

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Thursday 18 October 2012

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

The Speaker read the Prayer and acknowledgement of country.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Notices of Motions

General Business Notices of Motions (General Notices) given.

RETAIL LEASES AMENDMENT (MEDIATION) BILL 2012

Second Reading

Debate called on, and adjourned on motion by Mr Brad Hazzard and set down as an order of the day for a future day.

COMMUNITY RECOGNITION NOTICES

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

MANSFIELD WINES

Mr ANDREW GEE—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Mansfield Wines of Mudgee on winning Most Outstanding Red Wine and Champion Wine of Show at the 2012 Mudgee Wine Show for its 2010 Touriga Nacional, which is a Portuguese wine variety.
- (2) Recognises that this was the wine's first gold medal and notes that it has performed well at the Australian Alternative Varieties Show.

ROBERT STEIN WINERY AND VINEYARD

Mr ANDREW GEE—That this House congratulates Andrew Stein of Robert Stein Winery at Mudgee on being awarded the Most Outstanding White Wine at the 2012 Mudgee Wine Show for the winery's 2012 riesling.

LOWE WINES

Mr ANDREW GEE—That this House congratulates David Lowe of Lowe Wines at Mudgee on being awarded the Most Outstanding Fortified Wine at the 2012 Mudgee Wine Show for the winery's Non Vintage muscat.

VINIFERA WINES

Mr ANDREW GEE—That this House congratulates Vinifera Wines at Mudgee on being awarded the Most Outstanding Dessert Wine at the 2012 Mudgee Wine Show for the winery's 2008 Vinifera Easter semillon.

MANILDRA PASTORAL AND AGRICULTURAL ASSOCIATION GOLD LIFE MEMBER OWEN MURRAY

Mr ANDREW GEE—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Owen Murray on being presented with gold life membership of the Manildra Pastoral and Agricultural Association.
- (2) Notes that Mr Murray has served on the committee of the Manildra Pastoral and Agricultural Association for 40 years since leaving school in 1972.
- (3) Notes that Mr Murray is the third generation of his family to serve on the Manildra Pastoral and Agricultural Association.

POLICE RECRUITMENT AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT DAY

Mr GUY ZANGARI—That this House:

- (1) Acknowledges the contribution made by the NSW Police Force on the Community Engagement and Recruitment Day at Fairfield High School on 8 September 2012.
- (2) Notes the Community Engagement and Recruitment Day is vital in engaging young people to consider the NSW Police Force as a career option.
- (3) Congratulates Superintendent Peter Lennon from Fairfield local area command, together with Dena Odisho and Alex Santana, on running this event.

FAIRFIELD HIGH SCHOOL HIGH ACHIEVERS AWARDS

Mr GUY ZANGARI—That this House:

- (1) Acknowledges the contribution made by Julia Cordina, from Freeman Catholic College, Rebecca Knox from Mary Mackillop College and Aaron Taverniti from Patrician Brothers College on receiving high achievers awards from the Catholic Archbishop of Sydney.
- (2) Notes the dedication of teachers, staff and principals in supporting these students and their achievements in various fields, including leadership, commitment to social justice, academic and sporting success and community work.
- (3) Encourages and congratulates the students and their schools in receiving high achievers awards from the Catholic Archbishop of Sydney, Cardinal George Pell.

FAIRFIELD CAR WASH FOR A CURE

Mr GUY ZANGARI—That this House:

- (1) Acknowledges the contribution made by George and Dorothy Adam from Fairfield City Automotive Repairs in organising the Car Wash for a Cure to raise money for the Cancer Council NSW.
- (2) Notes the support given on the day by local businesses, including Woolworths, Coles, Supagas, Atlantic Oils, Debs Castle Hire, Peters Meats, Pronto Balloons, Townsend Party Hire, GP Spares, Officeworks and many others who donated their time, services and supplies on the day.
- (3) Congratulates all the volunteers involved in Fairfield's Car Wash for a Cure.

COUNCILLOR WILLIAM PICKERING CIVIC SERVICE

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Councillor William (Bill) Pickering on his re-election to the City of Ryde Council in 2012.
- (2) Commends Councillor Pickering for his continuing contribution to the local community through his service on the Council.
- (3) Wishes every success to Councillor Pickering and his colleagues during their term of office.

COUNCILLOR ROY MAGGIO CIVIC SERVICE

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Councillor Roy Maggio on his re-election to the City of Ryde Council in 2012.
- (2) Commends Councillor Maggio for his continuing contribution to the local community through his service on the Council.
- (3) Wishes every success to Councillor Maggio and his colleagues during their term of office.

COUNCILLOR CRAIG CHUNG CIVIC SERVICE

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Mr Craig Chung on his election to the City of Ryde Council in 2012.
- (2) Commends Mr Chung for contributing to the local community by serving on the Council.
- (3) Wishes every success to Mr Chung and his colleagues during their term of office.

COUNCILLOR SCOTT BENNISON CIVIC SERVICE

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Councillor Scott Bennison on his re-election to Lane Cove Council in 2012.
- (2) Commends Councillor Bennison for his continuing contribution to the local community through his service on the Council.
- (3) Wishes every success to Councillor Bennison and his colleagues during their term of office.

COUNCILLOR DAVID BROOKS-HORN CIVIC SERVICE

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Councillor David Brooks-Horn on his re-election to Lane Cove Council in 2012.
- (2) Commends Councillor Brooks-Horn for his continuing contribution to the local community through his service on the Council.
- (3) Wishes every success to Councillor Brooks-Horn and his colleagues during their term of office.

COUNCILLOR DEBBIE HUTCHENS CIVIC SERVICE

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Mrs Debbie Hutchens on her election to Lane Cove Council in 2012.
- (2) Commends Mrs Hutchens for contributing to the local community by serving on the Council.
- (3) Wishes every success to Mrs Hutchens and her colleagues during their term of office.

COUNCILLOR SOO-TEE CHEONG CIVIC SERVICE

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Mr Soo-Tee Cheong on his election to Lane Cove Council in 2012.
- (2) Commends Mr Cheong for contributing to the local community by serving on the Council.
- (3) Wishes every success to Mr Cheong and his colleagues during their term of office.

COUNCILLOR DAVID KARPIN CIVIC SERVICE

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Mr David Karpin on his election to Lane Cove Council in 2012.
- (2) Commends Mr Karpin for contributing to the local community by serving on the Council.
- (3) Wishes every success to Mr Karpin and his colleagues during their term of office.

COUNCILLOR MARK GOLD CIVIC SERVICE

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Mr Mark Gold on his election to Lane Cove Council in 2012.
- (2) Commends Mr Gold for contributing to the local community by serving on the Council.
- (3) Wishes every success to Mr Gold and his colleagues during their term of office.

ARDLETHAN LIONS CLUB AND JANICE LEWIS

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Janice Lewis for winning the Ardlethan Lions Save Sight Community Challenge.
- (2) Commends Janice on her work for the Ardlethan Lions Club, having spent hours volunteering and fundraising in her community.
- (3) Thanks the Ardlethan Lions Club and its members for their work for the community.

GRIFFITH BASE HOSPITAL AUXILIARY

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Griffith Base Hospital Auxiliary volunteers Monica Cotterill, Mary Dal Nevo, Marlene Buchanan and Marie Riley on their 30 years of service to the Auxiliary.
- (2) Congratulates Heather Eagleton, Mary Macedone and Rene Pettiford on their 20 years of service to the Auxiliary.
- (3) Congratulates Judy Bishop, Charlie Bishop, Brenda Bowen, Ninette Foscarini, Margaret Gray, Gordon Harris, Lyn Zuccato, on their ten years of service to the Auxiliary.
- (4) Wishes all of these volunteers all the best in their continuing work for the Auxiliary.

- (5) Recognises the valuable role that these volunteers have played in raising \$37,000 in donations to the hospital.
- (6) Wishes them well in their plan to raise a further \$54,400 in 2013.

WORLDSKILLS AUSTRALIA SILVER MEDALLIST TIM ANNETTS

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Leeton resident Tim Annetts on his silver medal at the WorldSkills Australia trade competition.
- (2) Acknowledges his achievement in the competition and his commitment to his work.
- (3) Commends him on the study that he undertook to compete in the competition and wishes him all the best for the future.

WORLDSKILLS AUSTRALIA GOLD MEDALLIST KURT MAIER

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates West Wyalong resident Kurt Maier on his gold medal at the WorldSkills Australia trade competition.
- (2) Acknowledges his achievement in the competition and his commitment to his work.
- (3) Commends him on the study that he undertook to compete in the competition and wishes him all the best for the future.
- (4) Congratulates TAFE NSW Riverina Institute Leeton campus on its success in this competition.

WADE HIGH SCHOOL RURAL FIRE SERVICE CADETS

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Griffith's Wade High School Rural Fire Service cadets Tara Myers, Tristan Colston, Ryan Camm, Lily O'Donnell, Nathan Wiscombe, Johnnie Kemp, Joseph Gifford, Mele Lolotonga and Adam Bolte on their graduation.
- (2) Commends Wade High School staff on their work in encouraging the students' ten week work studies unit placement.
- (3) Commends the students for their participation and involvement and for encouraging other students' participation.
- (4) Commends the Rural Fire Service staff for being involved and inspiring students.

BOMADERRY TIGERS AUSTRALIAN FOOTBALL CLUB

Mr GARETH WARD—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the Bomaderry Tigers Australian Football Club under 18 years team on its recent grand final victory, which reflects the hard work and determination of the players involved.
- (2) Acknowledges the ongoing contribution and personal sacrifices made by the club's secretary Mrs J Hickmott and the other dedicated members of the club's committee.

KIAMA MEALS ON WHEELS

Mr GARETH WARD—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the 2011-12 management committee of Kiama Meals on Wheels, including president Ann Dawes, vice president Shirley Bushnell, secretary Jenny Russell, treasurer Shirley Kehlet, client representatives Ailsa Jones Hawkins and Micahel Rankin and public officer Jennifer Hudson.
- (2) Acknowledges the outstanding and ongoing contribution these volunteers make in providing an important service for the elderly and disadvantaged in the local Kiama community.

ATHLETE BRIDGETTE DAVIS

Mr GARETH WARD—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Bridgette Davis of Kiama Public School on successfully qualifying in the long jump for the regional carnival in Canberra.
- (2) Notes that Bridgette's hard work and training has allowed her to achieve this outstanding result.

ATHLETE TIARN EAST

Mr GARETH WARD—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Tiarn East of Kiama Public School on successfully qualifying in the shot put for the regional carnival in Canberra.
- (2) Notes that Tiarn's hard work and training has allowed her to achieve this outstanding result.

ATHLETE DANE CLIFF

Mr GARETH WARD—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Dane Cliff of Kiama Public School on his recent success at the school sports carnival, winning five of the six events he competed in.
- (2) Notes that Dane's achievement is one that he should be extremely proud of.

SCOUTING AWARD RECIPIENT JOSHUA TOMPSETT

Mr MATT KEAN—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Joshua Tompsett from the 1st Hornsby Heights Scout Group on achieving the Grey Wolf Award, the highest available to a cub scout.
- (2) Notes that Joshua completed many activities to achieve this award including first aid, scout traditions, scientific discovery and community service.
- (3) Wishes Joshua every success with his future scouting endeavours.

BEROWRA PUBLIC SCHOOL DANCE GROUPS

Mr MATT KEAN—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Berowra Public School junior and senior dance groups on performing at the National Institute of Dramatic Art.
- (2) Thanks teachers Liz Sheldon and Jennie Smith for giving up their time to put these performances together.
- (3) Wishes the dance students at Berowra Public School all the best for their future performances.

CUSTOMER SERVICE AWARD RECIPIENTS LISA PALMER AND RUTH MAHER

Mr MATT KEAN—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Lisa Palmer and Ruth Maher of the Berowra Bendigo Bank on receiving State Customer Service Awards in February, March and June 2012.
- (2) Congratulates Lisa on also receiving the National Customer Service Award 2012.
- (3) Notes that each month one member from each state receives an award and a subsequent national award winner is selected from these.
- (4) Thanks Lisa and Ruth for their outstanding customer service to the customers of Berowra.

ATHLETE SAM PARRY

Mr MATT KEAN—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Sam Parry of Berowra Public School on his achievement in football and athletics.
- (2) Notes Sam's outstanding results at his school's athletics carnival where he broke school records and progressing on to the zone competition.
- (3) Notes that Sam progressed to state level for cross country earlier in 2012 where he placed 20th.
- (4) Wishes Sam all the very best with his sport in the future.

CHERRYBROOK RURAL FIRE BRIGADE SIXTIETH ANNIVERSARY

Mr MATT KEAN—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Cherrybrook Rural Fire Brigade on its 60th anniversary.
- (2) Notes that the brigade has 64 members, including seven women.
- (3) Thanks the brigade for assisting others in the Cherrybrook community and across the state.

BEROWRA WOMEN'S SOCCER TEAM

Mr MATT KEAN—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the Berowra women's over 35 years soccer team on being premiers and champions of the Northern Suburbs Football Association division 2 competition.

- (2) Notes that the team came from being the wooden spooners in 2011 to being champions in 2012 under the guidance of coach Mick Da Silva.
- (3) Wishes the team and the Berowra Soccer Club every success in the 2013 competition.

BEROWRA WALLABIES JUNIOR RUGBY LEAGUE CLUB

Mr MATT KEAN—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the Berowra Wallabies Rugby League Club under 10 and under 12 years teams on winning their respective grand finals at North Sydney Oval.
- (2) Notes that the under 10 years team won in extra time after the scores were tied at full time.
- (3) Notes that the under 12 years had come to the grand final after being undefeated for 17 games.
- (4) Wishes the Berowra Wallabies Rugby League Club all the very best in the 2013 competition.

PARALYMPIAN SARAH ROSE

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Sarah Rose on her participation in and representation of Australia at the 2012 Paralympic Games in London.
- (2) Congratulates Sarah on winning a bronze medal in her S6 50 metres butterfly heat, and setting an Oceania record of 40.39seconds.
- (3) Congratulates Sarah on finishing sixth in the final of the S6 50 metres butterfly with the time of 40.43 seconds.
- (4) Congratulates Sarah on finishing fifth in the SM6 individual medley heat with the time of 3:36.84 seconds.
- (5) Congratulates Sarah on finishing fifth in the S6 50m freestyle heat with the time of 38.37 seconds.

PARALYMPIAN ADAM KELLERMAN

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Adam Kellerman on his participation in and representation of Australia at the 2012 Paralympic Games in London.
- (2) Congratulates Adam on reaching the round of 16 in the men's singles and doubles wheelchair tennis.

HAWKESBURY SPORTSPERSON OF THE YEAR AWARDS

Mr BART BASSETT—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the Richmond Club on hosting the 21st annual Sportsperson of the Year award with special guest speaker, former international and first grade rugby league player, Geoff Gerard.
- (2) Acknowledges Sara Klein on being named the 2012 Richmond Club Sports Person of the Year for her efforts in athletics.

R U OK? DAY

Mr BART BASSETT—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Peter Webb and his team of volunteers on organising the R U OK? Day morning tea at the Richmond Park rotunda.
- (2) Notes that R U OK? Day was founded by the late Gavin Larkin after the suicide death of his brother, as a means of bringing people together and raising awareness of mental health issues.
- (3) Thanks all volunteers who helped host R U OK? Day morning teas.

RETIREMENT OF BOB RICHARDS

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Bob Richards of Bulahdelah on his retirement after thirty three years of service in the Ambulance Service of NSW.
- (2) Notes that Bob Richards worked for the service in Bourke, Dubbo, Brewarrina and Gilgandra before working for the Bulahdelah service for 24 years.
- (3) Commends Bob Richards on being an active member of the Bulahdelah community, including his roles as president of the Bulahdelah Lions Club and his executive positions in local football, golf and bowls clubs.

BENT ON FOOD CAFE

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Donna Carrier, owner of Wingham cafe, Bent on Food, on being inducted into the Hall of Fame at the 2012 North Coast Tourism Awards.
- (2) Notes that the prestigious award is only made to businesses demonstrating consistency of product by winning the same award category for three consecutive years.
- (3) Commends Donna Carrier and the staff of Bent on Food for the cafe being the most awarded business in the Manning Valley with nineteen awards, including the prestigious Qantas Australian Tourism Award in 2010, and for also winning four medals at the Royal Hobart Fine Food Show.

BULAHDELAH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the Bulahdelah Historical Society on its efforts to have a nine tonne alunite specimen boulder accepted into the National Rock Garden in Canberra.
- (2) Notes that the alunite boulder comes from Worrimi and was taken from the footprint of road works during construction of the Pacific Highway upgrade at the base of Bulahdelah Mountain.
- (3) Notes that the alunite boulder will be displayed with more than 100 other rocks from around Australia to represent the diversity of Australian geology and the role geology played in the history and development of Australia.
- (4) Notes that the alunite boulder will represent the industrial history of alunite mining on Bulahdelah Mountain from its discovery in 1875 to its cessation in the 1950s.

GREAT LAKES AQUATIC AND LEISURE CENTRE TWENTY-FIRST ANNIVERSARY

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the Great Lakes Aquatic and Leisure Centre on celebrating 21 years of operation.
- (2) Notes that the facility was opened in 1991 following a twenty year fundraising effort that raised \$250,000, and the receipt of various council and government grants.
- (3) Notes that the YMCA was appointed to manage the centre at the time of its opening and has continued to do so in a highly competent and professional manner since.

GOLFER JAC DELANEY

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Jac Delaney, a student of Great Lakes College and a member of the New South Wales schools' team which won the National Golf Championship in Perth.
- (2) Notes that Jac, who is 17 and plays off a handicap of one, qualified for the New South Wales team by coming second in the New South Wales titles in 2012.
- (3) Congratulates Jac on also winning both the Forster Golf Club senior and junior club championships in which he was the defending champion.

LILLA WHITE 100TH BIRTHDAY

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Lilla White of Tuncurry on celebrating her 100th birthday.
- (2) Notes that Lilla was raised in the Bulahdelah area and later moved to the Central Coast where she met and married James White and raised two children, Margaret and Alister.
- (3) Notes that Lilla has six grandchildren, sixteen great-grandchildren and one great-great-grandchild.

FORSTER BOWLING CLUB SUPER VETERAN IVY RAVELL

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Ivy Ravell on being presented with a second star for her New South Wales Women's Bowls "Super Veteran" badge.
- (2) Notes that ninety-eight-year-old Ivy plays at Forster Bowling Club every Thursday and is highly respected by her fellow members.

- (3) Notes that Ivy is also a passionate gardener and has two children, nine grandchildren, nineteen great-grandchildren and two great-great-grandchildren.
- (4) Notes that Forster Bowling Club dedicated a scoreboard to Ivy at Christmas 2011 for her efforts on the bowling green.

KIMBRIKI PROGRESS AND RECREATIONAL CENTRE

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the residents of Kimbriki and surrounding districts on the opening of the new facilities and the installation of new lighting at the Kimbriki Progress and Recreational Centre.
- (2) Acknowledges the hard work and dedication by the committee and its president Rod Saxby, secretary Craig Martin and treasurer and life member, Glenda Allen.
- (3) Notes that attending the official opening was ninety-two-year-old, Toby Polley whose father was one of the pioneers instrumental in getting the Kimbriki tennis centre under way.
- (4) Notes that four generations of the Polley family attended the opening with Toby Polley's son, John who has been a member for many years; his grandson, Josh and his great-grandson, Tobie Polley who both enjoy playing tennis.

MANNING VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the Manning Valley Historical Society on its celebrations marking History Week with the theme Threads and the display of wedding gowns worn in the district, including a gown made in 1860.
- (2) Notes the launch of the new Australian Inland Mission centenary publication of Vision Splendid, compiled by Darryl Lightfoot and Sue Pacey, which includes a short history of Reverend John Flynn, founder of the Australian Inland Mission, forerunner of the Aerial Medical Service and the Royal Flying Doctor Service.
- (3) Acknowledges the strong connection between the Manning Valley and the Australian Inland Mission.
- (4) Commends the dedication of the members of the Manning Valley Historical Society and its president Barbara Waters, secretary Kathy Taylor, treasurer Helen Joyce and patron Mac Gibson.

GRIFFITH WINERIES

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Griffith wineries on their achievements at the Riverina Wine Show held in September 2012.
- (2) Recognises that Griffith wineries compete nationally and create fine wines that are of high calibre.
- (3) Recognises the significance of awards that encourage wineries and winemakers to achieve in their profession.

SOROPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL LIFE MEMBER MARGARET SHEPPARD

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Coleambally resident Margaret Sheppard on receiving life membership of Soroptimist International recently.
- (2) Congratulates Mrs Sheppard on her ongoing work for her community and for furthering the work of the Soroptimist organisation over a period of 29 years.
- (3) Thanks Coleambally Soroptimist members for their ongoing work in their local community and worldwide.

LOWER LACHLAN COMMUNITY SERVICES

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates members of the Lower Lachlan Community Services on their nomination for the New South Wales/Australian Capital Territory 2012 Regional Achievement and Community Awards.
- (2) Recognises the work of the organisation for the community and district of Lake Cargelligo.
- (3) Thanks members for offering such a wide range of services in a rural and remote area of New South Wales.

RIVERINA REGION MARK EVERETT LEADERSHIP FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENT BOB WILLETTS

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Barellan Central School principal, Bob Willetts, on receiving the 2012-13 Riverina region Mark Everett Leadership Fellowship.
- (2) Notes that the fellowship is awarded for dedication and initiative in the teaching profession.

- (3) Notes that the knowledge that Mr Willetts will gain from the fellowship will benefit students and staff who work with him.
- (4) Recognises that awards such as the Mark Everett Leadership Fellowship are important as they recognise people who have made extraordinary achievements in their profession.

STEEL MAGNOLIA AWARD RECIPIENT SALLY CHAPMAN

Ms SONIA HORNER—That this House congratulates Shirley Chapman on receiving the Steel Magnolia title for 2012, awarded for two decades of co-ordinating a volunteer group that has created more than 2,500 blankets for needy people in the community and internationally.

TOUCH FOOTBALLER CHLOE CHENEY

Ms SONIA HORNER—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Chloe Cheney, of Lambton, on her selection in the Australian under 18 years touch football train-on squad.
- (2) Commends 15-year-old Chloe and her coaches, for their hard work and dedication to make the Australian squad.
- (3) Extends its best wishes to Chloe for the forthcoming trans-Tasman series in New Zealand in January 2013.

UNIVERSITY OF NEWCASTLE

Ms SONIA HORNER—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Vice-Chancellor Professor Caroline McMillen and the University of Newcastle, staff and students, on being ranked among the best universities in the world for the second time in one week in August 2012.
- (2) Notes that the University of Newcastle was ranked 45th on the Times Higher Education World University Rankings for the top 100 world universities under 50 years old.
- (3) Commends the University of Newcastle on placing fourth among the 14 Australian universities that made the list.

CHRISTOPHER GERTY SAN FRANCISCO BALLET SCHOOL TRAINEESHIP

Ms SONIA HORNER—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates 18-year-old Maryland teenager, Christopher Gerty, on his traineeship with the San Francisco Ballet School.
- (2) Notes that Christopher was one of only six young male dancers from around the world to be offered a traineeship, which he will undertake in 2013.
- (3) Extends its best wishes to Christopher during his traineeship.

HARLEYS FOR HUMANITY

Ms SONIA HORNER—That this House:

- (1) Acknowledges Harleys for Humanity for its ongoing efforts to raise funds for the Westpac Rescue Helicopter Service.
- (2) Notes that Harleys for Humanity provides considerable financial and promotional support for the helicopter service in the Hunter region.
- (3) Commends Harleys for Humanity founder, David Golledge, for his continued commitment and dedication to the organisation.
- (4) Extends its best wishes to all involved in Harleys for Humanity and thanks them for their selfless contribution to the Hunter community.

NSW PUBLIC SCHOOLS STATE DANCE FESTIVAL

Ms SONIA HORNER—That this House:

- (1) Notes that students from four Hunter and Central Coast schools were among 1,500 dancers from New South Wales who successfully auditioned for the state dance festival.
- (2) Acknowledges ensemble co-ordinator Jo-Anne Thorn for her ongoing dedication and commitment to the festival.
- (3) Congratulates all of the dancers who took part in the dance festival held at the Seymour Centre, Sydney on 13 September 2012.

LEUKAEMIA FOUNDATION VOLUNTEER LACHLAN McVICAR

Ms SONIA HORNER—That this House:

- (1) Commends Lachlan McVicar, of Wallsend, for his ongoing commitment and dedication to the Leukaemia Foundation over the past 10 years.
- (2) Notes that Mr McVicar has supported the Foundation by volunteering up to seven days a week, giving presentations, building a family retreat centre, and raising money, including by becoming a key player in the Newcastle Light the Night fundraiser.
- (3) Acknowledges the vital importance of Mr McVicar's volunteer work and thanks him for his selfless contribution to the Hunter community.

HUNTER INSTITUTE OF MENTAL HEALTH DIRECTOR TREVOR HAZELL

Ms SONIA HORNER—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Trevor Hazell, director of Newcastle-based Hunter Institute of Mental Health, on receiving an award for exceptional contribution to mental health services in Australia and New Zealand.
- (2) Acknowledges Trevor's contribution to the development of national approaches to teacher training, working with the media and the development of evidence-based strategies to address the needs of people who live with, or care for, someone with depression.
- (3) Wishes Trevor all the best in his future endeavours.

DANCING WITH THE WALLSEND BUSINESS STARS EVENT

Ms SONIA HORNER—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Maxine Johnson and her team at Maxi-Jazz Dance Studio, Wallsend, for their tireless efforts in organising the Dancing with the Wallsend Business Stars event.
- (2) Notes that the event raised \$6,000 for the Nicholas Trust for Paediatric Palliative Care.

WALLABY KANE DOUGLAS

Mr CHRIS GULAPTIS—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Kane Douglas, from Yamba, on making his debut for the Australian Wallabies on 17 September 2012.
- (2) Acknowledges the commitment and dedication shown by Kane to reach the highest level of his chosen sport.
- (3) Acknowledges the dedication of his parents, Trish and Chris, in supporting Kane in his sporting career, which saw him progress from the Yamba Buccaneers to the NSW Waratahs and onto the Australian Wallabies, and also supporting their eldest son Luke who is playing for the Gold Coast Titans and has now played 170 consecutive games of rugby league in the NRL.
- (4) Wishes Kane all the best for the rest of the Wallabies games for this season and for his continued involvement in the team.

CASINO BEEF WEEK LIFE MEMBER VERLA HAYES

Mr CHRIS GULAPTIS—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Verla Hayes on being named a life member of the Casino Beef Week, only the third person to receive this honour.
- (2) Acknowledges the dedication and commitment Verla has shown, not only to Beef Week, but to numerous charity and community groups in Casino and the Richmond Valley.
- (3) Acknowledges that Verla played an instrumental role in the establishment of the Beef Week festival.

TAFE AWARDS RECIPIENT JAMIE BRADLEY

Mr CHRIS GULAPTIS—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Jamie Bradley on his achievements at the 2012 TAFE Awards.
- (2) Congratulates Jamie on being named TAFE's Student Achiever in the Transport Category and TAFE's Overall Student of the Year.
- (3) Acknowledges this is the third consecutive year that Jamie has been recognised for his dedication and commitment as a mature-aged apprentice.
- (4) Wishes Jamie continued success in the future.

GRAFTON HOCKEY ASSOCIATIONS

Mr CHRIS GULAPTIS—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Grafton Hockey Association and Grafton Women's Hockey Association on an extremely successful grand final day.
- (2) Congratulates the following winning teams:
 - (a) Women's A Grade, McAuley White;
 - (b) Women's AR1, Demons Red;
 - (c) Women's AR2, Kylies Kaos;
 - (d) Women's AR3, McAuley Gold;
 - (e) Women's B Grade, Demons Tartans;
 - (f) Women's C Grade, Mixtures;
 - (g) Men's A Grade, Barbarians;
 - (h) Men's B Grade, Barbarians;
 - (i) Men's C Grade, Sailors; and
 - (j) Men's C Grade Consolation, joint champions Sailors Old Boys and Royals Originals.
- (3) Congratulates Jeff Thomas on having his name added to the Legends Board for his work with junior boys hockey and especially his work in brining indoor hockey to the local area.
- (4) Congratulates Janet Gould on being given life membership of the Grafton Hockey Association for her many years of dedicated service to the administration of hockey at both a local and a state level.
- (5) Congratulates the Grafton Hockey Association on the quality of the facilities they provide for the hockey community.

WOODBURN SHIRE COUNCIL BUILDING 100TH ANNIVERSARY

Mr CHRIS GULAPTIS—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the Mid-Richmond Historical Society Museum on the celebrations to mark the 100th anniversary of the Woodburn Shire Council building on Adam Street, Coraki.
- (2) Notes the Museum's restoration of the 1914-1918 Buckendoon and Bungawalbin Honour Rolls.

WOODBURN ORCHID SHOW

Mr CHRIS GULAPTIS—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the Woodburn Orchid Society on another successful orchid show.
- (2) Acknowledges the work of the society's president Ken Woods and secretary Sally Irons in the lead up to the show.
- (3) Wishes the Society all the best for the future.

REDFIELD OLD BOYS RUGBY TEAM

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET—That this House congratulates:

- (1) The Redfield College Old Boys Rugby Team for winning the 2012 Suburban New South Wales Rugby Competition grand final.
- (2) The Redfield Old Boys second's team who lost in their grand final by a penalty goal scored at the end of extra time.

BISHOP OF PARRAMATTA AWARDS FOR STUDENT EXCELLENCE

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the recipients of the Bishop of Parramatta Awards for Student Excellence, including Jake Giordano of Oakhill College, Izarra Reyes of Tangara School for Girls, and Aimee Saaib of Gilroy Catholic College.
- (2) Wish these students and all other award winners the very best in their future studies.

CRESTWOOD FAIR

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET—That this House congratulates Kathy Ebbott and others involved in organising the 2012 Crestwood Fair which was attended by nearly 20,000 people, and is part of the Orange Blossom Festival.

CASTLE HILL TAFE AND NORTH RYDE ROTARY CLUB DONATION

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET—That this House congratulates students of Castle Hill TAFE who, in conjunction with North Ryde Rotary Club, have designed solar powered computer systems that will be donated to a school in the remote highlands of Papua New Guinea.

VIVIENNE FLETCHER EIGHTIETH BIRTHDAY

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates 80-year-old Vivienne Fletcher from Castle Hill for daring to sky dive recently for her birthday.
- (2) Admires Vivienne's zest and love for life.

WALL TO WALL RIDE FOR REMEMBRANCE

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET—That this House congratulates:

- (1) All those who participated in the Wall to Wall motorcycle ride to commemorate police officers who have died as a result of their duties and to raise money for their families.
- (2) Parramatta Eels rugby league legend Nathan Hindmarsh for getting involved, as tribute was paid to police officers who gave everything for the community that they served.

COUNCILLOR LARRY BOLITHO CIVIC SERVICE

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET—That this House:

- (1) Thanks retiring councillor for the Baulkham Hills Shire Larry Bolitho for his service to the community since 1983.
- (2) Wishes Larry all the very best for the future.

WOOLWORTHS AGRICULTURAL BUSINESS SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENT KIERAN BEST

Ms TANYA DAVIES—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Kieran Best from Glenmore Park on receiving a 2012 Woolworths Agricultural Business Scholarship for his work as a trainee meat buyer at Glenmore Park.
- (2) Acknowledges the commitment of Woolworths Limited to developing the agribusiness skills of their employees.

TRAMPOLINIST ETHAN McGUINNESS

Ms TANYA DAVIES—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates 11-year-old Ethan McGuinness, from Glenmore Park, on winning gold in the National Clubs Trampolining Competition, and on his selection to the Australian team.
- (2) Wishes Ethan and the Australian team well for the 2012 Indo Pacific Championships.

BOWLS MEDALLIST CALLUM BROOKS

Ms TANYA DAVIES—That this House congratulates 15-year-old Callum Brooks on winning a gold medal in the doubles division and a silver medal in the singles division at the Special Olympics State Bowling Championships.

WOLLEMI COLLEGE

Ms TANYA DAVIES—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Mark Pirotta, Enoch Ekundayo, Michael Spiteri, Daniel Woolnough and Samuel Vella from Wollemi College on winning the Sydney Metropolitan Catholic Schools Debating Competition.
- (2) Wishes the team best of luck for the 2012 state championships in November.
- (3) Notes the dedication of teachers and parents at Wollemi College and other participating schools in giving up their time to allow students to benefit from extracurricular activities, such as debating.

MEDIADVICE PHARMACY

Ms TANYA DAVIES—That this House congratulates MediAdvice Pharmacy at Glenmore Park on winning the 2012 Penrith Local Business Award for best pharmacy.

PETER SINCLAIR GARDENS AGED CARE FACILITY

Mr CRAIG BAUMANN—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates RSL LifeCare on the opening of its Myall Lodge aged care facility extension.
- (2) Notes that the facility has been re-named Peter Sinclair Gardens.
- (3) Acknowledges Rear Admiral Peter Sinclair AC's continued commitment to the community.

MAITLAND HOSPITAL VOLUNTEERS REHABILITATION UNIT

Ms ROBYN PARKER—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the Maitland Hospital Volunteers Rehabilitation Unit program on winning the Local Health District Volunteers of the Year Award at the 2012 Hunter New England Health Achievement Awards.
- (2) Notes that the daily volunteer program for patients in the hospital's rehabilitation unit is considered by Hunter New England Health to be a critical component of a patient's recovery and empowers the patients to become more independent.
- (3) Thanks the volunteers for their tireless service on this program which was developed in 2011.

CENTRAL HUNTER LOCAL AREA COMMAND SUPERINTENDENT GARRY O'DELL

Ms ROBYN PARKER—That this House:

- (1) Welcomes Superintendent Garry O'Dell as the new commander of the Central Hunter police local area command.
- (2) Notes that Superintendent O'Dell started work at the local area command office at Maitland Police Station on Monday 10 September 2012.
- (3) Acknowledges the community's support for Superintendent O'Dell and his officers in the execution of their duty.
- (4) Thanks acting Superintendent Brett Greentree for his tenure as acting local area command commander prior to Superintendent O'Dell's appointment.

TRIBUTE TO SERGEANT MAURICE TOWERS

Ms ROBYN PARKER—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Sergeant Maurice Towers on 40 years of service with NSW Police on 12 September 2012.
- (2) Notes that Sergeant Towers has spent his career as a frontline officer of NSW Police and has spent 22 years policing the Maitland area.
- (3) Thanks Sergeant Towers for his diligence, commitment and service to the people of Maitland and New South Wales.

MAITLAND GARDEN RAMBLE

Ms ROBYN PARKER—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the Maitland Black and White Committee on the staging of the 29th Maitland Garden Ramble between 15 and 16 September 2012.
- (2) Notes that ten gardens participated in the event, including six new participants, and that funds raised from the event will be donated to Vision Australia.

EAST MAITLAND RUGBY CLUB

Ms ROBYN PARKER—That this House:

- (1) Notes that East Maitland Rugby Club is the 2012 Newcastle and Hunter Rugby Union C-Grade premiers.
- (2) Congratulates East Maitland on its 17-10 grand final win against Merewether Carlton.
- (3) Notes this is East Maitland's third consecutive C-grade premiership.
- (4) Wishes the club all the best for the 2013 season.

HUNTER ACADEMY OF SPORT

Mr TIM OWEN—That this House:

- (1) Notes that the Hunter Academy of Sport annual presentation night was held at the University of Newcastle on 3 September 2012.

- (2) Acknowledges that the Hunter Academy of Sport, through its numerous programs, supports talented athletes and sportspeople throughout Newcastle and the Hunter region.
- (3) Congratulates all the award nominees and recipients on their outstanding sporting prowess.

NEWCASTLE MASTER BUILDERS ASSOCIATION EXCELLENCE IN BUILDING AWARDS

Mr TIM OWEN—That this House:

- (1) Notes that the Newcastle Master Builders Association Excellence Awards were held at the Wests Leagues Club, New Lambton, on 24 August 2012.
- (2) Recognises that the Awards are in recognition of the outstanding skills, workmanship and high technical standards involved in residential and commercial construction in the Hunter, Central Coast, Manning Great Lakes and Oxley regions.
- (3) Notes that the objective of the Awards remains to encourage, promote and recognise best practice in building and to establish benchmark projects for others in the industry to emulate.
- (4) Congratulates all the Award nominees and recipients on their outstanding work in the building sector.

MARINE RESCUE NSW VOLUNTEER MARIAN CHAPPEL

Mr CRAIG BAUMANN—That this House:

- (1) Notes the valuable contribution that Marian Chappel from Salamander Bay has made to the Port Stephens unit of Marine Rescue NSW.
- (2) Acknowledges Ms Chappel's role as a watch keeper in the search and rescue communication centre and as a supervisor at the Inner Light Cottage Museum.
- (3) Thanks Ms Chappel for her selfless volunteering efforts in the community and congratulates her on being a finalist in the 2012 Port Stephens Volunteer of the Year Awards.

PORT STEPHENS VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR AWARDS FINALIST PAUL BENNETT

Mr CRAIG BAUMANN—That this House:

- (1) Notes the valuable contribution that Paul Bennett from Salamander Bay has made to Community Transport Port Stephens as a volunteer bus driver.
- (2) Acknowledges his involvement with the State Emergency Service for more than 10 years.
- (3) Thanks Mr Bennett for his volunteering efforts in the community and congratulates him on being a finalist in the 2012 Port Stephens Volunteer of the Year Awards.

PORT STEPHENS VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR AWARDS FINALIST SIMON BROOKE

Mr CRAIG BAUMANN—That this House:

- (1) Notes the valuable contribution that Simon Brooke from Salamander Bay has made to the Soldiers Point Salamander Bay Tidy Towns and Landcare Committee.
- (2) Thanks Mr Brooke for his outstanding volunteering efforts in the community and congratulates him on being a finalist in the 2012 Port Stephens Volunteer of the Year Awards.

TRIBUTE TO RON TAYLOR, AM

Mr MIKE BAIRD—That this House:

- (1) Notes the recent passing of Ron Taylor, a Fairlight resident, cinematographer and conservationist.
- (2) Recognises Ron's successes as a national and world champion spearfisherman and as an underwater photographer involved in the making of films such as *Jaws*.
- (3) Recognises the partnership Ron had with his wife Valerie and the important contribution the Taylors made to conservation through their filmmaking.
- (4) Commends the legacy Ron Taylor left and his passionate approach to life and efforts to better educate the world about underwater environments.

Question put and resolved in the affirmative.

Community recognition notices agreed to.

FIGTREE HIGH SCHOOL

The SPEAKER: I call the member for Keira. I congratulate him on his appointment as shadow Minister for Roads.

Mr RYAN PARK (Keira) [10.04 a.m.]: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I greatly appreciate your congratulations. I move:

That this House:

- (1) congratulates the staff, students and the parent body of Figtree High School on creating a positive learning environment;
- (2) notes that the school urgently needs funding to upgrade its out-of-date library facility; and
- (3) calls on the Government to fund the library upgrade to enhance school facilities.

Figtree High School is located in the southern part of the Keira electorate and borders the electorate of my colleague the member for Wollongong. It is an important and growing school but it faces a big challenge with its out-of-date and antiquated school library. The previous Government allocated significant funding to the school to construct a new hall and improve its facilities. I have been lobbying, and will continue to lobby, to get an assurance from this Government that Figtree High School will get a library that provides an adequate learning environment for a comprehensive high school. High school libraries are very different from what they were 10, 15 or 20 years ago. They now need to be fully equipped with technology that will enable students to access information across a wide spectrum of mediums.

School libraries need to reflect the fact that learning no longer takes place only in the classroom but also outside the classroom. Teachers and students must have more than simply books on a shelf. The school library proposed for Figtree will cost in the order of \$1 million. The library is yet to see any form of funding commitment from this Government. I have put questions to the Minister for Education about major capital works in the Illawarra south-east region. I am concerned that, despite 20 projects in the area having been nominated for major capital upgrades, not one has been implemented since this Government took office. That means that schools across our great region of the Illawarra and the south-east are missing out on important facilities. Figtree High School is just one example.

Figtree High School is a comprehensive high school located in a growing part of my electorate. It is not a specialised high school. It needs to have facilities that will ensure it can continue to grow and provide the education that students expect and teachers can deliver. It is concerning that less than two years into this Government's term it is already reverting to type by cutting services and infrastructure. The Government is going back to its tried and true method, which is cutting education funding. During the Metherell and Greiner years the Liberal Party became famous for massive cuts to education. Under Barry O'Farrell's leadership we are now seeing an obsession with driving education down and reducing the opportunities for young people to learn and for teachers to effectively carry out their important task of educating the leaders of tomorrow.

This is important. It is above politics and it needs to be looked at. I have sought advice from the Minister countless times, urging him to at least start the planning process for this important project. The community and the parent body expect it, and the teachers and students certainly deserve these upgrades. We cannot continue to adopt the same old method of trying to improve infrastructure in other parts of the community but at the same time let our schools become run down. We should encourage learning in our schools by giving them the best facilities and the best opportunities for that learning to take place. It needs to be an absolute priority for this Government to ensure that learning takes place in an environment that is effective and that keeps up to date with today's challenges and conditions.

It gives me great pleasure to formally lobby on behalf of my community for a better library. I urge the Minister to visit the school and speak to the staff about the need for an improved library. It is not a multimillion dollar, huge-scale project, but it is a very important project. The previous Government made a commitment to this project and delivered significant upgrades for the Figtree High School. Work has been carried out on the school previously, but it is now time for this Government, having delivered two budgets and being 18 months into its term, to prioritise funding for this important project. Each school needs good facilities and a library that keeps up to speed with today's challenges. I urge the Government to step up, start the process, and give the Figtree High School the library it fully deserves.

Mr CHRIS SPENCE (The Entrance) [10.10 a.m.]: At the outset I make the point that, while the Government does not oppose this motion, I find interesting the statement made by the member for Keira that this motion is not about politics—that it is above politics. I suggest that this debate is absolutely 100 per cent a political stunt. The member for Keira says that the library is urgently needed. I could not agree more that schools and teachers deserve everything that we as a Government can give them, but he said that the library is run down, that the school needs new facilities, and that this is an important part of education. He learned that in his first 100 days as a member, because he gave notice of this motion in October 2011. However, in the 16 years in which Labor was in government Labor did not recognise the need for a library as a priority. If it was a priority at that stage why did the member for Keira not lobby the former Government to deliver the funding to build extensions to the library?

If this is important, the Building the Education Revolution [BER] program should have provided the funds to give Figtree High School the funds with which to extend the library. This motion is a political stunt by the member for Keira. Clearly, he has moved this motion solely for the purpose of going back to the school and saying, "The Government has not delivered." The point I make is that for 16 years his Government, the Labor Government, did not deliver this improvement. Not one representation was made to the former Government. It is only after 200 days of this Government's administration that he has pressed for funding for the library. Apparently for 16 years there was nothing wrong with the library, but 200 days after this Government was elected suddenly it is a disaster and this Government has to fix it. Suddenly it is our problem.

If the member for Keira is an expert on libraries, in the first place he should not have criticised the Library Bill and, in the second place, perhaps he should be the shadow Minister for Education, not the shadow Minister for Roads, because he now seems to be an expert on libraries. The member for Keira has asked a number of questions of the Minister relating to the Figtree High School. From the outset it should be made clear that on many occasions the member has been told that a project to extend the current library of the Figtree High School is nominated for inclusion in future capital works funding. Projects are considered for funding against competing State and regional priorities. This project is not currently deemed to be a high priority within the Illawarra south-east region. As the local member of Parliament he should encourage the school to apply for funding in the next round of the public school upgrade program.

In relation to the subject of school facilities, the Liberals and Nationals took to the election a commitment to improve school facilities after 16 years of Labor's neglect. When the Government was elected 18 months ago the Minister asked the Department of Education and Communities to conduct an assessment of all maintenance issues in all New South Wales schools. The results were announced earlier this year and make for sober reading. Labor's waste and mismanagement resulted in a school maintenance liability and infrastructure backlog amounting to almost \$1 billion. There was nearly \$1 billion worth of rundown toilet blocks, science laboratories, food technology laboratories and roofs needing replacement.

Ms Noreen Hay: Well, fix them.

Mr CHRIS SPENCE: I acknowledge the interjection by the member for Wollongong, who says, "Well, why don't you just go and fix it?" What did she do for 16 years? In 16 years Labor did not fix anything. The waste and mismanagement that we witnessed during Labor's Building the Education Revolution Program was disgusting, to say the least, and this State cannot afford to make those same mistakes again. Now we are aware of the extent of the problem we will be implementing reforms to make New South Wales number one again. As I mentioned, the Liberals and Nationals took to the election a commitment of an additional \$60 million for school maintenance and infrastructure. In this Government's first term we have increased that funding by a further \$10 million in 2012-13. The first round of the public school upgrade program resulted in 143 infrastructure projects being funded and almost 700 schools receiving extra minor maintenance money.

Some of the projects that have been delivered include Abbotsford Public School in the electorate of Drummoyne, which received \$60,000; Albion Park High School in the electorate of Kiama, which received \$10,000; Alstonville High School in the electorate of Ballina which received a \$30,000; and Annandale North Public School in the electorate of Balmain, \$4500. Other allocations are: Strathfield, \$10,000; Auburn, \$43,280; Kogarah, \$14,000; Ballina, \$110,000; Menai, \$48,000; Pittwater, \$200,000; Bathurst, \$12,000, and for another school in Bathurst, \$26,000; and \$15,000 in Keira. I do not see the member for Keira congratulating this Government on giving Bellambi Public School \$15,000. All he wants to do is play politics and criticise the Government.

As I stated earlier, the member for Keira gave notice of this motion 200 days after the Government was elected. After 16 years of a Labor government not a single cent was spent on maintaining schools

appropriately. After 200 days of the current administration the member for Keira informed the Parliament that the Government should have fixed the problem. Suddenly it is a crisis, and he says that this Government should do something about it. This Government is committed to education. This Government is committed to school funding and maintenance. This Government is committed to teachers across the State. We will honour those commitments.

Ms NOREEN HAY (Wollongong) [10.16 a.m.]: I support the very articulate argument advanced by the member for Keira and congratulate him on his promotion to shadow Minister for Roads.

Mr Mike Baird: So you supported him, did you?

Ms NOREEN HAY: Indeed. Judging by some of the comments made by the member for The Entrance, it is clear that 18 months is not long enough for him to educate himself about who was a member of the former Government.

Mr Chris Spence: It is better than 16 years of amnesia.

Ms NOREEN HAY: Nevertheless, for 16 years the people of New South Wales would not vote into government the Coalition parties, but the people of New South Wales are now sorry they did. Both the current member for Keira and the previous member for Keira fought very hard to obtain funds to improve facilities at Figtree High School. I am concerned about the attitude displayed by the Government in relation to schools in the Illawarra region. For example, the Government promised to replace all the demountable classrooms in the lead-up to the 2011 State election. What happened to that? What happened to the promise to increase resources in schools and educational centres? Now we are talking about cuts of almost \$2 billion to the Education portfolio. A suggestion that reveals just how little Government members know is that almost \$2 billion taken out of the education budget will not affect front-line delivery of education. That is just ludicrous.

Mr David Elliott: Tell the Federal Government to give us some more cash.

Ms NOREEN HAY: The Government cannot reduce back office and administration staff without affecting the front-line delivery of education. The member for Baulkham Hills knows it and I know it. As usual, since the Government was elected, it has blamed the Federal Government for everything. I recall that when the former Labor Government called on the then Coalition Opposition to support New South Wales receiving a better GST revenue distribution under the Howard Government the silence was deafening. This Government has to recognise its failure to fund. It is not part of this motion but it is taking \$3 billion out of health—

Mr John Sidoti: It is \$5.2 million. Shame on you.

Ms NOREEN HAY: It is taking \$2 billion out of education, and the member for Drummoyne sits there grinning and whingeing as usual. The Government promised to fix all this. I remind the member for The Entrance, who responded to my interjection, that he promised to fix it and now he is in government he is trying to blame everyone who was here before the last election. The Government should stop cutting money out of education and increase funds for schools. Its attitude to libraries has been well seen: they are not important in the eyes of government members. Libraries in schools are very important to us. I am pleased that the member for Keira continues to lobby to get the money to get the library at Figtree High School sorted out.

Mr John Sidoti: You said you wanted us to fix it.

Ms NOREEN HAY: You promised to fix it and you did not. You blame everyone but yourselves. The Illawarra region is missing out on funding under this Government. The cuts to funding have been across the board—I will give you that: the Government is reducing everyone's entitlements—but it has had 18 months and its cuts to education are a disgrace. Government members should be ashamed of themselves. They should hang their heads in shame. The Government has no planning process. It should deliver the library.

Mr LEE EVANS (Heathcote) [10.20 a.m.]: The member for Wollongong is terribly confused. Figtree High School and the extension of the library are important to the O'Farrell-Stoner Government and are not to be taken lightly. Infrastructure in all schools has been run down over the last 16 months, and I apologise for that. It is an absolute disgrace. Everything has happened in the last 16 months. So far as Figtree High School is concerned, the previous member for Keira—does anyone know who the previous member was? Was it a Coalition member? No, it was not a Coalition member; it was a Labor member.

The Figtree High School upgrade will cost \$1 million. Let me tell the House about a school I was involved with, Endeavour Sports High School. It was identified more than eight years ago for a library extension. Its library is currently 320 square metres. With a school population of over 1,000 students it needs to be 702 square metres. That school has been waiting eight years for an upgrade—so long that the parents and citizens association decided to raise the money and extend the library itself. Let us not make this political, but in seats not held by the Coalition there were upgrades up to your back teeth.

I inform the House of some money that has been flowing from the Public School Upgrade Fund: Corrimal High School in the electorate of Keira, \$18,000; Corrimal Public School, Keira, \$10,000; Corrimal Public School again, \$20,000; Figtree High School, Keira, \$30,000; Gwynneville Public School in the Wollongong electorate, \$40,000; Keira High School, \$32,000; Mount St Thomas Public School, Wollongong, \$10,000; and again Mount Thomas Public School, Wollongong, \$10,000. These are just some of the moneys flowing from the Coalition Government—non-political, across-the-board. We are making sure that schools get upgrades of their facilities, but in good time. All schools have a backlog after the last 16 years and we are catching up with the work that needs to be done.

Hayes Park Public School at Wollongong received \$200,000. Where is the member for Wollongong? Has she departed, done a Harold Holt? The money is flowing. We have been trying to do our best in 16 months and we have been actively working on the projects. Upgrades are coming to all schools in New South Wales. Schools are welcoming the work that has been done and the money that is flowing. I congratulate the O'Farrell Government on recognising the lack of infrastructure in public schools. It is working to fix the deficit. As far as the motion goes, I agree that Figtree High School needs an upgrade and I fully support the call for funding.

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

Motion agreed to.

CRONULLA FISHERIES RESEARCH CENTRE

Mr RYAN PARK (Keira) [10.25 a.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) recognises the work that staff and research professionals do at the Cronulla Fisheries Research Centre;
- (2) notes that there are a number of workers who live in the Keira electorate employed at the centre; and
- (3) calls on the Government to reverse its decision in relation to the closure of the centre.

Unfortunately, the decision to close the Cronulla Fisheries Research Centre was one of the worst decisions by the Government in its early stages. This involves more than just the science and the incredibly important environmental work that the research facility performs at Cronulla. This is a case where a new Minister, inexperienced, not understanding the facilities and infrastructure in her portfolio, has made the decision to close a perfectly good facility, a world-renowned facility, and to relocate it in areas that are not suitable.

Who will this impact? No doubt this is a world-renowned research institution. Both sides recognise the importance of the research carried out by the Cronulla Fisheries Research Centre, not only to the New South Wales and Australian community but to the worldwide community. About a dozen people who work in that centre and live in the electorate of Keira came to see me desperately trying to get a better understanding of why the Minister would do this. There was no commitment about this before the election but she has closed the centre without a single business case to justify the decision.

The Treasurer is present. I am sure the Treasurer very carefully, as all Treasurers do, goes through Cabinet minutes with a fine-tooth comb to see how he can justify decisions. Obviously he was not sitting on the budget committee this day. Someone let him down. We know a bit about this process. It goes like this. The chief of staff will say, "This is all right. Treasury signed off on this." It goes through and then reality hits. Reality hit very badly when it came to the Cronulla Fisheries Research Centre. Government members have openly been outraged by a decision their Government took to close this facility.

Mr Chris Spence: Point of order: As much as I am enjoying the—

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

Mr CHRIS SPENCE: This has nothing to do with the motion. The motion is about Figtree High School.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! There is no point of order.

Mr RYAN PARK: What do I do about that? The member for The Entrance is not from my good friend the Treasurer's faction, so normally I would now spend a lot of time belittling him. But as I am in a reasonably good mood and the Cronulla Fisheries Research Centre is important, I will do the right thing—the conservative forum owes me one. The decision to relocate the Cronulla Fisheries Research Centre has been ill-conceived financially in the outcomes it will deliver for the environment, for the important work of the centre, and also for the lack of consultation with the site workforce. This centre needed to be maintained and, if anything, enhanced. Since the decision was announced the facility has experienced a rapid decline in staff morale because of their huge concern for their work. These passionate professionals and researchers are concerned about their important work in fisheries research and marine environment research generally.

This Government has completely ignored that work and professional advice and made this decision without a business case. That certainly is not how to advocate for the community. I note the presence in the Chamber of the member for Kogarah, someone from whom the lot opposite could learn a little about advocating for their communities. Advocating for one's community does not mean closing down important institutions or centres such as the Cronulla Fisheries Research Centre. Important community institutions not only improve the local environment but also help to drive, create and support local jobs. I again urge the Minister to present the business case to the Treasurer to allow him to run his steely eye over it and to make the important decision to maintain the centre where it belongs, at Cronulla.

Mr CRAIG BAUMANN (Port Stephens—Parliamentary Secretary) [10.32 a.m.]: I appreciate the member for Keira putting this matter on the business paper as it always is good to talk about the fantastic work of NSW Fisheries staff and research professionals. The decision to relocate the Cronulla Fisheries centre of excellence demonstrates the New South Wales Government's pre-election policy commitment to a decade of decentralisation. The centre will be relocated to a number of locations, including Coffs Harbour, Nowra and my electorate of Port Stephens. I believe the member for Coffs Harbour will move an amendment to the motion. The Port Stephens Fisheries Institute boasts one of the largest and most successful aquaculture and aquatic ecosystems research programs in Australia.

Port Stephens Fisheries scientists lead the country in temperate marine fish-breeding research. The institute houses one of three Australian Government hatcheries involved in the breeding program for the iconic southern bluefin tuna. Larvae have been reared to juveniles in a world first under this program, including at Port Stephens. This species has extremely sensitive larval stages, requiring the highest quality water and environmental conditions which, of course, Port Stephens has. In 2009 the southern bluefin tuna breeding program was voted by *TIME* as the second best invention in the world—not too bad for a swamp north of Newcastle. Despite suggestions to the contrary, water quality at Port Stephens Fisheries Institute is of a high standard. Depending on the intended use, water can be used directly through ponds and large tanks, filtered through large sand filters or stored for future use. Through appropriate storage and treatment, sensitive marine species have been held on site for decades.

Port Stephens already has extensive research facilities, which include a mollusc hatchery, for developing and improving hatchery and nursery techniques for Sydney rock, Pacific, pearl and flat oysters, as well as other molluscs, such as pipis; a quarantine mollusc hatchery, which allows research and production of molluscs potentially carrying the QX disease; a marine fish brood stock centre with nursery facilities, and grow-out tanks and ponds for improving methods for hatchery production; and a bass hatchery and other facilities with which people in the gallery would be more familiar than me. There would be no better marine facilities with the scope and flexibility for research and aquaculture production anywhere in New South Wales or Australia than Port Stephens.

I commend the Government for decentralising Fisheries NSW jobs to Port Stephens, especially because my electorate already boasts one of the largest and most successful aquaculture and aquatic ecosystems research programs in Australia. The Port Stephens Fisheries Institute is a valuable player in the Port Stephens economy, providing the region with important jobs and injecting millions of dollars in salaries into the local economy. More than 80 employees are employed at the Port Stephens Research Institute, including the Executive Director of Fisheries NSW, Dr Geoff Allan, and approximately 50 highly qualified scientists and research support staff who specialise in aquaculture and aquatic ecosystems research and aquatic biosecurity. It is great to see some

staff have already moved from Cronulla to Port Stephens. My wife and I moved from Sydney to Port Stephens in 1985, just after we were married. We have since raised three sons in this fantastic environment. Williamtown RAAF base was established during World War II and is one of Australia's most important defence facilities with 3,000 service personnel who, with their families, seamlessly become very much part of the Port Stephens community even though their postings usually are only for two or three years.

The Tomaree Peninsula is also a much sought after retirement destination—the member for Toongabbie knows it well—especially for those forced to live in Sydney for employment, but need I say that property prices are much lower than those in Sydney. For anyone who enjoys coastal living, moving to Port Stephens is a smart choice. Its spectacular beaches, access to services and great community living are just some reasons people have made Port Stephens home. We are only a two-hour drive from Wahroonga, north of Sydney, most of the way by freeway or a 30-minute flight from Sydney into Williamtown. The port is 2½ times the size of Sydney Harbour with a fraction of the boat traffic. Its pristine waters host 140 bottlenose dolphins, and migratory humpback whales are our favourite tourists. We have a clear and clean harbour and the most spectacular beaches.

Port Stephens is a perfect spot for all water sports—our fishing tournaments are world-renowned. We have excellent schools and the University of Newcastle is a world-class educational establishment. And unlike many other coastal towns, our national parks, which we treasure, will ensure that we can never develop much past our present state. I wholeheartedly support the New South Wales Government's decision to relocate commercial fisheries to Port Stephens and other locations. Living in Port Stephens means less time commuting, working and stressing, and more time enjoying a great lifestyle. I look forward to welcoming those staff relocating from Cronulla to Port Stephens. I will make sure they are welcomed by everyone in the community. As I say, we are used to a large RAAF transient population, many of whom eventually will retire to the Port Stephens paradise. I urge everybody to support the amendment that will be moved by my colleague the member for Coffs Harbour.

Ms CHERIE BURTON (Kogarah) [10.39 a.m.]: I support the motion moved by the member for Keira relating to the Cronulla Fisheries Research Centre. What an absolutely disgraceful decision. I will place this on the record despite what members opposite say: There was no need to close the Cronulla Fisheries Research Centre. When Government members were in opposition they made big promises about consulting with the community. But no consultation was involved in the closure of the Cronulla Fisheries Research Centre. Despite protests from people who were losing their jobs in harsh economic times, the Government does not have a care in the world for them. The Minister for Education said that he makes no apology for cutting jobs and those people who lost their jobs at the Cronulla Fisheries Research Centre have not been given any new ones. Earlier in debate on this motion the member for Port Stephens said how wonderful it was that Cronulla was losing jobs.

What about those poor, ineffective Government members opposite? Time and again I have referred to the inability of the member for Oatley to deliver lifts for his electorate. The member for Rockdale cannot deliver a police station for his electorate and now we have heard about the poor member for Cronulla who cannot hold on to the Cronulla Fisheries Research Centre. It is disgraceful that the member for Cronulla is not present in the Chamber. He said that he was a spokesperson for the people and that he would defend them, but we are aware of what he stands for. It is evident to members of the community that the member for Oatley and the member for Rockdale, who initially said he would fight to keep the Cronulla Fisheries Research Centre, are hopeless members who were not able to deliver on their promises. The member for Rockdale cannot even defend his local community. At least the member for Cronulla had the courage to publicly bag the Government for its shocking decision.

Mr Andrew Fraser: Point of order: I draw attention to Standing Order 73. The member for Kogarah is making a personal attack on another member. If she wishes to do so it should be done by way of substantive motion. The member should be discussing the motion before the House and not making personal attacks on other members.

Ms CHERIE BURTON: I am making my introductory comments.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! I remind the member for Kogarah that if she wishes to make a personal attack on another member she should do so by way of a substantive motion. The member for Kogarah will return to the leave of the motion.

Ms CHERIE BURTON: Government members can dish it out but they cannot take it. We saw the red face and the embarrassment when the Minister tried to defend this decision. I do not think the Minister

supported the decision but the puppeteer moved her out to defend a disgraceful decision that meant job losses for Cronulla. The member for Cronulla can proudly say that within two years of representing Cronulla he has presided over job losses in his local area. The community has been let down so many times since the March 2011 election. This is another bottom drawer decision that nobody knew anything about.

[Interruption]

It is my turn. I have listened to the contribution of the windbags opposite. I am making a contribution to debate on this motion.

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

Ms CHERIE BURTON: This is another bottom drawer decision by the O'Farrell Government. Let us look at other bottom drawer decisions that no-one knew anything about. I refer to the \$1.7 billion that has been cut from the Education budget and the \$3 billion that has been cut from the budget of NSW Health. St George hospital, which members opposite proclaim to love so much, will be one of the most disadvantaged hospitals in this State.

Mr Mark Coure: I've delivered.

Mr Andrew Fraser: The member for Kogarah should speak more quietly.

Ms CHERIE BURTON: Government members should not be so sexist and they should mind their own business. I will speak as loudly as I like and members opposite can deal with it.

Mr Mark Coure: You had 16 years to do it and you did nothing.

Ms CHERIE BURTON: This Government has done nothing. It has presided over the worst— *[Time expired.]*

Mr ANDREW FRASER (Coffs Harbour—The Assistant-Speaker) [10.43 a.m.]: I move:

That the motion be amended by leaving out paragraph (3).

What we have heard from Opposition members is that the glass is half empty. For the people of Port Stephens and Coffs Harbour, the closure of the Cronulla Fisheries Research Centre will result in a glass that is overflowing, as 21 jobs will be transferred to Coffs Harbour. Those jobs will not be lost. Despite the rhetoric of Opposition members who said that 90 per cent of fisheries personnel do not wish to move, 41 of them have said that they would like to move. They contacted my office looking for places in preschools and educational facilities on the North Coast.

One of the most magnificent marine research facilities in the world is located in Coffs Harbour. I pay tribute to Professor Christidis and to those researchers at the National Marine Science Centre who will be continuing their research in seven laboratories in the most unique marine environment in Australia—the confluence of hot and cold currents from the north and south. The Solitary Islands Marine Park offers unique opportunities for important research into changing seawater temperatures that will be able to be detected in Coffs Harbour and that will be at the forefront of any changes.

At that magnificent centre at Solitary Islands Marine Park seawater is pumped from Charlesworth Bay for a distance of 100 metres and then it is pumped into the laboratories. The Minister and I visited that centre and discussed the relocation of staff with scientists. An Australian researcher who had conducted research in a renowned facility in Scotland said that the facilities provided to researchers and staff in Coffs Harbour were excellent and, in his opinion, probably the best in the world. Professor Peter Lee, vice-chancellor of the university, offered assistance by way of research and the National Marine Research Centre, the premier research centre in Australia, opened its arms to any staff relocation.

I state jokingly that if I had my way I would relocate those members of staff to Coffs Harbour which I believe has a more pristine waterway than Port Stephens. Aquaculture research at Port Stephens is second to none. We are upgrading an ageing facility that was probably past its use by date and staff members are willing

to move. Forty-one staff members have shown an interest in moving to either Port Stephens or Coffs Harbour and 21 staff members have said that they will be relocating to Coffs Harbour. This great move will help the economy of Coffs Harbour and increase the fisheries research that is done in that area. For those who do not know, 40 per cent of the snapper sold at the Sydney Fish Market is caught in the waters off Coffs Harbour. We must ensure that we have a sustainable and pristine fishery. We are doing marine science a favour by conducting research in those regional areas where the majority of recreational and commercial fishing occurs.

Mr RYAN PARK (Keira) [10.47 a.m.], in reply: I thank members for their lively contributions to debate on this motion. I thank my colleague the member for Kogarah.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! The member for Keira has the call.

Mr RYAN PARK: As a former chief of staff in the Labor Government I can say with some authority that the member for Kogarah is a strong advocate for her community. When Government members have been through and have won four elections they will be in a position to say similar things about their colleagues. The Opposition will divide on this important issue to draw attention to the fact that the Government does not support the Cronulla Fisheries Research Centre. Opposition members want the member for Cronulla to stand up for his constituents and for his community by joining the member for Kogarah, the member for Toongabbie, the member for Mount Druitt and me and voting for an issue of importance to his community and to research in New South Wales. The Opposition will give the member for Cronulla and his colleagues in surrounding areas an opportunity to show that support. We look forward to—indeed, we welcome—the Government's support for the motion.

Question—That the amendment be agreed to—put.

The House divided.

Ayes, 61

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

Noes, 19

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

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Amendment agreed to.

Motion as amended agreed to.

UNITED NATIONS ANTI-POVERTY DAY MORNING TEA

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! I remind members that the United Nations Anti-Poverty Day Morning Tea is now being held in the Speaker's Garden.

LONDONDERRY ELECTORATE ROADS

Mr BART BASSETT (Londonderry) [11.02 a.m.]: I move:

That this House notes:

- (1) notes the recent comments 12 months ago made by the Leader of the Opposition to the *Hawkesbury Gazette* about traffic problems in the North Richmond district;
- (2) condemns the former Government for its failure to provide adequate funding for capital works to address traffic congestion and road works in the Londonderry electorate; and
- (3) acknowledges the recent visit by the Minister for Roads and Ports to the Londonderry electorate to inspect the problems and examine solutions firsthand.

Was it a surprise that only weeks after losing the election the Leader of the Opposition went out to the Hawkesbury to complain about traffic at North Richmond? No, it was not a surprise. Was it a surprise that after years in government whilst the Leader of the Opposition sat in Cabinet, lived at Kurrajong and crossed the North Richmond bridge every day, he did not see the traffic congestion? No—miraculously he was blind to it. He did nothing about it and he put no money into solving the problem. While I was the Mayor of Hawkesbury City the former Labor Government handed down three budgets. I formally wrote to the two Labor members representing the area—John Aquilina and the former member for my electorate Alan Shearan—before the budgets were handed down about work that needed to be done to address the ongoing traffic congestion not just at North Richmond but also at Windsor and in other areas of the Hawkesbury. But did I say, "Get on and do the job"? Did I say, "Just get out and build something straightaway"? No, because I realised the practicalities of getting things done. What I asked for were some plans for the project at North Richmond—some options that the community could look at and decide on. That is happening now.

I am always happy to acknowledge the involvement of other tiers of government in funding—the State cannot do it all, local government cannot do it all and the Federal Government cannot do it all. But because we said that we would look for solutions to the traffic congestion at North Richmond, the Federal Government put in some money that enabled Roads and Maritime Services to do some studies at North Richmond and a full study from Richmond to North Richmond. Those studies are underway and the options are available for public comment. For 8½ years I chaired the Hawkesbury traffic committee. Members of that committee included John Aquilina, a former member for Riverstone, and Allan Shearan, a former member for Londonderry. I always made sure that traffic congestion at North Richmond was minuted and that representatives were present at the meetings. Unfortunately, nothing ever happened. For more than a decade, traffic problems at North Richmond have continued to increase, but nothing has happened. I reiterate that I did not say to the former Labor Government, "Get out there and build it tomorrow"; I just asked for a plan to make it happen.

When Carl Scully was the Minister for Roads, the member for Hawkesbury and I ran a campaign, along with many other people in the community and the councils of Baulkham Hills—now The Hills—and Hawkesbury, to push for an upgrade of Windsor Road. Finally, the Minister accepted that there was a problem and agreed that the upgrade of Windsor Road would not stop at Garfield Road, that it would go through to Windsor. I acknowledged then that even though we had to push very hard to make that happen, the former Labor Government got on with it and did the job. The member for Hawkesbury and I did not say, "It has to be built in a year". We were practical and we said, "Give us a plan. Make sure that the money is in the budget every year so that we can see that Windsor Road will be upgraded", and that is what happened. That was all I asked for in relation to North Richmond, but what we got from the Leader of the Opposition was what was in the *Hawkesbury Gazette*, which is his local newspaper. He lived at Kurrajong—he might still live there—but he did nothing.

The Leader of the Opposition did nothing about the railway system out there, he did nothing about the North Richmond bridge and he left a problem for us to fix. This lack of action reflects what the Leader of the Opposition raised yesterday and the hypocrisy of those opposite, including the member for Canterbury who is now interrupting. Those opposite do not want us to point out what occurred for all those years they were in government, but we will. Yesterday the Opposition highlighted its issues with a plan put forward by Infrastructure NSW. We have a plan. We will fund a plan. The Opposition is critical of that plan and suggests that nothing will happen. The only reason the Opposition thinks nothing will happen is that they assume we think like they do: the Opposition thinks the Government will have a plan, but do nothing. The Opposition thinks we will not fix the finances of the State so that we can afford to build infrastructure. Well, guess what? Members of our community, not the Opposition's mates in the union movement—and the Leader of the Opposition is a mate of the union movement, as is—

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): Order! The member for Canterbury will direct her comments through the Chair.

Mr BART BASSETT: The Opposition does not like this. Their little mate Michael Want—Robbo's mate; they were there as twins—who runs a cosy little community group at North Richmond, came out of the woodwork after the election complaining about our not doing anything. We were six weeks in government and suddenly they wanted a new bridge built. They probably had not been in the area for 16 years but suddenly, bingo, there is a problem. We are getting on with the job and we are going to fix it. We are not going to say to councils, "By the way, you have to put all this housing into your area"—which is what the former Labor Government did to the Hawkesbury—"and it has to be out of the flood plain". Of course, it has to be out of the flood plain; we accept that. We got a plan for a residential strategy, but when we pointed out where the housing would be the former Labor Government said, "Oh gee, you can't build houses there; you need a bridge". We know we need a bridge. The developer will put forward a plan and it will be part of the gateway process.

Mr RICHARD AMERY (Mount Druitt) [11.09 a.m.]: The Opposition opposes this dishonest motion which notes recent statements by the Leader of the Opposition, condemns the former Labor Government for its failure to provide adequate funds for capital works in the Londonderry electorate and acknowledges a visit by the current Minister. The only thing more dishonest than the words in the motion are the words the member for Londonderry said in this House in support of the motion. I think the member for Londonderry takes the cake for the most jaundiced, exaggerated and inaccurate contribution made to this House. In the second paragraph of his motion the member condemns the former Labor Government for its failure to provide adequate funds for capital works to address traffic congestion and roadworks in the Londonderry electorate. The Londonderry electorate is not made up of only North Richmond and the Hawkesbury, it takes in three local government areas, not just the one of which he was the mayor.

The Londonderry electorate also includes Penrith and Blacktown, areas that the member should visit occasionally where he might see that the Labor Government provided tens of millions of dollars worth of traffic and road upgrades in its 16 years. The Labor Government of the 1970s and 1980s also provided tens of millions of dollars. The member for Londonderry said he is surprised by the Leader of the Opposition making some statements in the local press. I suggest the Leader of the Opposition was saying, "We like your talk. Now you do as well as we did." I will give the Government members some dot points. For a start, projects in the Hawkesbury in the Londonderry electorate by the current Government total nil. That is what we have in one column. In the other column the Windsor Road, which the member for Londonderry highlighted, was a multimillion-dollar project funded by the former Government. How does that sit with paragraph 2 of the motion that the former Government did nothing?

Liberal members want to say that the former Government spent tens of millions of dollars only because they campaigned for it. The Liberal members say it happened because they issued some press releases and went on talk-back radio. Do members opposite really think that the Labor Government would build a major arterial road through the north-west of Sydney just because a couple of local councillors and local members issued a press release? Talk about taking the credit. The Windsor Road upgrade and the Old Windsor Road upgrade are substantial projects by the former Labor Government that make a joke of the second paragraph of the motion. The member for Londonderry forgot to mention that the public transport coming out of the north-west is the train to Richmond and Windsor, and the bus system. Have those members ever noticed the priority express bus lanes alongside the Old Windsor Road and other major arterial roads in the area? Who spent that money? It was the former Labor Government. That also does not look good for paragraph 2 of the motion.

The member for Londonderry should withdraw the motion and apologise. The motion seeks to attack the funding we delivered to western Sydney. I inform the member for Londonderry that the Labor Government,

in conjunction with Federal governments, built the biggest arterial road project ever undertaken by a State government in Australia. The program included the Windsor Road upgrade to four lanes between Parramatta and McGraths Hill and the Windsor Road evacuation route, which is a 2.6-kilometre road between Windsor and Mulgrave and along a 1.5-kilometre bridge over South Creek now known as the Jim Anderson Bridge. Do the members for Hawkesbury, Riverstone or Londonderry happen to notice that bridge? Do they happen to see it?

Mr Ray Williams: We do.

Mr RICHARD AMERY: Then how was it funded? One would think it was funded by a chook raffle run by the member for Londonderry. I inform members opposite that it was funded by the former Labor Government. The M7 motorway was a major contribution to the north-west and western suburbs of Sydney; it was a co-project by the Federal Government and the former Labor Government. Have the Hawkesbury members noticed a thing called the Yarramundi Bridge replacing the previous old timber bridge and providing a more secure link? Have they noticed it? Probably they have not. Maybe the Labor Government built it, but members opposite issued a press release. Along the Richmond Road members might have noticed a multimillion-dollar set of traffic lights and duplication of the road at the St Marys Road and Richmond Road intersection at Berkshire Park. The member for Londonderry should recognise that that is in his electorate, but of course if he goes outside the Hawkesbury he gets lost and the blinkers come on.

Traffic lights were also constructed at Dunheved Road and Greenbank Drive East. Have members opposite ever heard of Dunheved Road? Probably they have not. The Bells Line of Road at Little Wheeny Creek was resurfaced at a cost of \$1.8 million. The Hawkesbury Valley Way and the Blacktown Road were also resurfaced, and repairs were undertaken on Londonderry Road from Kenmore Road to Northern Road at a cost of \$2.8 million. Repairs were also undertaken to Cranebrook Road from Church Lane to North Road. What a mealy-mouthed, insignificant and dishonest motion we have before the House. The former Labor Government spent millions of dollars in the Hawkesbury, Londonderry and Riverstone electorates. The member for Londonderry also said we did nothing in relation to railway services. Actually some years ago when I was the member for Riverstone we replaced all of the wooden bridges on the Richmond to Riverstone line.

Mr Clayton Barr: Who is "we"?

Mr RICHARD AMERY: The former Labor Government. Barrie Unsworth was the Minister at the time. We then got the electrification going and put the stanchions up. When the Greiner Government was elected it cancelled the project. If it was not for the Federal Labor Government it never would have been funded. Members opposite must have forgotten that.

Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Hawkesbury—Parliamentary Secretary) [11.16 a.m.]: Mr Assistant-Speaker, you could be mistaken for thinking—

Ms Linda Burney: That you're an idiot.

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): Order! I ask the member for Canterbury to withdraw that remark.

Mr RAY WILLIAMS: It astounds me.

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): Order! I ask the member for Canterbury to withdraw that interjection.

Ms Linda Burney: I withdraw it.

Mr RAY WILLIAMS: I was shaken there for a moment. That comment has offended me no end. It is interesting to note that last night the Leader of the Opposition said he had got rid of the deadwood off the frontbench, but I notice the member for Canterbury is still here. The Leader of the Opposition may have to correct the statement he made last night.

Ms Linda Burney: I request that statement be withdrawn.

Mr RAY WILLIAMS: I do not think it was offensive, I just made a comment. I will continue talking about to the motion at hand. I commend the member for Londonderry for the job he has done not only since

coming to this House as the elected member for that area but also in his previous role as mayor and elected councillor for the Hawkesbury local government area where he was a tireless worker for solutions to the traffic problems in North Richmond. My constituents who live on the western side of the Hawkesbury River have to travel through that problem area every day. The traffic conditions are deplorable. The roads are gridlocked morning and afternoon. That did not happen just in the past 18 months; it has been contributed to by decades of continual development.

However, the former Labor Government enforced that Hawkesbury City Council should undertake to consume growth within its area, including growth on the western side of the Hawkesbury River up to a suggested number of 5,000 additional homes. Whilst the former Labor Government wanted the Hawkesbury local council area to absorb that additional development and to provide homes for the population in that growing region, it did not once put its hand up to say that it would support improvements to traffic management in that area. That is a matter of fact.

The member for Mount Druitt, who preceded me in this debate, referred to all the infrastructure upgrades in every location except the area to which the motion is directed, which is North Richmond. The fact is that the traffic conditions in North Richmond are deplorable. What has the local member of Parliament done? He has worked hard to ensure that whatever development occurs in that area, infrastructure will be upgraded to satisfy the needs of that new development. The upgraded infrastructure not only will satisfy new growth in the area but also will address the current deplorable traffic conditions and reduce problems that currently exist.

The O'Farrell Government has been left with a legacy that will take years to correct. We were left with a \$5.2 billion shortfall when this Government was elected in March 2011, including a \$5 billion reduction in GST revenue over the term of this Government. In other words, this Government is \$10 billion behind. While we recognise that and have reduced expenditure, which was tracking at 6.1 per cent whereas revenue was running at 5 per cent, we have continued with our record infrastructure spend, which will extend to areas of the Hawkesbury and will include improved traffic management around North Richmond and the Windsor area. I am sure that will be discussed in greater detail later today.

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) [11.20 a.m.]: During my contribution to debate on this motion, I will examine parts of the motion moved by the member for Londonderry. The motion states:

That this House:

- (1) notes the recent statements made by the Leader of the Opposition to the Hawkesbury Gazette about traffic problems in the North Richmond District;
- (2) condemns the former Government for its failure to provide adequate funds for capital works to address traffic congestion and road works in the Londonderry electorate; and
- (3) acknowledges the recent visit by the Minister for Roads to the Londonderry electorate to inspect the problems and examine possible solutions firsthand.

I will deal with the second paragraph of the motion in detail. It seems to be a trend with this Government to refer to the 16 years of Labor Government as though nothing ever happened. I state for the record some of the things that happened in western Sydney, particularly around Londonderry, that the member for Londonderry needs to get his head around. First, I refer to the roads around Londonderry and areas of western Sydney—roads that are used by the people of Londonderry. I refer, for example, to Cowpasture Road, Elizabeth Drive, Wallgrove Road and the M7.

Mr Ray Williams: Point of order: The member should confine his remarks to the leave of the motion, which refers to the Londonderry electorate. Cowpasture Road is approximately four electorates away from the Londonderry electorate in a southerly direction. I ask you to direct him to confine his remarks to infrastructure within the Londonderry electorate. He may as well refer to New Zealand and Tasmania.

Mr GUY ZANGARI: To the point of order: I was a minute into my speech and the member for Hawkesbury jumped up. When he does not like something, he jumps to his feet and puffs up his chest.

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): Order! Is the member for Fairfield speaking to the point of order?

Mr GUY ZANGARI: Yes.

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): Order! What is the member's point of order?

Mr GUY ZANGARI: My point of order is that when the member for Hawkesbury has a list of his achievements in government, then he can come and talk to me.

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): Order! Clearly the member's remarks do not relate to a point of order. In accordance with the standing order, I direct the member for Fairfield to confine his remarks to the leave of the motion.

Mr GUY ZANGARI: The former Labor Government has a proud record of roadworks in western Sydney that tie in with the Londonderry electorate. The largest urban arterial road built by any State Government in Australia is the Windsor Road upgrade that resulted in the provision of a four-lane carriageway between Parramatta and McGraths Hill. The member for Hawkesbury knows that. What about the Windsor flood evacuation route? Is that in the Londonderry electorate? Of course it is.

[Interruption]

I am focusing my remarks on the motion, but Government members do not like what I am saying. The member for Hawkesbury referred to the library bill and referred to a lot of books about Labor. I am sure the member for Hawkesbury recalls the debate on the library bill. However, I digress. Let us acknowledge what a great road the M7 is. It was funded jointly by the Federal and State governments. Other projects include construction of the Yarramundi Bridge that replaced the former timber bridge and provided a more secure link, as well as the installation of traffic lights and the duplication of the road at St Marys and Richmond roads intersection at Berkshire Park Road. It does not get any better than that. I do not agree with the second paragraph of the motion. Before the member for Londonderry moves motions, he really should think about what he is committing to writing.

Mr BART BASSETT (Londonderry) [11.24 a.m.], in reply: What an entertaining display we have witnessed from Opposition members. I acknowledge contributions to the debate made by the member for Mount Druitt, the member for Fairfield and of course the member for Hawkesbury. I will begin by addressing issues raised by the member for Mount Druitt. He said that I am not quite sure how to get to other parts of the Londonderry electorate outside Hawkesbury. The Londonderry electorate office is in Werrington in the Werrington railway station complex. I travel through the Londonderry electorate daily to get to work. He referred to the amount of money invested across the Londonderry electorate. An example that comes to mind is the Werrington arterial road. How many times did Labor members grandly announce construction of the Werrington arterial road? It is depressing. A search on Google will reveal how many times that project was announced by Labor Ministers but never delivered.

In contrast to that, the Coalition Government is getting on with the job of constructing the Werrington arterial road. The member for Mulgoa, the member for Penrith, the member for Smithfield and I have inspected the site and can verify that the project is underway. Prior to the 2011 election, the then shadow Minister inspected the site and the current Minister visited all four electorates to which I have referred to inspect the problems. The Werrington arterial serves a number of electorates, including the southern end of the Londonderry electorate. That is something that Labor promised to do but failed to deliver. The member for Fairfield referred to the improvements at the intersection of St Marys Road and Richmond Road. I acknowledge the presence in the Chamber of the member for Riverstone and the member for Hawkesbury, who know how that happened. The council had to put signs up on Richmond Road because of the fatalities that had occurred at that intersection.

A community group formed at Berkshire Park and campaigned; it has no allegiance whatsoever to the Liberal Party. We had to campaign and lobby the former Labor Government to force it to make the project an election commitment in the lead-up to the 2011 State election. That is how it happened. Did the former Labor Government do any other work on Richmond Road? No, it did not. Let us tie in the M7 to the motion by explaining who built the M7 and what was coming for Richmond Road in relation to congestion when the M7 was completed. The Howard Government committed more than \$300 million to the M7, or the Western Orbital as it was known at the time, and the other funding was from private money. The project was not State funded. It was jointly funded by private money and Federal funding from the Howard Government. That is how the M7 was built.

Mr Guy Zangari: And Carl Scully.

Mr BART BASSETT: It was built with no thanks to the State Government.

Mr Richard Amery: The project would not have got up without us.

Mr BART BASSETT: I ask members not to speak badly about Carl. I like him. Let us leave poor old Carl Scully alone. In regard to Richmond Road, the Coalition, for all the years it took to build the M7, knew what was going to happen when it opened—a significant increase in congestion on Richmond Road resulting from the convenience of using the M7 and leaving it at Richmond Road. But did the former Labor Government plan to do anything to Richmond Road, knowing that that would happen? No, it did not. Did the former Labor Government start work to do anything on Richmond Road? No, it did not. Did the former Labor Government have any plans to do any work on Richmond Road? No, it did not.

Over the years the member for Riverstone and I have highlighted the need for roadworks and we are getting on with the job. Currently the Government is upgrading to dual carriageway a section of road from Bells Creek and Richmond Road through to Townsend Road, and putting out to tender for design works from Townsend Road up towards Garfield Road. That is what this Government is doing—getting on with the job. I will conclude my speech by referring to public transport, particularly trains on the Richmond line. For years we were promised air-conditioned trains on that line, but people are still freezing in winter and boiling in summer. From next year, that will no longer be the case. I commend the motion to the House.

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

Motion agreed to.

WINDSOR BRIDGE

Mr BART BASSETT (Londonderry) [11.29 a.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) notes the ongoing planning, consultations and preparation of designs to build a new bridge across the Hawkesbury River at Windsor;
- (2) condemns the former Government for failing to lodge an application to complete the planning requirements; and
- (3) notes plans have now been expedited for work to commence on building the new bridge at Windsor that will assist in alleviating traffic congestion and improving safety for motorists in the electorates of Londonderry, Hawkesbury and Riverstone.

The former Labor Government started the process to replace the Windsor Bridge between 2000 and 2008. It did this because the current bridge needs to be replaced. It is a replacement bridge program. Why? Because the bridge was built in the nineteenth century—in 1874 and rebuilt in the 1890s to increase its height to cater for local flooding. It was abundantly clear that the bridge needed to be replaced. My colleagues in the Chamber today the members for Hawkesbury and the member for Riverstone and I have campaigned for that for a long time. Hawkesbury councillor Bob Porter, who lives at Wilberforce, has also campaigned very hard because of his concerns not only about the condition of the bridge but also its narrowness and the fact that trucks and school buses have to pass on the bridge.

Roads and Maritime Services—the Roads and Traffic Authority at the time—agreed that the bridge needed to be replaced because of safety concerns with a decaying bridge. Some groups in Hawkesbury at the moment are saying that the bridge is okay, that it can be kept and we can build a bypass that will cost who knows how much. Putting a bypass at Windsor would significantly affect the economic viability of many businesses in Windsor. The previous Minister, Mr Borger—who has miraculously found himself on the Western Sydney Chamber of Commerce—told us what we should do with infrastructure. That is funny because I know, internally from Roads and Maritime Services, that that very gentleman—

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Melanie Gibbons): Order! The member for Canterbury will come to order.

Mr BART BASSETT: —the Minister for Roads at the time, told the Roads and Traffic Authority not to proceed with the Windsor Bridge because it was too controversial because of the Greens and some heritage people, and to leave it there as a problem for the new Government to sort out. How has he been rewarded for that? He has been given a position on the Western Sydney Chamber of Commerce. Did the council have a

position on that I hear those opposite ask? Yes. It is a Roads and Maritime Services road and council supported Roads and Maritime Services from the day it presented its designs to us in a briefing. We said we supported it completely. We supported option one, which was the most viable option. We told the previous Government that that was the most viable option. We did not want a gold-plated addition to the area, we did not want money wasted on that, we did not want businesses to be economically affected. Now we have the member for Canterbury running out there carrying on about heritage. It is funny that Labor did not worry about these things when it was in government. It just said that was what it would build, it would consult the community, and it went on and on.

Did the former Government lodge an environmental impact statement? Did it do any boring to see what was required for the bridge pillars? No, none of that. It sounds like a repeat of what happened with the North West Rail Link. It drew a line on a map. When we came to government we found out the former Government was going to build a railway line under an existing arterial road and would have to shut the arterial road at Bella Vista while it built the North West Rail Link. It did not think about where the cars would go for the next five years; it just drew a line on a map. That is what the former Government did with the Windsor Bridge: it drew a line on a map and said that was where it was going. But it became a little too controversial so to keep its Green mates happy it would let the rest of the community suffer. All it was concerned about was Greens preferences. Its Green mate, Councillor Williams, came here, grabbed the Greens representative from the Parliament to go out there and it was decided that the project would do terrible damage to a heritage item, it would destroy Thompson Square.

Let us get the facts straight. A road or an access has run through Thompson Square from back when Lachlan Macquarie declared it. It used to go down to a wharf. Then it went down to the bridge. A road has run through Thompson Square for as long as Thompson Square has existed. We are not going to have a road that carves its way through the middle of Thompson Square; we will have a road that is dropped down to a level so it does not interfere with the heritage houses. It will follow Bridge Street—that must mean there was a bridge there—across the Hawkesbury River at Windsor and join up with the road near Wilberforce leading to Freemans Reach. It will be lowered so it will not affect the existing heritage houses.

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

Mr BART BASSETT: It will improve access during flooding and will allow Thompson Square to be squared up. The road will run down one side. Thompson Square will become a square. Maybe it is not a square; it could be a rectangle. People will have access to this area. Families will be able to enjoy it. It will be bigger. It will be landscaped. The Opposition has been scaremongering, saying a road will go through Thompson Square. Hello: it already does. I think the only time the member for Canterbury has travelled out there is when some of her mates got on the phone and said come out and make a big deal about this. The big deal is that the community wants the bridge fixed. We are sick and tired of the Opposition's games. We are going to build it. The Opposition can make all the noise it likes.

Ms LINDA BURNEY (Canterbury) [11.36 a.m.]: I do not intend to respond to the member for Londonderry's comments, because they are so inaccurate and so pithy they are not worth responding to. I will talk about two issues. First I will refer to the heritage value of Thompson Square and the effects on it from the current Government's proposal. Second I will raise questions about certain members' participation and role in some of the goings-on in relation to the decisions that have been made. The Minister for Roads and Ports on the one hand says the bridge is unsafe but has taken action in regard to B-doubles that flies in the face of that. I put this on the record:

It is likely to have a long-term irrevocable and negative impact on Windsor and the whole of Thompson Square in particular.

This was not me talking about the proposal for the Windsor Bridge replacement; it was the Heritage Council of New South Wales. Even Roads and Maritime Services option number one performed badly in respect of the impact on heritage and the character of Thompson Square and the surrounding heritage buildings. We are not talking about any square; we are talking about the oldest Georgian square in Australia. It was established in 1795. The three members on the government side who are involved in this think it can be trashed and thrown away. That is a major insult to the heritage of colonial Australia. The bridge itself was erected in 1874. We are not arguing that the bridge does not need work; the argument is about the option the Government is supporting and the effect that will have on a piece of heritage that can never be replaced. Let us be very clear what we are talking about.

The chosen option will significantly affect the heritage value of Thompson Square and its precinct, which dates back to 1795. The option those opposite support is not the right option to deal with the bridge issues. A petition of 10,000 signatures regarding this issue will be presented to this place in a few weeks. I hope that on that occasion each of the three members opposite has the guts to face the 10,000 signatories from their communities and not carry on like boys as they are doing today in the Chamber. If they want to be big brave men they should be present on the steps when that petition is delivered. They have said that Community Action for Windsor Bridge [CAWB] is a bunch of greenies who do not have any credibility and do not know what they are talking about. My interaction with that group raised a number of issues about which those members opposite need to be aware regarding the way these decisions have been made.

Community Action for Windsor Bridge asserts that option one is inferior to other proposed Hawkesbury River crossings, such as a sustainable bypass. I do not understand why the bypass option cannot be considered or be part of the discussion—but perhaps I do. The proposed project will impact negatively on the heritage, business and visual amenity of the whole area. I do not deny that the area has suffered long-term traffic issues, but Governor Macquarie would not be happy with this proposal. If Windsor Bridge is so unsafe and needs replacing, as those opposite purport, why has the Government increased its vehicular carrying weight? Those three members opposite should ask that of their Minister. Why has the maximum vehicle load capacity increased from 19-metre 42.5 tonne B-double trucks set in 2008 to 25-metre 60 tonne B-doubles?

If the bridge is in such poor condition why has the Government increased the B-double weight for that bridge? Have any of those three members opposite the answer to that question? Clearly not, and neither did their Minister in the budget estimates hearings. I want an answer to that question. On 27 October 2010 representatives from the Department of Roads, or whatever is its present iteration, visited the member for Hawkesbury, Ray Williams, who at that time was a member of the Opposition. I have never heard of two middle-level bureaucrats doing such an unusual thing.

Mr Ray Williams: Would you like their names?

Ms LINDA BURNEY: I am interested to know the purpose of the meeting, the outcomes and whether any minutes were taken. Do not worry; I have their names. Two then Opposition members also were councillors who favour this option. My questions require answers. The three important issues of this motion are the heritage value of Thompson Square, the reason this option was chosen and the true roles of the three Government members to whom I have referred.

Mr KEVIN CONOLLY (Riverstone) [11.43 a.m.]: Thompson Square is important and its heritage is significant. The proposal will affect this important precinct, so it must be looked after carefully. This proposal will enhance the heritage of Thompson Square and improve the status quo. Currently Thompson Square is a triangle with a cutting through the middle, which distorts and destroys the original square as it would have been known back in the late 1790s. The unfortunate decision to put in the road cutting was made in the 1930s. We now have a historic opportunity to remove it and restore the square to its original shape and move the traffic from the middle of the square down along one side following the alignment of Bridge Street, which was the traditional access to the bridge. Heritage is important and I believe the impacts of this proposal are a net benefit and not at all negative. Unfortunately, the Heritage Council of NSW assessed something that was not proposed. The quote read by the member for Canterbury was based on misinformation provided to the council about a proposal for a four-lane road. As no such thing is proposed for Thompson Square, the Heritage Council's assessment is meaningless: its comments were about a proposal that nobody has ever put forward.

Ms Linda Burney: That is not true.

Mr KEVIN CONOLLY: It is true. The member can check if she likes. Roads and Maritime Services, or the Roads and Traffic Authority, has never proposed a four-lane road through Thompson Square. I will now comment on a recent proposal for a bypass by an associate entity not related to the Community Action for Windsor Bridge group. Roads and Maritime Services did not propose this option; it was floated by another body recently. The bypass proposal is to extend the road south from the Wilberforce Road junction with Freemans Reach Road across Rickabys Creek to join Hawkesbury Valley Way. That involves a distance of 1.9 kilometres compared with the option one length of about 250 metres if it were constructed on the traditional alignment. The proposal is to increase the length of the crossing from 250 metres to 1.9 kilometres. The contours of the land proposed to accommodate this new bypass will mean that the majority will be significantly lower than nine metres Australian height datum [AHD].

If the bypass achieved the same flood immunity as achieved by option one, that is, 11 metres Australian height datum, representing about a one-in-five annual recurrence index, I estimate that a viaduct between 750 metres and one kilometre long would be needed. Certainly, the proposal involves two bridge crossings, one over the main river and one over Rickabys Creek, with viaducts and bridge between 750 metres and one kilometre in length. The realistic cost of that option is somewhere between \$150 million and \$200 million, compared with the \$45 million for option one, which sensitively addresses the heritage concerns, realigns the square, removes the cutting, increases the amount of green space and does nothing to impact negatively on Thompson Square. Some people say the proposal will impact badly on Thompson Square. What is wrong with option one?

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Melanie Gibbons): Order! The member for Canterbury will come to order.

Mr KEVIN CONOLLY: What impacts from option one are people concerned about? No buildings will be damaged. The road alignment through Thompson Square will be reduced. Thompson Square has two roads running through it: the cutting and Bridge Street. The new alignment will focus on one road and the bitumen coverage through the square will be smaller than currently exists.

Mr RICHARD AMERY (Mount Druitt) [11.47 a.m.]: I join the Deputy Leader of the Opposition in opposing the motion. This motion raises the question of what a difference an election makes to some people's views on this issue, particularly the mover of the motion.

Mr Kevin Conolly: On that side.

Mr RICHARD AMERY: No, particularly the member for Hawkesbury, who always said, "Let's build this bridge immediately" without taking into consideration any environmental concerns. It should be no surprise to anybody that the Labor Party, Labor members in this Parliament or in the public domain fight to preserve heritage. Those sorts of fights run through Labor's history. After hearing the comments of Government members about the impact of heavy traffic on this site I would not be more surprised if they said B-doubles would be good for The Rocks. In preserving this State's heritage Labor governments, other political parties and community groups always have to resist the work of Coalition governments. The previous Government, condemned by the mover of this motion, embarked on a process of planning, consultation and design. However, the proposal favoured by the member for Londonderry and his Hawkesbury City Council will severely impact on Thompson Square.

This is not just a view of some Opposition members on the council or some green groups; the Heritage Council has also expressed concern about that—the Heritage Council that has been criticised as meaningless in relation to this particular issue. I recall driving in to Parliament with the former member for Londonderry, who said he had called upon this current member in his capacity as the mayor to seek support from the council's historical committee to keep the bridge. Unfortunately, there has been no response from that committee. What is the status of the council's historical committee in relation to Thompson Square? Again it is something left unsaid in relation to this matter. It is clear that many residents do not want the proposed new bridge to impact on Thompson Square and have formed an active local group called Community Action for Windsor Bridge. It is a hardworking group that will bring a more than 10,000 signature petition to this place, but it is derided by the three members who represent that part of the State.

We all know the bridge we are talking about, the Windsor Bridge, is old and narrow and cannot deal with the heavy traffic volume in that area. If there is a way to build a new bridge that will improve traffic congestion without damaging the sensitive heritage of the historic town of Windsor it should be done. Towns such as Windsor and Richmond and the Hawkesbury should be proud of their heritage. The origins of Thompson Square go back to only a few years after the First Fleet arrived, yet those opposite want to run heavy trucks through it. Surely there is enough room in the area to resolve the issue in a way that will protect Thompson Square and provide a bridge. With the river, the township and land space surely a better solution can be found than the jackboot style of policy that is coming from Coalition members. The Coalition wants to destroy a heritage site that has been in existence since European settlement in this country.

Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Hawkesbury—Parliamentary Secretary) [11.51 a.m.]: I will place three very important facts on the table. Who proposed to upgrade the current Windsor bridge? Answer: The former Australian Labor Party State Government. Who proposed to upgrade the Windsor bridge in the current corridor with option one? Answer: The former Australian Labor Party State Government. Who was on the front page of

the *Hawkesbury Gazette* proposing to have the new bridge under construction by 2009? Answer: The former member for Riverstone and the Leader of the House and part of the former Australian Labor Party State Government.

The option for a bridge decided by a former Government has been proceeded with by this Government. Why? Because we need this important piece of infrastructure on behalf of our region. We need an upgraded bridge. Let me place on the record information about the structural integrity of the current bridge. As the member for Canterbury correctly said, the bridge was constructed in 1876. It is a century and 36 years old and is deteriorating. It needs to be replaced. The bridge will be removed because of its deteriorating condition. The proposal will be actioned by this responsible Government.

I return to an item that the member for Canterbury commented on earlier. In 2008 bureaucrats from the Roads and Traffic Authority, now Roads and Maritime Services, came to see me. In 2011, after the last State election, the same bureaucrats came to see me in my office to discuss the same things that they discussed with me in 2008. The newly elected Liberal members for Riverstone and Londonderry—this speaks volumes—were also there. In 2008 those bureaucrats said to me, and I place on the record again, that the bridge would be started in 2009. I asked that bureaucrat mentioned by the member for Canterbury, "Why didn't you start the bridge?" He said to me, "I was hoping you wouldn't ask me that question." That speaks volumes about the previous regime and bureaucracy.

A very important and pertinent point is that Windsor, as the second oldest European settlement in this country, has some of the most valuable and unique heritage aspects in its centre. There is not one member in this Parliament that would jeopardise or diminish any of that heritage nature. Option one will not diminish them. The Historic Society and the Heritage Council have proposed that the piece of road from the roundabout at Bridge Street and George Street down to the beginning of the bridge be heritage listed. It was designed and constructed in 1934. As the member for Canterbury said, Thompson Square dates back to 1795 and was proclaimed by Governor Macquarie in 1812. If we are talking about heritage value, would it not be better to preserve Thompson Square the way it was constructed in 1795 and proclaimed in 1812 by Governor Lachlan Macquarie by putting in place option one, which will preserve heritage value and provide a great transport and infrastructure outcome for the Hawkesbury?

Mr BART BASSETT (Londonderry) [11.55 a.m.], in reply: I thank the member for Canterbury, the member for Riverstone, the member for Mount Druitt and the member for Hawkesbury for their contributions. The member for Canterbury referred to the carrying capacity of the bridge. I am happy to look into that. Since the March election the speed limit on the Windsor Bridge has been reduced to 40 kilometres an hour. In discussions with Roads and Maritime Services we have looked at the dynamic loads of B-doubles and other trucks. The load is spread across the number of wheels on the road. The bridge is able to withstand the dynamic load as it is spread over a greater area.

The speed has been reduced because of the narrowness of the bridge and because those dynamic loads are affected by speed. We have taken into account the speed limit on the bridge, how the bridge is used, tare loads and what sorts of vehicles use it. We want to enhance and improve Thompson Square, and that is what we are doing. Would it not be good if just for once people actually focused on an outcome rather than saying that there is something wrong with whatever proposal is put forward? Someone always has an alternative proposal, such as the one the then member for Riverstone put forward from the local group against this project. It is 1.9 kilometres long.

In view of the Windsor flood evacuation route and its length and cost—\$140 million—it is ridiculous to think that the alternative could be built for the money that group is saying it could be built for. The Government would be more than happy to have the group put forward ideas on design of the concrete for the bridge or the sorts of railings that will make it blend nicely with the Windsor township—as has happened in other areas—instead of building the bridge somewhere else or keeping the current bridge. Members on the opposition benches have said that the bridge is narrow, so we need to address that, and a bypass would be good.

They talk about a bypass and then they say we need to save the old bridge. It is impractical to save the old bridge. The old-style pylons are rusting out. Rebuilding the old bridge in its current location would require closing the bridge for 18 months or two years, with the resultant traffic congestion in North Richmond. If that is done you may as well shut the Hawkesbury down for two years. It is an impractical use of money and would destroy the economy of the Hawkesbury. Why not be practical and focus on good outcomes, how the bridge can

be designed, what the landscaping and style of the open space will be, how it can be enhanced and what economic benefits can come to the businesses of Windsor? There would be no economic benefit to Windsor from putting in a bypass.

People have said that other towns have been revived following the construction of a bypass. It has taken years and years for that to happen. Windsor struggles already and the construction of a bypass would mean that one could kiss the town goodbye. We want to support Windsor and the Hawkesbury. Hawkesbury City Council has always supported option one, I have always supported option one and the member for Riverstone has always supported option one—so option one it is.

Question—That the motion be agreed to—put.

The House divided.

Ayes, 56

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

Noes, 17

Mr Barr	Mr Hoenig	Mr Rees
Ms Burney	Ms Hornery	Ms Watson
Ms Burton	Mr Lynch	Mr Zangari
Mr Daley	Dr McDonald	<i>Tellers,</i>
Mr Furolo	Ms Mihailuk	Mr Amery
Ms Hay	Mrs Perry	Mr Park

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Motion agreed to.

HUNTER CRIME

Ms SONIA HORNERY (Wallsend) [12.10 p.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) notes recent crime figures of the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research that identify an increase in thefts from vehicles and fraud;
- (2) notes that the figures for the Hunter are consistent with State figures; and
- (3) calls on the Government for increased Hunter region police to respond to the increase in theft from vehicles and fraud in the region.

It is with great concern that I inform the House that in 2011 theft and fraud in the Hunter region dramatically increased. This deplorable phenomenon has expanded and now includes other forms of crime. The NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research established in its June 2012 quarterly report that there had been an increase in theft from motor vehicles and that, rather significantly for the Hunter, there had been a notable increase in robberies with a weapon of a colossal 49.5 per cent. Tangible evidence of this latest statistic is demonstrated by the Hunter's armed robbery tally appallingly reaching triple figures as at 3 September.

The 100th incident was the forty-second armed robbery in the Newcastle City Local Area Command this year alone, which is higher than last year's total of 33 armed robberies. Violent crimes are occurring at a rate of one every 2½ days in the Hunter, yet the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, and Minister for the Hunter is refusing to implement additional protective measures. Rather than enhance our defence against these perpetrators, those opposite are determined to slash police resources and diminish safety in the community. Last month three employees were bound hand and foot at Lambton Bowling Club after armed robbers smashed their way into the premises with metal bars. Another incident involved four men who stormed into Windale Bowling Club wielding knives, batons and a crowbar and tied up five employees before robbing the safe and the possessions of one of the victims.

The frequency of these horrifying acts demands a prompt increase in police who can patrol areas and respond to crime. However, it appears that the O'Farrell Government and the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, and Minister for the Hunter have other ideas in mind. The September intake of students at Goulburn Police Academy was cancelled, which means there will now be 300 fewer police officers on the streets. In addition, Newcastle City Local Area Command had 21 permanent officers transferred to Highway Patrol and the new Transport Command. As a result of these blatant cost-cutting measures there will now be 321 fewer police officers on the streets patrolling local suburbs and protecting innocent civilians from aggressive crime.

Increasing police numbers is vital as high-visibility officers simultaneously increase community confidence and act as deterrents of crime. Placing officers conspicuously in notable areas of criminal activity means perpetrators are more likely to be caught or they will alter their behaviour in accordance with the law. The statistics prove that violent crime has increased dramatically since 2011, so the decision to reduce the number of officers who can conduct these patrols or respond to crime in a timely manner within the community is absurd. It is simply not good enough to continue to ignore these repeated offences in our community. If those opposite had any concern for the wellbeing of constituents in the Hunter they would increase police resources in the area.

The crime manager at Newcastle City Local Area Command, Detective Inspector Graeme Parker, has stated that police are struggling with the serious increase in armed robberies. It is clear that the police are underresourced. The illogical decision to decrease the number of police who can respond to crime is certainly not going to alleviate the situation. Recently the Police Association said that many commands in the Hunter are still underresourced even though the Parsons report recognised the need to increase police numbers in the region. Lack of police and escalating crime are matters of serious concern to those in the business and wider community who fear for their safety and security.

On 7 June 2012 I held a crime forum targeting elderly members of my electorate. The forum gave constituents an opportunity to voice their concerns about the state of crime and to offer valuable observations and insights in an open arena. A remarkable number of residents want more police in the vicinity, and there is particular concern about the lack of police in Wallsend. One constituent raised the importance of suburban policing, which enables officers to become more familiar with local communities and their issues. I entirely agree with that because local stations allow the police and the community to engage better with one another.

Undeniably, police numbers need to increase in the Hunter, although the relevance of building a police station in the western suburbs is palpable. Time and again I have petitioned and lobbied for a police station in the vicinity of Wallsend in response to repeated requests from the community. Unfortunately, the community's wishes have fallen on deaf ears and will continue to be ignored by those opposite. These escalating occurrences of violent crime need to be promptly responded to by the O'Farrell Government. How can business owners and staff feel comfortable knowing that they may be next in line to be attacked? How can our communities feel safe knowing police numbers on the frontline have been slashed?

We need to ensure that police are resourced sufficiently to prevent and respond to crime within the community. In addition, we need to increase high-visibility police patrols to prevent crime occurring. I commend the hardworking Hunter police for their efforts in combating crime, but it is clear that they are

underresourced in their battle against these violent perpetrators. Ample resources need to be provided so that the police can demonstrate to offenders that they cannot terrorise innocent civilians and escape punishment, which is a notion I hope the O'Farrell Government and the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, and Minister for the Hunter can comprehend and respond to effectively.

Mr GARRY EDWARDS (Swansea) [12.17 p.m.]: I thank my friend the member for Wallsend for bringing this motion to the attention of the House. The most recent report of the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research is the New South Wales Recorded Crime Statistics Quarterly Update June 2012. Unfortunately, it was found that across the State, steal from motor vehicle offences have increased by 5.47 per cent and fraud has increased by 5.2 per cent. However, it is important to note that in both Newcastle and the Hunter generally over the 24 months to June this year those two offences were stable. Statewide the most commonly stolen items from motor vehicles are numberplates. In addition, recorded service station frauds accounted for more than one-third of the fraud offences.

For the benefit of members I will outline some of the reasons why we have seen these offences increase statewide, although not across the Hunter and Newcastle specifically. Anyone who drives on the road is conscious of the price of petrol; it changes constantly and at times it increases. When petrol prices increase petrol theft increases. Those people who premeditate the theft of petrol often use stolen numberplates to disguise the ownership of the vehicle they are filling with petrol. Across the community we face higher petrol prices and that means the incidences of numberplates being stolen from motor vehicles and the amount of petrol fraud committed increase. But that does not mean we should accept this crime—quite the opposite. This Government is introducing a number of initiatives aimed at stopping petrol theft.

At the outset it is important to note that each and every report of petrol theft is investigated by police and overseen by the Fraud and Cyber Crimes Squad. It was an initiative of this Government to trial the Fail to Pay for Fuel project. The main difference with this trial and the traditional method of reporting petrol theft is that all service stations in the trial area will obtain a form from the internet, complete it and fax it to police. The new system has initially been trialled in five local area commands including Port Stephens in the Hunter. When a report is received police conduct an initial assessment, including whether the vehicle is stolen, and the investigation is progressed based on the evidence available. I am advised the results of the trial have been positive, with some procedures being modified in response to feedback and with police continuing to assess its future progress.

In addition to this project, local area commands conduct both covert and overt operations around petrol outlets to target offenders. This includes the use of automatic numberplate recognition, which allows the police to detect stolen numberplates which are used to deal fraudulently in petrol. The Liberal-Nationals Government is working closely with service station owners to develop workable crime prevention strategies to reduce this type of offending in the first place, such as the distribution and fitting of anti-theft numberplate screws. The NSW Police Force internet site also includes information and advice for service station operators on how to prevent fail-to-pay incidents. The advice includes what to look for, such as customers attempting to conceal their identity with hats and sunglasses, drivers remaining in the vehicle while passengers use the pump, or concealed, altered or missing numberplates. There also is information on what service station operators can do when they suspect someone may be planning to steal petrol and what to do if a fail-to-pay incident occurs. Service station operators should not be afraid to request prepayment where suspicion exists. The prepayment method is particularly encouraged after dark.

This is only part of the strategy that the New South Wales Government has implemented to stop petrol theft. It has developed also a comprehensive crime prevention strategy to stop stealing from motor vehicles. Stealing from vehicles is a crime committed by professional thieves and petty criminals. We know that offenders target vehicles in high-risk locations and that stealing happens in some places more than others. The strategy to prevent stealing from vehicles in New South Wales aims to reduce stealing from vehicle offences by focusing law enforcement and prevention efforts in hotspots in 12 local government areas. The measures included in the strategy are designed to make it harder to remove items from vehicles and decrease the vulnerability of specific locations to theft. These measures are prevention-focused and will complement the existing law enforcement activities of the NSW Police Force, which primarily are concerned with intelligence gathering and offender apprehension. The police will continue to work hard not only to prevent petrol theft but also to develop new and effective investigation methods and bring the culprits to justice.

I also note that in my local area command of Lake Macquarie the \$21.5 million which was mooted by the previous Labor Government to establish a single command centre at Glendale has changed under this

Government. For that same \$21.5 million we will now have three stations. We have one at Belmont, we will have one at Morisset and we will have one at Toronto. In addition, 22 additional full-time constables have been appointed in Lake Macquarie alone since the Government came to power in March last year. I will now digress for a moment. On 4 August last year I led the Government's debate on the carbon tax. In recent times petrol prices have increased by approximately 20¢ a litre. Did that price increase come as a result of the devaluation of the Australian dollar, a massive increase in wages or increases in the price of oil? I think not. I refer to my warnings to this House on 4 August last year. We can blame increased petrol prices directly on the Federal Labor Government's carbon tax.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Melanie Gibbons): Order! The member's time has expired. I call the member for Toongabbie.

Mr Andrew Constance: Tell the truth at ICAC.

Mr NATHAN REES (Toongabbie) [12.24 p.m.]: I note the member's interjection and leave him under no illusion that I will do anything other than that—at length. I support the motion of the member for Wallsend concerning theft and fraud in the Hunter region. The member for Wallsend is a tireless advocate for her area. She acts without fear or favour regardless of who is in government. She is a committed worker for her community across a number of issues and her energy and commitment to causes in her region is rivalled by very few. Crime in the Hunter is a microcosm of crime in New South Wales. The Government inherited 17 out of 17 crime categories that were either stable or falling. In 18 short months rates of crime in five of those categories are now increasing: to wit, domestic violence, cattle rustling—

Mr Tim Owen: Cattle rustling?

Mr NATHAN REES: Members opposite may laugh but it matters to their Nationals colleagues. The member for Newcastle is something of a political xylophone—he sounds terrific but he is not essential to the orchestra. Cattle rustling rates are up, as are methamphetamine manufacture and distribution. Five categories of crime rates are up from those that the Government inherited 18 short months ago. The most critical category is obviously the shootings in western and south-western Sydney. In the Hunter there are too many thefts and frauds. There also are insufficient police numbers. The Government has refused to increase police resources in the Hunter area. Instead it has left local area commands across New South Wales some 300 police officers short of authorised strength numbers.

The Government has fiddled the definition of authorised strengths so that the 16,000 or so authorised numbers for recruitment across New South Wales becomes a maximum figure rather than a constant figure. When Labor was in government it employed in excess of the authorised figure to ensure that when officers were on leave, on training, on holidays or were injured at work the numbers of police on the beat preventing and solving crimes met the authorised strength number. Instead, in a cynical cost-cutting exercise this Government has changed the definition of authorised strength, which means that our communities are less safe. We will soon receive the long-awaited government response to the Parsons report.

If the rumours are correct it will halve the number of local area commands, smashing the career structures for police officers across New South Wales and putting communities in danger through an opaque reporting mechanism that will not allow individuals in the community to determine how many police officers are serving their streets, schools and homes. In the recent past this Government has seen not only increases in the incidence of crime in the Hunter, in particular fraud and theft, but also increases in five of the 17 key crime categories. There is now havoc in the Police Integrity Commission and among police officers. They have been at war with each other, as have the various oversight bodies. The top echelons of the NSW Police Force are now in open combat over Operation Emblems. This State used to have the best resourced and most effective police force anywhere in the world. In 18 short months members opposite have managed to burn that to the ground. The statistics speak for themselves.

Mr Andrew Constance: Point of order: If the member wants to mislead the House I remind him that the member for Newcastle might be a political xylophone but the member for Toongabbie is a political violin. I continue to hear him screeching and whining.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! There is no point of order.

Mr TIM OWEN (Newcastle) [12.28 p.m.]: I do not think I have ever heard such rubbish from the good ship *Titanic*. I endorse the comments of my colleague the member for Swansea. Since March last year the

New South Wales Government has continued to show its commitment to improving police numbers and resources in the Hunter. We have delivered 28 probationary constables for the Lake Macquarie Local Area Command, 16 for the central Hunter, 30 for the city of Newcastle and 17 for Port Stephens—the highest numbers ever. Where does this rubbish come from about this Government not committing to the Hunter or to Newcastle? Labor members cannot continue to mislead their electorates.

As a result of the commitment of the Government and the Police Force, the most recent operational strength figures show that the authorised strength of the Central Hunter Local Area Command was 99 per cent, for Lake Macquarie it was 102 per cent, for Newcastle City it was 98 per cent, and for Port Stephens it was 98 per cent. The Government is continuing to move probationary constables to those areas to surpass the authorised strength. We also have committed to major upgrades of police stations across the Lake Macquarie Local Area Command. As the member for Swansea stated, this Government is providing more than \$21.5 million to construct and rebuild a total of three police stations, one each at Belmont, Toronto and Morisset. This Government has done exactly what local area police commands have asked it to do.

This Government is not doing something that is ideologically driven or that we believe is politically convenient. This Government is doing what the operational commanders on the ground have requested it to do. That is exactly why \$21.5 million was moved from one central command to re-establish, regenerate and reinvigorate three local area command police stations. We know that stealing is a significant issue facing our community—there is no argument about that—but it is important to note that although in the Hunter region there were 5,900 incidents of stealing from motor vehicles in the 12 months to June this year, in Newcastle and the Hunter over a two-year period, the statistics relating to this offence are stable. Stolen numberplates often are used in a range of criminal incidents, including fuel theft and robbery, as my colleague from Swansea articulated. The Government knows that is a problem, but is doing a lot to prevent it, as the member for Swansea said.

This Government does not just sit back and watch the crime rates increase; it tackles them head-on, as I have mentioned. Police in the Hunter region have been working hard to prevent that type of crime from occurring. Police are proactively patrolling in car parks, particularly around our beaches and shopping centres. There also has been a real focus by the police on patrolling train station parking areas and other high-risk areas with the aim of preventing cars being broken into and increased numberplate theft. Local area commands in areas such as the Hunter work closely with local councils to audit high-risk areas and implement crime prevention through environmental design principles such as increased lighting in problematic areas. Another initiative that has been pursued is the distribution to members of the public of anti-theft screws.

The screws make it much more difficult for thieves to simply take a numberplate and use it to steal petrol. It is important for service station owners to do their part in preventing petrol theft. Police advise that service station operators should always look carefully at every customer and check for suspicious signs and behaviour prior to authorising operation of the pump. Service station owners and managers also need to be prepared to provide police with the assistance they need to investigate and prepare their report, including producing evidence such as closed-circuit television footage and sworn statements from appropriate staff. I congratulate the NSW Police Force and the Government on all they are doing to prevent petrol theft and the theft of numberplates, and for driving crime rates down across the Hunter region.

Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) [12.32 p.m.]: I welcome the motion moved by the member for Wallsend. It is with some bemusement that I participate in a debate that has referred to xylophones and violins in the context of crime. Nevertheless, it is important to note that a former Premier and current shadow Minister for Police, who is also the member for Toongabbie, referred to the fact that when the former Labor Government left office, it had achieved a decrease in 17 out of 17 crime rates, but that is certainly no longer the case. I thank the NSW Police Force and recognise all the work its members do. They do the jobs that many of us would not necessarily want to do, and hope that we never have to do, and they apply themselves to their work with great gusto. It is our responsibility as members of this House to speak not about how hard they work—we all agree how incredibly hard they work—but also to discuss the resources we offer them.

I appreciate the point made by members on both sides of the Chamber that our Police Force numbers and strength in the Hunter are quite good at the moment. However, that begs the question about why we would have increasing crime rates and whether more needs to be done. I would always hope that we do a little bit more in terms of police resourcing. Not a day goes by that some type of theft or fraud is not reported in the local media. Unfortunately, in the past week Cessnock has been a hotspot. There were ramraids on the Newcastle Permanent Building Society and an IGA supermarket. A woman who was stealing and breaking into cars just

around the corner from my house was arrested, which is good news. When members of the community assist the police, the news gets better and better. Theft from cars, homes and businesses as well as public areas, in particular schools, is another problem for my community. I hear frequently from my schools about theft that has been occurring in their areas. As the member for Newcastle mentioned, sometimes crime rates are about safety and security by design. There are still a large number of schools in my electorate that need large security fences, which seem to do so much good in the prevention of crime.

However, whatever is stolen needs to be replaced by the owners. If the stolen items are from schools and are public property, all New South Wales taxpayers bear the cost. Even people who do not pay taxes in New South Wales pay the cost because there are fewer resources available for them. Whenever we can reduce or prevent crime, we will be all the better for it. There have been too many incidences of carjacking. Sometimes those offences occur when children are still inside the vehicle. People commit that type of crime because they are obviously in a desperate state and they have a sense of entitlement to take from hardworking and good people in our society, just because they feel their needs rank a little bit higher than those of others. Because so much already has been said about the budget, I make the point that while it may seem to be a strange topic in a debate about crime, the budget is historically where governments bother to record crime rates and show some crime indicators.

The first budget of this new Government included reports of incidences of personal crime, not including domestic violence, property crime, alcohol-fuelled non-domestic violence, and indicators of the numbers of people who consider speeding cars to be dangerous, people who consider graffiti and vandalism in their neighbourhood to be a problem, people who consider louts or gangs to be a problem, people who consider drunken and disorderly behaviour to be a problem, and even the number of break and enter fingerprint incidents that are examined. That is usually recorded in the budget, but all that reporting has ceased under this Government. The Government will not bother reporting on that anymore because it is just too hard. In last year's budget, the figures showed that each category of indicators would increase, which is a problem for this Government and the Minister. We need to be better at this. I thank very much the police officers of New South Wales, who work so hard at addressing the incidences of crime.

Ms SONIA HORNERY (Wallsend) [12.36 p.m.], in reply: I thank members who have contributed to this debate—the member for Swansea, the member for Toongabbie, the member for Newcastle and the member for Cessnock. I thank the member for Swansea particularly for his erudite speech, which I would expect from him, although I must admit to being a bit confused. He referred to the carbon tax. It seems that if the price of lemons goes up these days, it is because of the carbon tax. According to the member for Swansea, the reason for the big increase in armed robberies in the Hunter—117 incidences—is the carbon tax. It is all the fault of the carbon tax. I do not think the community would recognise and acknowledge that the reason for the increase in the incidence of armed robberies in the Hunter is the carbon tax. The member for Swansea referred to prevention strategies and I totally agree with his very wise suggestions.

However, the problem in the Hunter is that the police are so underresourced that they do not have time to respond to crime in the area. When they respond to crime, statistics show that response times have worsened. That is an important issue. The member for Swansea and the member for Newcastle also spoke glowingly about the \$21.5 million for the refurbishment of Belmont, Morisset and Toronto police stations. I support and will continue to support upgrading those buildings. However, I am concerned that the commitment by the Minister for Police and Emergency Services initially was to build a new police station at Glendale—an area that does not have a police station anywhere near it. The Minister has back-pedalled on that promise, and now a police station will not be constructed in that area at all. From one end of my electorate, in New Lambton, to the Lake Macquarie area of Argenton and Cockle Creek, we do not have a police station, thanks to this conservative Government.

Obviously the member for Toongabbie is an expert on police issues. He said that the Hunter is a microcosm of New South Wales. He said there were increases at the moment in five crime categories, which is a worry, but he boiled it down in the Hunter to there being too many thefts, too many frauds and insufficient resources, which I thought was a very good summary. He mentioned that the Government response to the Parsons report will be released soon. I note that Parsons suggested we need more local police stations and an increase in high-visibility policing, something we are not getting in the Hunter at the moment. We do not have a police station in the entire Wallsend electorate. People who live in Lake Macquarie and Newcastle, both of which are on the fringes of the local area command, have response times that are not acceptable.

The member for Newcastle claimed that my issues and the community issues were rubbish, that there was not a problem in the Hunter; that the Government was delivering well and that the Opposition is misleading

the community about response times and increases in theft and fraud. I inform the member for Newcastle that statistics belie what he said. Statistics show that theft and fraud have increased in the Hunter in the past year, and that is something we all need to pay attention to—particularly the Government. I thank the member for Cessnock for his normal articulate response. Like him, all of us on this side of the House recognise and thank the police for the incredible job they do.

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

Motion agreed to.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Postponement of Business

General Business Notice of Motion (General Notice) No. 628 called on and postponed, by leave, on behalf of Ms Linda Burney.

LUCAS GARDENS SCHOOL HYDROTHERAPY POOL

Mr JOHN SIDOTI (Drummoyne) [12.42 p.m.]: I move:

That this House

- (1) congratulates the Government on the grant of \$300,000 to the Lucas Gardens School for a hydrotherapy pool; and
- (2) congratulates the Assistant Principal, Jo-Anne Gardiner, Friends of Lucas, the City of Canada Bay Council and Communities for Communities for their tireless work in contributing to the \$800,000 total cost of the pool.

In November last year, I reported to this place that the Government had committed \$300,000 toward the building of a hydrotherapy pool at Lucas Gardens School in Canada Bay, which is in my electorate. This was very welcome news at the time and it appeared the construction of the pool would be imminent with large contributions from the local community. At that time the various community groups and Canada Bay council had contributed an impressive \$600,000 to the project. The newly appointed principal, Ms Jenny Zagas, is continuing to raise money and informs me that the cost of the pool has increased to \$1.2 million. Unfortunately, construction cannot commence until all the money is raised.

This is an important facility, not only for the school but also for the entire area. To my knowledge, there is no hydrotherapy pool in the inner-west area and there is a huge demand for such a facility. For the students at Lucas Gardens, a hydrotherapy pool would make an enormous difference to their educational experience. The building of a hydrotherapy pool has been a dream of the school community for the past six years. We all know that hydrotherapy is a method of treating disease that dates back to the ancient Greeks and Romans. The mechanical and thermal effects of hydrotherapy improve the range of movements, thereby improving mobility. The buoyancy provided by aquatic exercise also reduces the pain associated with some of the medical conditions of the students. The school currently has a small spa to use for hydrotherapy purposes, but its use is limited to junior students.

Lucas Gardens School provides some great educational programs for pupils with an intellectual or physical disability. Currently, 34 students attend Lucas Gardens. The staff perform a brilliant job in helping these students achieve individual learning goals and progress toward greater independence. These students are aged from five to 18 years. They participate in literacy, numeracy, creative arts, physical education and technology classes, and they have the opportunity to learn additional skills through speech therapy, physiotherapy, music and occupational therapy. Jenny Zagas informs me that there has been enormous support from the local community to help fundraise for the project. In less than 12 months a further \$100,000 has been raised, bringing the total to \$700,000. That has increased further. We are getting awfully close to that \$1.2 million figure.

The Friends of Lucas, the City of Canada Bay Council, Five Dock Rotary, Peru Perumal Architects, Macquarie Foundation, Pemberton Foundation and a great organisation, Communities for Communities, have all shown dedication and generosity in fundraising activities. But we are still short of the target, and until we reach the goal of \$1.2 million the students at Lucas Gardens School will continue to be denied the benefits of a hydrotherapy pool. In addition to the construction of the pool, \$30,000 worth of equipment will need to be

sourced. Jenny has started a program whereby individuals and businesses can donate a specific item. She tells me this is working well and a number of donations for such items as special beds and mechanical equipment have already been received. Once the pool is completed it will cost \$15,000 to maintain. Jenny Zagas has already taken requests from local groups and individuals who would like to use the facility outside school hours. The pay-for-use facility will fund the pool's annual maintenance bill.

The school and its community are doing everything possible to make this project happen and I believe it is the responsibility of government to continue its support of this initiative. I take the opportunity to thank the Minister for Education, who was instrumental in providing funding of \$300,000 towards the pool, which was much appreciated by many in the community. Both businesses and individuals have worked tirelessly, and with boundless energy and enthusiasm to ensure this project becomes a reality. It is for that very reason that I have every confidence that the Lucas Gardens School hydrotherapy pool will be built and enjoyed by students and the community for many years to come. I thank the Government for its support to date and look forward to its ongoing assistance for this project.

Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) [12.48 p.m.]: I thank and commend the member for Drummoyne for moving this motion. What a great example he has given us of communities working with local government and State Government to provide a much-needed facility for a local community. I am so glad the member, towards the end of his contribution, spoke about the fact that outside the school day there would be an opportunity for some private use of the hydrotherapy pool and therefore the opportunity to generate some income. We all know we have the small projects in our communities. They are not the big-ticket items, the large road infrastructure projects or rail lines, the things we sometimes get caught up with in this place. This project is one of those small things that the local member is working on with the Minister and his local council to try to achieve.

The Cessnock electorate also has a local community that is trying to generate enough interest with its local council for a hydrotherapy pool for the same reasons the member for Drummoyne referred to. Rehabilitation and injury management has progressed so far and so quickly that we no longer accept, nor should we accept, that people should be burdened by restrictions for their entire lives without working towards making those burdens less and increasing their mobility. Hydrotherapy pools are such an important part of community for that very reason. I recognise that the Minister for Disability Services, who is at the table, may support the member for Drummoyne in his quest. Of course, the Minister for Education already has made a contribution. Money will soon be available from the Community Building Partnerships; and hopefully an application will come from that sector as well. Every little bit helps. I congratulate the member for Drummoyne, the Lucas Gardens School and its community. This great issue encapsulates what we as good local members should be doing in this Chamber—that is, fighting for our local communities to make sure their lives are better. I wish him good luck in his endeavours.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE (Bega—Minister for Ageing, and Minister for Disability Services) [12.50 p.m.]: I applaud the efforts of the member for Drummoyne for bringing this motion to the attention of the House and the Government. Minister Piccoli's vital dedication and support, particularly to special needs schools in this State, is evidenced by his enormous commitment from Building the Education Revolution savings. The Government is pleased to support this community effort, which is driven particularly by Assistant Principal Jo-Anne Gardiner, the Friends of Lucas Gardens, the City of Canada Bay Council and Communities for Communities. Their tireless efforts in raising \$800,000 to \$900,000 to date reflect incredibly well on the school community and the wider community. Hydrotherapy provides enormous benefits to students with disabilities, particularly physical benefits. As indicated by the member for Drummoyne, this pool will not just be a school asset; it will be a community facility to benefit the entire inner west. The school's dream for such a facility must be acknowledged. Hydrotherapy provides exercise benefits to children with disability by enabling greater mobility improvements.

Currently, Lucas Gardens School has a small spa, but its use is limited to junior students. The school's educational programs for its 34 special needs students are supported by incredible staff and achieve fantastic learning goals with the ultimate aim of seeking greater independence for those students. Fundraising efforts continue, and I urge the member for Drummoyne to continue his advocacy to see what else can be done. Unfortunately, the disability department does not fund school projects. The \$300,000 that the Department of Education and Communities allocated through Minister Piccoli would have been welcomed. This Government is spending \$53.5 billion in education over the next four years and employing more teachers; it employed 520 new teachers last year. Such allocations to schools provide enormous outcomes. Recognising that the community and the school are still a couple of hundred thousand dollars short, especially given the fundraising efforts of people

like Jo-Anne Gardiner, I have no doubt that their target will be met. Again, I congratulate the school on its efforts to date and also recognise the member for Drummoyne for bringing such an important motion to the attention of the House today.

Mr JOHN SIDOTI (Drummoyne) [12.54 p.m.], in reply: I acknowledge the contributions of the member for Cessnock and the Minister for Disability Services. Obviously, the member for Cessnock will face similar challenges in his electorate and, as any member would do, will fight for better services. I wish him well in his endeavours and hope all of the funds his community needs are raised. A hydrotherapy pool is a marvellous facility for students and more widely for the whole community. Constructing a hydrotherapy pool is expensive, particularly when it is a non-standard size; it is also costly to maintain and run. I thank the member for Cessnock for his contribution and wish him well. The Minister for Disability Services is well acquainted with the wonderful remedies of hydrotherapy, particularly for young students. It is one thing to go to school, but it is quite another to have to battle the disadvantages and challenges of special needs while being educated. I thank Minister Constance for his contribution. He has visited the Drummoyne electorate on many occasions and seen firsthand the many good things this Government is doing.

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

Motion agreed to.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! It being close to 1.00 p.m. committee reports will now be proceeded with.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE

Report: Report on the Examination of the Auditor-General's Performance Audits September 2010-February 2011

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

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

LEGISLATION REVIEW COMMITTEE

Report: Legislation Review Digest No. 26/55

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

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) [12.58 p.m.]: As Chair of the Legislation Review Committee, the hardest-working committee delivering more reports than any other committee in the House—something that the member for Mount Drutt often agrees with in these take-note debates—I take this opportunity to comment on the recent Legislation Review Digest report tabled on 16 October 2012. This is the twenty-sixth digest prepared by the Legislation Review Committee of the Fifty-fifth Parliament. As required by sections 8A and 9 of the Legislation Review Act, the Legislation Review Committee identifies issues in proposed legislation and regulations. The twenty-sixth digest examined the three bills introduced in the sitting week commencing 18 September 2012. The bills considered were: the Law Enforcement (Powers and Responsibilities) Amendment (Kings Cross and Railways Drug Detection) Bill 2012, the Snowy Mountains Cloud Seeding Trial Amendment Bill 2012, and the State Revenue Legislation Further Amendment Bill 2012.

The Law Enforcement (Powers and Responsibilities) Amendment (Kings Cross and Railways Drug Detection) Bill 2012 authorises the use by police officers of dogs for general drug detection, without first requiring a warrant, in public places in the Kings Cross precinct. The bill also adds additional train lines on which police officers may use dogs for that purpose so that all suburban train lines on which CityRail operates train services are covered. The committee noted that authorising the use by police officers of dogs for general drug detection may infringe on the rights of individuals to not have their physical space encroached upon. The committee referred to Parliament whether these provisions trespass on individual rights and liberties.

After eight years of the cloud seeding trial, the Snowy Mountains Cloud Seeding Trial Amendment Bill 2012 replaces the current trial with a scheme to provide for ongoing cloud seeding operations in a larger part of

the Snowy Mountains area. The committee made no comment in relation to this bill. The State Revenue Legislation Further Amendment Bill 2012 was introduced by the Treasurer to update legislation governing taxes and grants administered by the Office of State Revenue. This bill responds to legislative uncertainty following recent court decisions, addresses the registration of heavy vehicles in New South Wales, reviews the administration of health insurance levies, and clarifies and extends eligibility for the Regional Relocation Grant.

There were three retrospective clauses that the committee commented upon within the bill. The committee also noted the Minister's power to calculate an annual percentage change in relation to health insurance levies and referred to Parliament whether this was appropriate in circumstances where data from the Australian Statistician is available. The committee also noted that the bill provides the Chief Commissioner with the power to extend the period of time during which the foundations of a house may commence and still qualify for the Regional Relocation Scheme.

The committee commented on one regulation in this digest, that is, the Home Building Act Amendment (Exemption) Regulation 2012. This regulation amends the principal Act. The committee always seeks to bring to Parliament's attention regulations that amend legislation. The committee prepares the digest to assist the members of this place and the other place in their consideration of bills. I thank the members of the committee, namely, the member for Swansea, the member for Rockdale, the member for Bankstown and the member for Parramatta and our colleagues in the other place, the Hon. Shaoquett Moselmane, the Hon. Peter Phelps and Mr David Shoebridge, who consider the bills and issues relevant to the committee as required by the Legislation Review Act during the committee's deliberations. I thank the staff for the preparation of the report and I wish them well as they prepare the next digest that will contain 11 to 13 pieces of legislation and several regulations.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) [1.03 p.m.]: I speak to the Legislation Review Digest No. 26/55. I acknowledge the committee members: the members for the electorates of Myall Lakes, Parramatta, Rockdale and Swansea and our colleagues in the other place Mr David Shoebridge, the Hon. Shaoquett Moselmane and the Hon. Peter Phelps. I also acknowledge the hardworking committee staff. This week's digest reviewed three pieces of legislation: the Law Enforcement (Powers and Responsibilities) Amendment (Kings Cross and Railways Drug Detection) Bill 2012; the Snowy Mountains Cloud Seeding Trial Amendment Bill 2012; and the State Revenue Legislation Further Amendment Bill 2012.

The committee reviewed the Law Enforcement (Powers and Responsibilities) Amendment (Kings Cross and Railways Drug Detection) Bill 2012. As I stated in my second reading speech, sniffer dogs play an essential role in the prevention of the sale and purchase of illicit substances. In addition to their primary function of detecting substances, sniffer dogs also have an important secondary function of deterrence of drug-related crime through high-visibility policing. The committee noted that the bill may pose issues relating to personal integrity in so far as increasing the use of sniffer dogs might, "infringe upon the rights of individuals to not have their physical space encroached upon". The committee referred to Parliament whether this constitutes a trespass on personal rights and liberties. I note that the bill has received bipartisan support. It is a necessary tool to assist the police in the fight against illicit substances. The New South Wales Opposition in particular supported the legislation.

The committee reviewed the Snowy Mountains Cloud Seeding Trial Amendment Bill 2012. The committee made no comment on this legislation in relation to its functions under the Legislation Review Act 1987. The committee reviewed the State Revenue Legislation Further Amendment Bill 2012. The committee raised issues in regard to retrospectivity in so far as clauses of the bill would apply retrospectively. However, as these clauses sought to clarify a position within the law rather than establish a new offence, the committee made no further comment relating to this issue. The committee noted that the bill will extend a legislative scheme by allowing the Chief Commissioner to extend the period of time during which the foundations of a house may commence and still qualify for a scheme.

However, given that the power provided by the bill was not considered to be coercive the committee made no further comment. As members would be aware, in addition to parliamentary bills, the committee reviews regulations. One such regulation is the Home Building Act Amendment (Exemption) Regulation 2012. I note that home building is an area of particular interest to this Government: in the space of 12 months the Minister has proposed two separate bills in this area. The Opposition looks forward to the outcome of the latest review of the Home Building Act and is committed to ensuring fairness in this important sector. I commend the Legislation Review Digest No. 26/55 to the House.

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

Report noted.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE**Report: Report on the Examination of the Auditor-General's Performance Audits
September 2010-February 2011****Question—That the House take note of the report—proposed.**

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson) [1.07 p.m.], by leave: I contribute to the take-note debate on the Public Accounts Committee report No. 5/55 entitled "Report on the Examination of the Auditor-General's Performance Audits September 2010—February 2011, dated September 2012. It is with great pleasure that I take note of this fifth report of the Public Accounts Committee of the Fifty-fifth Parliament and the second report that focuses on the vital role of following up on the performance audits of the New South Wales Auditor-General. The committee's audit review process is designed to test the adequacy of actions taken by agencies in response to performance audits conducted by the Audit Office of New South Wales. The committee questions agencies about the measures they have taken in responding to the Auditor-General's recommendations. If the Public Accounts Committee is not satisfied or has further questions, it can seek further information or examine witnesses in a hearing.

Such hearings are generally public hearings conducted in a transparent manner. Committee examination has proven to be a very effective means of comprehensively testing action taken on all performance audits and maintaining a high level of scrutiny of the agencies that are under review. This is particularly important, as once a performance audit conducted by the Audit Office is complete, the Auditor-General will rarely revisit a particular audit. The committee's examination is generally the only way for agencies to publicly explain what has happened as a result of a performance audit. It adds weight to the audit process and provides further impetus to the overall scrutiny of public expenditure. It is important that appropriate operational changes are instituted and that this is done in an open and transparent fashion. It is also important that this action is brought to the attention of the Parliament through the work of the Public Accounts Committee.

The report in question, which was tabled on 20 September 2012, provides an examination of eight audits conducted into the following areas: the NSW Lotteries sale transaction, home detention, sick leave, electronic information security, the Helicopter Emergency Medical Service contract, the mental health workforce, coalmining royalties and protecting the environment pollution incidents. The committee held a public hearing in June to question public officials and staff of the Audit Office in relation to four of these audits. We heard, in particular, from the Department of Premier and Cabinet, and the Department of Finance and Services about the Government's work on electronic information security. We heard from the Ministry of Health on the mental health workforce, from the Department of Trade and Investment in respect to the administration of coalmining royalties and from the Ambulance Service of New South Wales about the Helicopter Emergency Medical Service contract. With some exceptions, the committee was generally satisfied that the responsible agencies are now meeting their obligations and implementing the Auditor-General's recommendations.

The committee has made 10 key recommendations to New South Wales government agencies to address various issues. If members do not have time to read the full report, I encourage them to at least look at the list of 10 recommendations. These relate to enhancing electronic information security in New South Wales, delivering better mental health services, improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the mining royalty collection system and strengthening the response to pollution incidents, thereby achieving better environmental outcomes for the people of New South Wales. The committee and indeed the Parliament look forward to receiving within six months the Government's response to these recommendations, just as the new Government has responsibly and diligently done over the past year. Finally, I record my appreciation for the assistance provided by the Auditor-General and the Audit Office of New South Wales staff. I thank all committee members from both sides of the House and the secretariat staff who work hard and well. I thank them all for their assistance in the inquiry process and in the preparation of this report.

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

Report noted.

COMMITTEE ON LAW AND SAFETY**Report: Inclusion of Donor Details on the Register of Births****Question—That the House take note of the report—proposed.**

Mr JOHN BARILARO (Monaro) [1.13 p.m.]: Today I speak on the report of the Committee on Law and Safety entitled "Inclusion of donor details on the register of births", which was initiated in 2011 following a

District Court judgement that resulted in a sperm donor's details being removed from the register of births. The committee's terms of reference for this inquiry sought to examine whether there should be provision for including donor details on the register of births and to offer recommendations for dealing with this issue appropriately. New South Wales legislation was amended in 2010 to ensure information about clinical treatments involving sperm, egg or embryo donors that result in the birth of a child are kept on a central register. This change means that donors no longer have the guarantee of anonymity that they had before this date.

The committee heard strong evidence about the positive value of knowing about one's genetic heritage on children as they grow up. The committee believes this is the matter of central consideration in this inquiry. Current regulation ensures that children conceived with the use of donor gametes after 2010 are assured of having access to information about their donors when they reach adulthood. However, for those conceived before this date this is a complex and highly personal issue and the committee heard evidence from many people whose lives have been affected by donor conception. The committee considers that the welfare of the child is paramount in this situation and has recommended that while the register of births should note if a child is donor-conceived, there are many reasons, including privacy, that the details of the donor should not be included on this register or on birth certificates.

The committee heard evidence about private donor conception arrangements that take place outside of clinics. These arrangements are unregulated and privately arranged donors' information is not recorded under the current register. The committee is concerned that children conceived through these arrangements should not experience discrimination just because their donors' details are not officially recorded. As such, our report has recommended that the current system be expanded to allow participants in private arrangements to register their details voluntarily. A key area highlighted by this inquiry is that donors, donor-conceived people and all those affected by donor conception should have access to comprehensive counselling and support services. This is a vital aspect of access to any genetic or medical information and, although it was not included in the terms of reference for this inquiry, the committee intends to examine this issue in more detail in a subsequent inquiry.

The committee also examined the way in which information is stored and managed in the current assisted reproductive treatment register, which is operated by the Ministry of Health. We looked at the systems that other Australian States use and felt that the Victorian system of both recording information and allowing access to it, while not perfect, goes some way toward addressing the questions we were considering. The committee heard different proposals for managing this information but did not receive sufficient evidence during this inquiry to recommend changing the current system. We anticipate examining how this information is managed within the context of related topics, such as support services, in more detail in our next inquiry. In terms of donor-conceived people accessing their own information, the committee has recommended, in a similar manner to the Victorian system, that when donor-conceived individuals aged 18 or older apply for their birth certificate they are also issued with an addendum stating that there is further information available.

They can then apply to the agency that manages the donor register for further information. The committee hopes that this will begin to encourage a culture of openness rather than the secrecy that has traditionally surrounded this topic and enable parents to tell their children about the circumstances of their conception. Over the course of this inquiry the committee became aware of the different approaches and legislation applying in different jurisdictions within Australia. The committee is aware of the sensitivity of this issue and believes that all affected parties should have the opportunity to contribute to the discussion and development of these issues. The committee believes there are tangible benefits to having a uniform system throughout Australia and we are keen to see this on the national agenda through the appropriate intergovernmental forums.

As I have mentioned, this is a complex issue and the committee found that there are many interrelated matters that also need to be considered. Proper consideration will allow us to formulate complete recommendations for best practice in dealing with the management of information related to donor conception, for both the parents and children involved. While this inquiry has concluded that donor details should not be included on the register of births, the committee intends to conduct a new inquiry to examine all the related issues that arose during this current inquiry. I thank all those who took part in the inquiry. The committee was extremely grateful to hear the views of inquiry participants about an issue that raises many sensitive and personal concerns for people affected by donor conception.

I thank also my fellow committee members—the member for Wollondilly, the member for Swansea, the member for Fairfield and the member for Cabramatta—for their contributions to the committee's work during this Parliament and their enthusiasm and empathy for a sometimes emotional topic. It truly was a

bipartisan approach, free of politics. I thank also the member for Davidson for filling in during the inquiry. Of course, this would not be possible without the dedicated, solid work and support of the committee staff and I thank them. In conclusion I state that my personal belief is that donor-conceived people have the prevailing right to know the identity of the person who contributed to their biological make-up. It is therefore important that information relating to donors is accessible and that parents are encouraged to be honest with their children. There is a lot more to be done, especially as this inquiry raised more questions than answers.

Mr NICK LALICH (Cabramatta) [1.19 p.m.]: I contribute to the take-note debate on the report of the Committee on Law and Safety entitled "Inclusion of donor details on the register of births". I thank my colleagues on the committee and I also thank the committee clerks for their hard work and diligence and the information they provided us. The public takes very seriously the issue of the inclusion of donor details on the register of births, as do the stakeholders who gave evidence. The recommendations and findings that this committee has made have far-reaching consequences for individuals who are donor-conceived, as well as for their families and biological families.

My views on this issue stem heavily from the point of view of not causing undue grief to anyone involved—the donors, the donor-conceived children, the families or the biological families. This is an emotive issue because it involves the one thing that all of us in this Chamber can agree we hold close to our hearts—our families. As would be expected, there are conflicting views on how to manoeuvre through this issue without causing unnecessary pain to anyone. Some people believe that truth is the most important thing and that letting a donor-conceived person know that further information about them is available is the right thing to do. Similarly, some people have an opposing view and believe that undue stress and family problems may arise if donor-conceived people are involuntarily fed such information.

It is a fine line to tread and I hope the committee is able to properly express the pros and cons of the arguments. The Committee on Law and Safety has recommended that the New South Wales Government work with other State and Territory governments to develop a nationally consistent system for the registration, management and release of information. That is a no-brainer: having agreement and consistency throughout the States and Territories will be very important so that everyone is on a level playing field. Consistency amongst jurisdictions is key when dealing with an issue as emotive as this.

The committee recommends that the Attorney General introduce legislation that if a birth registration statement specifies that a child was donor-conceived, the Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages is to note that the child was donor-conceived in the entry on the register of births about that child's birth. The question arises though that when a person turns 18—the age of becoming an adult—should they be told by the registry that further information is available regarding their heritage? This kind of news, even brought to an adult, can be both distressing and difficult to take for everyone involved. The family that has raised the young adult and the young adult will have a lot of soul-searching to do if this information suddenly becomes available out of the blue. Many questions will be raised and there will be, for a time at least, some change in the parental familial relationship.

On a recent visit to the United Kingdom I visited the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority to see how other jurisdictions manage the issue. The Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority is the United Kingdom's independent regulator overseeing the use of gametes and embryos in fertility treatment and research. In the United Kingdom information is not given to a donor-conceived person unless that person asks for the information. There is no notation on the birth certificate. If the person goes through life not knowing that they are donor-conceived they are quite happy with that. In the United Kingdom they believe it is a family issue and that it is up to the family unit to decide whether to give that information to the donor-conceived child. I lean towards that belief because, as I indicated before, it can cause a lot of stress to people if they find out suddenly that they are donor-conceived and that their family is not their true family.

True and innocent acts of parenting could be turned around and litigated as lewd acts. That is just one of many far-reaching consequences that could arise. My main concern, as I have said, is that undue pain and grief not be caused to any of the parties involved. I agree that donor information should not appear on a birth certificate prior to the person turning 18 years of age. The committee will continue to work hard to provide this Parliament with the best advice possible so that the public of New South Wales has a system that treats fairly all involved in donor fertilisation and conception.

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson) [1.23 p.m.]: I was privileged to participate in the deliberations of the Committee on Law and Safety for two or three months as a temporary member. I acknowledge particularly

the leadership of the member for Monaro, who kindly acknowledged everyone else's contribution on the committee. His leadership was very important on what is undoubtedly a sensitive topic. He brought the whole committee together to a common-sense outcome. The interests of donor-conceived people are important. They do not have any control over their status, and that is an important consideration in addressing these matters. I endorse the comments of the member for Cabramatta in relation to the desirability of consistency between jurisdictions. Just as New South Wales looks to the Victorian system, one would hope that other States carefully read this report. I know that the New South Wales jurisdiction is happy to work with other jurisdictions to try to get some common-sense consistency between jurisdictions, which sometimes is all too lacking in other areas.

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) [1.25 p.m.]: I also make a contribution to the take-note debate on the report of the Committee on Law and Safety on the inclusion of donor details on the register of births. I acknowledge first my fellow members of the committee: the member for Monaro, the member for Swansea, the member for Cabramatta and the member for Wollondilly. I also thank the member for Davidson for his contributions to the committee during the public hearing in the absence of the member for Swansea. I also acknowledge the hardworking committee staff for their support of the committee members during the inquiry. A donor register which contains information regarding clinical reproductive treatments involving sperm, egg or embryo donors that resulted in a birth has been maintained by the Ministry of Health since 2010. A voluntary register was created for births prior to 2010, which involved anonymous donors; but as donors are not legal parents, their details are not recorded on the births register maintained by the Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages.

There has been much discussion about how to encourage parents to tell their donor-conceived child the truth about their conception. The Committee on Law and Safety received information and heard from parties on both sides. The committee received evidence from donor-conceived people that they were strongly in favour of including donor information in some form on birth certifications. Evidence was also received from individuals who thought that making such information available would breach privacy and create confusion about legal parents' rights and responsibilities. The committee recommended that an addendum indicating that further information is available be attached to birth certificates that are issued to donor-conceived adults. Details about the donor could then be sought by applying to the agency that manages the donor register. This model is based on Victoria's system, which was widely supported by inquiry participants as an appropriate way to encourage parental disclosure and access to information while maintaining the privacy of donor-conceived individuals.

Various options were proposed for operating a register of donor conception information, ranging from maintaining the existing register, which is managed by the Ministry of Health; migrating the register to the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages; or creating an independent body to administer all aspects of maintaining such a register. After assessing the evidence the committee reached the view that it would be premature to modify the current system. The committee heard evidence that whichever agency manages the donor register that agency should also offer other relevant services to those affected by donor conception, as well as undertake record keeping. The committee made a recommendation that the New South Wales Government work with State and Territory governments to develop a nationally consistent system for the registration, management and release of information in relation to donor conception.

A recurring theme identified by the committee was the importance of parents informing their donor-conceived children about the circumstances of their conception. The children's welfare is our primary concern and the committee believes parents can be supported throughout this process by the Government making the appropriate support services available to them. As private donor conception arrangements occur outside of a clinical setting, they are presently not recorded on the donor register. The committee is concerned that any individual conceived under these circumstances should not suffer the prejudice of discrimination. The committee has subsequently recommended that the current system be expanded to allow for voluntary registration of donor details in relation to private arrangements, if the participants desire it.

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

Report noted.

[The Deputy-Speaker left the chair at 1.30 p.m. The House resumed at 2.15 p.m.]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Notices of Motions

Government Business Notices of Motions (for Bills) given.

QUESTION TIME

[Question time commenced at 2.19 p.m.]

ULTIMO PUBLIC SCHOOL

Ms CARMEL TEBBUTT: My question is directed to the Minister for Education. Will the Minister rule out selling Ultimo Public School to developers so that children as young as five do not have to attend school in office blocks?

The SPEAKER: Order! I will not allow the Minister to answer the question until there is order. I will stop the clock if necessary. The Minister for Education has the call.

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: I have with me a list of the schools that were closed by the former Labor Government. It is fascinating. I imagine that some of the closures occurred even during the member for Marrickville's brief tenure as the Minister for Education. I will list a number of the schools that the former Labor Government closed in the Sydney region. They include Fred Birks School, Camperdown Public School, Randwick North High School, Redfern Public School, Alexandria Public School, Waterloo Public School, Maroubra High School, Vacluse High School and Forest House School. I confess that I do not know the location of every one of these schools.

Ms Carmel Tebbutt: Point of order: All this is very interesting; however, my point of order relates to relevance under Standing Order 129. Very concerned parents at Ultimo Public School would like to hear the Minister's plans—

The SPEAKER: Order! I understand the point of order. The Minister is being relevant to the question he was asked. There is no point of order.

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: I am sure anyone with any sense recognises the precise relevance of the list I read out. When schools are closed in the inner city the schools that are not closed have capacity problems, and there is clearly a capacity issue at Ultimo. I was present on Tuesday when that fantastic announcement was made about the online syllabus, to which I referred yesterday. It includes an additional investment of \$25 million in professional development for teachers so that we will continue to have a world-class teaching workforce in New South Wales. It is a terrific school, but it has capacity and space problems.

If the member for Marrickville and former Labor Minister for Education and Training had not sold all the other inner-city schools, we would not have those problems. I notice the member for Balmain is nodding his head. Unfortunately the Government cannot create land or sites for schools, or invent land. We have to deal with the issues as they arise. It is true that last Monday night Department of Education and Communities officers who deal with assets attended a parents and citizens meeting to consult and to discuss some of the options. What I have mentioned so far is one of several options, and rezoning is another.

Mr John Robertson: So, rule it out?

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: Did the Leader of the Opposition say that it was ruled out? Rezoning was ruled out because it means that some people would not be able to send their kids to the Ultimo school. Presumably, because it is such a great school, parents want to send their kids there.

Ms Linda Burney: Presumably? You mean you do not know?

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

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: What I am saying is that every option has to be canvassed in relation to how we deal with capacity areas at Ultimo—

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

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: —because the member for Marrickville closed and sold off other inner-city schools in Sydney. This problem is largely of the former Minister for Education and Training's creation. I am

absolutely up-front about this. We have to canvass every option, but Monday night was about consulting the community. Is the Labor Opposition suggesting that we should not do that? The departmental officers attended the parents and citizens meeting last Monday and said, "This is one of the options." Although I was not there, I believe they said, "If this is not supported by the community, it won't go ahead."

The department has done precisely the right thing. It has consulted the community about the future of the school. However, we would not be in this position had the member for Marrickville and former Minister for Education and Training not closed and sold off all the other schools of inner-city Sydney. If the member for Marrickville is worried about this problem, she was the Minister for Education and Training for a few years so she should refer her concerns to her Labor colleagues, some of whom presumably will be appearing before the Independent Commission Against Corruption in coming months.

FEDERAL HEALTH FUNDING

Mr GREG APLIN: My question is directed to the Premier. How does doubt about Commonwealth funding for health impact upon New South Wales residents?

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I thank the member for Albury for his question and for his strong interest in health. There is an Albury-Wodonga health agreement that causes some stresses and strains at times. I welcome this opportunity to enlighten the House on the latest appalling sleight of hand by the Federal Government in an attempt to pull back money from New South Wales. New South Wales could lose almost \$1 million a week, although "lose" is not quite the right word. This is all about trickery from a Federal Government that already has a reputation for trickery. The Federal Government is demanding that almost \$50 million be handed back from our last financial year's health budget. The Commonwealth decided to use revised Australian Bureau of Statistics population figures to support its claim that it gave New South Wales too much money last financial year, and now it wants to get the money back.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: According to those revised population figures, apparently there are 91,000 fewer people throughout New South Wales than we thought. The Commonwealth Government, like Oliver Twist, now has its hand out. The Commonwealth Government is asking for \$50 million to be returned. This is money that was spent last financial year on providing services to people right throughout New South Wales. It was money that was used to fund essential services in the regions and in our cities. It is not money that is sitting in a till in a hospital cafeteria, and it is not money that is sitting in a bank account of a local health district.

The sort of money that the Federal Government wants returned would fund more than 1,500 cardiac bypass operations, or 2,600 cochlear implants, or 900 kidney transplants. It is the equivalent of more than 2,600 hip replacements, more than 700 bone marrow transplants, more than 3,000 knee replacements and more than 3,800 pacemakers—some of which could be useful for backbench members of the Opposition. It is enough to pay the salaries of more than 400 paramedics or 500 nurses. However, I again emphasise that this is not money that the New South Wales Government received from the Commonwealth Government this financial year, and it is not money that is available to be handed back. It is money received and spent last financial year in providing assistance to people across this State. It is an example of more trickery from the Federal Government, which will do anything to claw back money from the States and Territories as it heads towards the next election with the mythical promise of delivering a Federal budget in surplus.

If the money is returned, that will have an impact on the people of this State. As I stated yesterday, irrespective of whether it is the \$2.4 billion that may be clawed back from the New South Wales Government if the Federal Government does not commit to renewal of the national partnership agreements, or whether it is the bad news that we already know—which was delivered eight weeks after the New South Wales Government presented this year's budget—of Federal Government cutbacks of \$5.2 billion in GST funding, we know that we cannot spend money that we do not have. That is why belts are being tightened. That is why we are having to engage in savings across government. These are tough but necessary decisions that are being made to ensure that the New South Wales Government does not end up doing what Labor did too often—spend more than we have, and have a later day of reckoning.

Mr Clayton Barr: Tell us about the State debt, mate. Read the budget and tell us the size of the State debt.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: The member for Cessnock did not make it to the frontbench last night, and I do not think that comment will get him onto the frontbench today.

The SPEAKER: Order! I remind the member for Murray-Darling, the member for Monaro and the member for Kiama that the Premier does not need their assistance.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: At this stage I should congratulate two good members of this House, the member for Lakemba and the member for Ryde, on their fourth anniversary; they were elected four years ago today. Never let it be said that the Leader of the Opposition does not have a sense of humour because we know that changes that were made yesterday—

Dr Andrew McDonald: Point of order: My point of order is under Standing Order 129. The question was about Federal and State health funding, and the Premier has now moved well off the track and clearly he has no intention of returning to it.

The SPEAKER: Order! I am sure the Premier will return to the leave of the question. There is no point of order.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I wanted to highlight the fact that we do not yet have Opposition frontbenchers who are prepared to stand with us against a Federal Government demand to pay back money that was given to us last year and that has been spent providing services. [*Extension of time granted.*]

I do not know what the Federal Government wants the State Government to do if it is going to start seeking respectively, off the back of population revisions, to demand from States and Territories across the country the return of funding that has been spent providing essential services. The shadow Minister for Health would do well to think about the principle involved here. Speaking of shadow Ministers, I was delighted that the member for Fairfield was appointed to the Opposition frontbench, and we know that the member for Keira has been breaking his neck to be appointed. The next Opposition leader, the member for Heffron, has finally been appointed to the Opposition frontbench. I note that, according to the Labor website, Kristina Keneally is still the member for Heffron. The new shadow Minister for Water is Walt Secord—the great leaker.

The man who leaked on Robert Furolo has been appointed to the perfect job, that of shadow Minister for Water. Never let it be said that the Leader of the Opposition does not have a sense of humour. I have no sense of humour when it comes to demands from the Federal Government to pay back funds that were spent across New South Wales in accordance with the rules as they were set. We will not engage in this sort of retrospective clawback to help Julia Gillard and Wayne Swan's attempt to win the next Federal election. We will put the people of the State first. We will fight these efforts.

FORMER MEMBER FOR CLARENCE

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: My question is directed to the Deputy Premier and Leader of The Nationals. Did the Speaker or her office speak or correspond with the Deputy Premier, or any member of his staff, before deciding to shelve an investigation into allegations the disgraced former member for Clarence, Steve Cansdell, rorted parliamentary allowances?

Mr ANDREW STONER: Apart from the question containing some fairly inflammatory and inaccurate terminology, I advise that I have explained to this House on a number of occasions the sequence of events.

Ms Linda Burney: Tell us again.

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

Mr ANDREW STONER: Okay, I will tell the member for Canterbury again; she was a bit slow the first time. The sequence of events was that last year Mr Cansdell informed me that he had committed an offence in relation to speeding and that there was an allegation in relation to the signing of a statutory declaration.

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

Mr ANDREW STONER: I immediately reported the matter, as a Minister of the Crown is required to—unlike some of the actions taken by those opposite in relation to the Health Services Union boss, Mr Williamson. I immediately reported the matter to my director general as required. I also advised Mr Cansdell that he should stand down as Parliamentary Secretary for Police—which he did. I further advised Mr Cansdell that he should report the matter to the police—which he did. There is something in our system of government that I am sure those opposite do not understand—it is called the separation of powers—and it is this: The authorities upholding the law and making judgements in relation to the law ought to be given space to investigate such matters. And that is the process that has occurred. Rightly, this Government has not interfered in that process.

I contrast that with some of the actions taken by the previous Government. For example, with regard to allegations concerning the former member for Penrith, the then Premier, the former member for Heffron, waded in saying that the complaints were vexatious before they were even investigated by the Independent Commission Against Corruption. It is a matter of record that the Independent Commission Against Corruption found that the former member for Penrith lied and that the Premier's defence of that member was therefore inappropriate. At every stage, this Government has followed the proper process. There has been a separation in relation to the investigation of this matter.

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

Mr ANDREW STONER: As to whether I have had any conversations with the Speaker in relation to these matters, as I have reported to the House on previous occasions the answer is simple: No.

ELECTRICITY PRICES

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD: My question is directed to the Minister for Resources and Energy, and Special Minister of State. What is the New South Wales Government doing to place downward pressure on rising electricity prices?

Mr CHRIS HARTCHER: I thank the member for Myall Lakes for the great work he did on the Stroud transmission line; it will be a great testament to him. What a sight are those opposite. Normally members fight to get on their party's frontbench. In the Labor Party, its members fight to get on the backbench. There are 34 members of the Opposition, 19 of whom sit on the frontbench. For the first time in history Labor has more members on its frontbench than it has on its backbench. They are doing well, and I congratulate every one of them. I congratulate especially the member for Heffron, who is my shadow and about whom we will hear a lot in the near future.

Ms Linda Burney: Answer the question.

Mr CHRIS HARTCHER: I am. I read to the House the following:

The State Energy Ministers are, and have been doing, exactly what they should be doing—conducting reviews and drafting rule changes that should benefit consumers and businesses.

There is every possibility the changes we are about to agree on will see price increases slow ... cheap threats do not assist in this debate because it is a complex reform that won't be solved by cheap front-page headlines.

Who said that? Did I? Was it the Premier? Was it the Leader of the Opposition? No, it was Martin Ferguson, the Federal Minister for Energy. He leads the member for Liverpool's faction because he is the brother-in-law of the member for Liverpool. The Productivity Commission says there should be a review of the electricity network regulatory frameworks. Well, guess what? The O'Farrell Government is doing that. The Productivity Commission calls for a system that gives consumers a voice under the national electricity customer framework. Guess what? The O'Farrell Government has done that. The Productivity Commission criticises excessive reliability standards being passed on in consumer power bills. Guess what? The O'Farrell Government has commissioned the Australian Energy Market Commission to conduct that review. The Productivity Commission calls for greater resourcing, accountability and independence of the Australian energy regulator. Guess what? The New South Wales O'Farrell Government has done exactly that.

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

Mr CHRIS HARTCHER: The Productivity Commission calls for the closure of solar bonus schemes. Guess what? The O'Farrell Government has done that. The Productivity Commission calls for the phase-out of

the small-scale component of the renewable energy target. The O'Farrell Government has done that. Every single item requested by the Productivity Commission is ticked off by this Government, because this Government is absolutely committed to bringing down the spiralling price of electricity. Unlike our opponents under whom electricity prices increased by more than 70 per cent in five years, who let \$1.8 billion pass through the energy regulator and who imposed \$1.7 billion through the solar bonus scheme—that totals \$3.5 billion for consumers—this Government is addressing every single driving factor of the price spiral. It would be remiss of me if I did not welcome the new shadow Minister for Energy or point out to the House that he has a great story to tell. After all, Louis Bayeh, who admitted to the royal commission to bribing 41 police officers, had a lawyer. Who was that lawyer?

Mr Paul Lynch: Point of order: My point of order has two elements. The first is that whatever this escapade on which the Minister has embarked is, it has nothing to do with the question he was asked and he clearly is in breach of Standing Order 129. The second point is that his comments sound very much like a substantive attack, which should be done by way of substantive motion.

The SPEAKER: Order! I caution the Minister about entering into any kind of substantive attacks on members. I warn the Minister to be careful about the direction in which he may be heading. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

Mr CHRIS HARTCHER: I accept the ruling. If calling a member of the Labor Party a lawyer is a substantive attack, we really have got somewhere.

The SPEAKER: Order! That is not the point I was trying to make.

Mr CHRIS HARTCHER: There is a story to tell, but I will not tell it today. I believe in doing these things in series, in ongoing instalments. So much needs to be said about Botany council.

The SPEAKER: Order! There is too much conversation from Government members.

Mr CHRIS HARTCHER: The story of Botany council, the Botany council affair and Laurie Brereton, and the ongoing Botany council saga—

Mr John Robertson: Point of order: My point of order is relevance under Standing Order 129. The Minister already has been drawn back to the leave of the question. He is now flouting your ruling and wandering off on an escapade.

The SPEAKER: I cautioned the member about the direction in which he was heading. I remind him of that caution and ask him to return to the leave of the question. The point of order is upheld.

Mr CHRIS HARTCHER: If there is one area of concern for the people of this State, as the Prime Minister said, power prices are the new petrol prices—or the old petrol prices, or whatever.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister is straying from the leave of the question. He will return to the leave of the question.

Mr CHRIS HARTCHER: Nobody likes to get a power bill. This Government acknowledges that concern. This Government has not allowed \$3.5 billion to sway the consumers of this State. This Government acknowledges every aspect of the cost drivers and will bring the price spiral under control.

FORMER MEMBER FOR CLARENCE

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: My question without notice is directed to the Premier. Did the Speaker or members of her office speak or correspond with the Premier or any member of his staff about the Independent Commission Against Corruption referral concerning allegations that the former member for Clarence had abused a staff allowance?

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: No, I had no knowledge. There was no consultation prior to the report today. I certainly did talk to the Speaker after I saw the report today and she repeated what was published in today's paper. There was no prior conversation or contact with me or my staff about the Independent Commission Against Corruption matter. However, do not let me waste 4½ minutes of question time. Time and

again I will say that Labor should not judge us by its standards. I do not believe the former Speaker, the member for Northern Tablelands, would have consulted either side of the House if he had received a letter from the Independent Commission Against Corruption about a staff member. That is my view, and I think he would respect that. But I cannot say that about previous Labor Speakers in this place, who would have happily gone off to their Government to try to protect them from some embarrassment, because that is their DNA.

Ms Carmel Tebbutt: How do you know?

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: And she remains on the frontbench.

The SPEAKER: Order! Government members will come to order. The Premier has another 3½ minutes in which to conclude his answer. The Premier has the call.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: They should not judge us by their own rotten standards.

Ms Linda Burney: Come on, knock yourself out, Barry.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: The member for Canterbury interjects. I could not but notice the contents of the press release of the Leader of the Opposition last night. It certainly pumped up the member for Keira. The bright-eyed, bushy-tailed new talent coming onto the frontbench is the bloke who suggested the Rozelle metro to his former boss. As I said before, the Leader of the Opposition promoted the member for Fairfield—the closest mate of the former member for Fairfield, the well-known Joe Tripodi. Not only does he put a leaker into the Water portfolio, but he promotes the ethics adviser to Eric Roozendaal.

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order: My point of order is relevance under Standing Order 129. The Premier's comments have nothing whatsoever to do with the question. The Premier might be having a good time but his remarks are entirely irrelevant. If he has nothing further to say he should sit down.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Maroubra would have noted that the Premier did answer the question specifically. There is no point of order.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I was responding to the interjection by the member for Canterbury. I am reminded that in last night's press release there was a lot about Ryan Park, praise for the member for Heffron, a single line for Walt Secord, but two paragraphs about Linda Burney trying to convince her that she has not been demoted. Who knew she was Brad Hazzard's opposite number in this place?

Dr Andrew McDonald: Point of order: The question was about a staff member using the additional temporary staff [ATS] allowance to do paid electoral work for a Federal member.

The SPEAKER: Order! I know what the question was about. The Premier has answered the question.

Dr Andrew McDonald: His comments are not relevant to the question. My point of order is relevance under Standing Order 129.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Premier has answered the question. The member will resume his seat.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: Those opposite should not apply their standards to ours. We are raising standards. For instance, we would never appoint to the frontbench someone who lied about Cecil Hills High School. We would never appoint to the frontbench someone who gave ethics advice to Eric Roozendaal. We would never appoint to the frontbench someone who gave advice to Kristina Keneally to shut Parliament early to avoid scrutiny over the sale of the State's electricity assets. That is the difference. We practise higher standards. You are a bunch of grubs who continue to go for the low ground. No matter how much you try to suggest that we are applying your standards, we will never apply your standards.

HOUSING INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr GLENN BROOKES: My question is addressed to the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure. How are the Government's efforts to clean up the New South Wales planning system delivering increased housing supply and investment in major projects across New South Wales?

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: At the outset I thank the member for East Hills for his interest in this issue. He actually has some real life experience. He understands the importance of getting New South Wales moving.

Mr Michael Daley: Unlike your Premier.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: This from a man who can barely get half his butt on a seat. He should just keep quiet for the moment.

Ms Linda Burney: It is smaller than yours.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will come to order. Those kinds of remarks are entirely inappropriate. The member for Canterbury will refrain from making such inappropriate remarks.

Mr Andrew Stoner: It is reverse misogyny.

The SPEAKER: It is reverse misogyny and I am on to it.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: I think it might be called misandry, but I am not going to complain about that because Linda has moved on and we will let her. It is worth starting by thinking about where we were 18 months ago. We had an election.

Ms Carmel Tebbutt: No.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: Yes, and you are one of those dozen who now sit squeezed on the frontbench and were responsible for ensuring an air of corruption wafted across New South Wales. Part 3A was an Opposition invention.

Mr Clayton Barr: You wish you had.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Cessnock will cease interjecting.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: The member for Cessnock just said we wish we had it. No, we do not, we are glad we got we rid of it. That is why we have seen Ministers such as Kristina Keneally, Tony Kelly, Ian Macdonald, and Eddie Obeid exit Parliament in a conga line with other Labor Ministers in serious trouble over the planning system and decisions made behind closed doors. They are the reason that the stench wafted across New South Wales. At the same time they managed to achieve the lowest housing starts in 50 years. When in government the Opposition drove the economy into the ground.

What the Government has been doing in the past 18 months is ensuring that there is community consultation, transparency, truth, integrity and engagement across New South Wales as to our new planning system. The Government has made sure there is a can-do culture operating, a culture that has seen some major turnarounds. The Government is about bringing people together on this great journey. It does not matter whether you provide the housing, are in community or environmental groups, or a member of The Greens, the Labor Party or crossbench who have been invited to the forums, the Government is engaged in a great venture and it is looking to make New South Wales number one again by leading housing and jobs back into the State.

In 1995 when we left government 57,000 new homes were produced in that final year. An average of 30,000 new homes was where it got to in the last five years of Labor. That is absolutely appalling—no wonder the economy took a nosedive. The Government has implemented a range of stimulus measures, including half a billion dollars in infrastructure investment. A can-do culture will steer this State towards being the number one State in this country. The private sector is back in town. In last week's Urban Development Institute of Australia forum Stephen Albin noted that the major companies were back in town and they were building the homes needed for the expected future population. It is all happening for people who want to rent accommodation and those who need affordable housing.

The bottom line is that the leaders of the marketplace have led the charge back into New South Wales: Stockland, Lend Lease, Mirvac, Australand Holdings and Meriton are all great companies doing great business, producing housing and centres of industry and generating employment opportunities. They are back in New South Wales and they feel enlivened and enriched by the process. They are providing for our community—18 months after the Coalition came back into government following 16 long years when New South Wales took

a dive. What a year this last financial year has been. New South Wales was the only State to have recorded an increase in housing approvals. I stress that every other State in Australia saw a decline in the number of housing approvals but New South Wales saw an increase. [*Extension of time granted.*]

I thank the member for East Hills for his interest, even if the entire frontbench of the Labor Party is asleep. If one of them actually moved the entire frontbench would turn and the member for Maroubra would fall off the end. It is a question of who turns first as to which way they go. Let us look at housing approvals. In Sydney they are up 20 per cent on the previous year. That is due to 18 months of the O'Farrell Liberal-Nationals Government. Members may remember the prancing, primping Premier who was in office in 2008-09. She was also the Minister for Planning. From that period to today we have seen an 80 per cent increase in housing approvals. Labor produced a lousy 30,000 homes a year. Yesterday an analysis released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics showed that, while the value of new building activity commenced across the nation fell nearly 10 per cent through the years, New South Wales reported an increase of nearly 9 per cent.

New planning measures for State significant projects has facilitated the approval of over \$26 billion of new development activity since this Government came to office. There are 64,000 additional construction jobs and 40,000 ongoing operational jobs. The Government is making a difference and engaging the community along the way. The community is with the Government on this and the Government looks forward to making further changes and creating further activity over the years we are in office. I thank members on the Labor frontbench for listening in such an interested way, all tightly sitting on the bench, gripped and waiting for the next words.

[*Business interrupted.*]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Questions of the Speaker

Mr MICHAEL DALEY: I seek leave to suspend standing orders to permit me to ask the Speaker a question about the referral to the Speaker by the Independent Commission Against Corruption.

The SPEAKER: Order! The standing orders do not permit the suspension of standing orders during question time nor asking questions of the Speaker during question time. If the member wishes to ask me questions he may see me at the conclusion of question time. I recommend that the member read the standing orders regarding asking questions of the Speaker.

Leave not granted.

QUESTION TIME

[*Business resumed.*]

FORMER MEMBER FOR CLARENCE

Ms LINDA BURNEY: My question without notice is to the Deputy Premier and Leader of The Nationals. Has the Deputy Premier received any information, verbal or written, suggesting that the former member for Clarence made false declarations relating to traffic offences on more than one occasion?

Mr ANDREW STONER: In view of the allegations of misogyny from the Federal Labor Government in recent times it is refreshing to get a question from a female frontbench member of the New South Wales Opposition. Unfortunately, the Leader of the Opposition, the member for Blacktown, in his recent promotions of four of their number overlooked the female element, which does not fit with the Federal strategy. When there is so much talent amongst female members on the backbench you would wonder why he chose this lot. We could have had the member for Kogarah as the shadow Minister for road safety.

Ms Linda Burney: Point of order: My point of order is under Standing Order 129. I asked whether the Deputy Premier received any information, verbal or written, suggesting that the former member for Clarence made false declarations relating to traffic offences on more than one occasion.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Deputy Premier has the call. He will return to the leave of the question.

Mr ANDREW STONER: I was getting to that point. The member for Wollongong would be good in the role of Minister for planning and development, although the member for Shellharbour is distancing herself

on a daily basis from that. To the question by the member for Canterbury: I have explained to the House on a number of occasions the information which was passed to me. That was the only information passed to me and that is the information I acted upon promptly in accordance with the proper guidelines for Ministers. That was passed on to the appropriate authorities. All the information that was made available to me was given to me by the member for Clarence, and that was given to the appropriate authorities immediately. I contrast that with the way members opposite handled a number of allegations in relation to their members, including attacking the complainant. All information which came to me was passed on immediately to the proper authorities.

TOURISM

Mr ROB STOKES: My question is addressed to the Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Hospitality and Racing, and Minister for the Arts. How is the Government's effort to boost tourism in New South Wales benefiting the State's economy?

Mr GEORGE SOURIS: I thank the member for Pittwater for his most important question. According to the national visitor tourism survey the New South Wales tourism industry is on its way back after having endured 16 years of lethargy and inaction by the previous Government. I can give one example fresh from today, that is, today's opening of Sculpture by the Sea by the Premier of New South Wales, along with the member for Vacluse and the member for Coogee, and a very supportive New South Wales Government. This follows 14 years of disinterest from Labor. The event has attracted some 500,000 visitors in its time. It opened today and will close on 4 November.

The reasons for the resurgence are a series of actions taken by this Government. However, one important reason is the O'Farrell-Stoner Government's commitment to promoting and marketing New South Wales and establishing it as the events capital of Australia, with 36 major events since March last year and more to come. It is not by chance that yesterday Sydney was voted Oceania's number one city for the second year running in the *Condé Nast Traveller Magazine* United States Reader's Choice Awards held in New York and number six in the world.

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

Mr GEORGE SOURIS: Melbourne did not even make the top 100.

Ms Cherie Burton: It was number one under us.

Mr GEORGE SOURIS: Melbourne was number one under you? In the same awards, readers and travellers ranked Australia's hotels, with Sydney's Langham taking out the top spot and the harbour city having the top five hotels as well as eight of the top 10. I inform the House that thanks to the concerted efforts of the Liberals-Nationals Government there have been significant increases in visitation and overnight stays in New South Wales and interstate visitors to our State increased by 7.4 per cent over the financial years from 2010 to 2012. This includes 3.2 million extra visitor nights, with 500,000 additional interstate visitors, and expenditure by interstate visitors to New South Wales also increased by 12.1 per cent during that period.

Ms Cherie Burton: Tell us what you did?

Mr GEORGE SOURIS: Is this aggravating you for some particular reason?

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Kogarah will cease interjecting.

Mr GEORGE SOURIS: I know what you wanted to do. Okay, you are up there now. Just stay there and be quiet for a while. Your turn might yet come.

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

Mr GEORGE SOURIS: Domestic overnight visitors to New South Wales have contributed more than \$28 billion to the New South Wales economy since June 2010, with long-term benefits to our accommodation, dining, retail, sports and entertainment industries. In particular, visitors from interstate seeing family and friends in New South Wales increased over the two years by 17.1 per cent to 2.7 million. This is further strengthened by an increase in aviation seat capacity in New South Wales by 3.4 per cent to 26.7 million seats since 2010. The

statistics seem to have got to the member for Kogarah. The news is also very good for regional and rural areas. That will quieten her down. New South Wales intrastate tourism has also increased, with a 6.7 per cent increase in New South Wales residents travelling within the State—17 million in the last financial year.

It is gratifying to see that when New South Wales residents travel they are choosing to enjoy the many and varied attractions of their own State. It is great economic news for regional communities. In the year to June this year domestic and international visitors to regional New South Wales generated 72.6 million nights of accommodation and \$12.5 billion in tourist expenditure. Regional New South Wales receives 66 per cent of total overnight visitors to the State and 48 per cent of total visitor nights spent in New South Wales. The Government is determined to ensure that tourism remains strong and vibrant and a key economic driver for the State's regional and rural areas. That is why the O'Farrell-Stoner Government, as is patently evident, is so highly committed to enhancing the State's tourism industry and rebuilding the State's economy.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr JAMIE PARKER: My question is addressed to the Minister for Education. How does the Government propose to effectively support schools to deliver quality sustainability education when the Government's funding cuts are set to remove environmental education curriculum support staff from the department?

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: I have certainly made no secret of the restructure in the Department of Education and Communities. I am not in a position to comment about that restructure, because a process is in place whereby consultation within the department is required. This is required in the restructuring of any department. Feedback on the restructure is being assessed and analysed at the moment. I have asked the director general with respect to the restructure and other measures being undertaken in education that there be no impact on student learning. Obviously, the entire purpose of education is student learning, and I have asked the director general that there be no impact—or if there has to be an impact that it be minimised as much as possible. These are significant changes that we are making in education. They are significant changes forced upon us because of two particular issues. The four members of the Opposition seeking to interject all sat around the Cabinet table and blew the riches of New South Wales and left us with a \$5 billion deficit over four years.

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

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: This was compounded by the drop in GST revenues, the downgrade earlier this year from the Commonwealth of another \$5 billion.

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

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: That is why we have had to take a number of these difficult measures. At some stage we have to start governing and stop campaigning. Members may recall the days prior to March 2011 where every time we saw a Minister they had a hard hat on, were in a photograph, cutting a ribbon or campaigning for the next election. They were not making the tough and difficult decisions or making sure that capital works expenditure was done effectively. For example, they could have been keeping an eye on Building the Education Revolution to ensure that we received value for money. However, they were not interested in managing; they were interested in cutting ribbons and getting their photographs in the local newspaper or in the *Daily Telegraph*. That is what was wrong with the previous Government. This Government has swept that aside. I remind those who do not remember of what happened under the previous Government.

I am pretty confident that over the next couple of years we will read plenty about it in the newspapers as it is recanvassed in the Independent Commission Against Corruption. We will all be reminded of precisely why the people of New South Wales in March last year did what they did to the Labor Party. It was to kick them out of government for a long time. I say in response to the member's question that every public servant in the Department of Education and Communities provides value. Because we are reducing the number of positions in the bureaucracy I do not suggest for one moment that those people who will be affected do not provide value. They certainly provide value, but we have a responsibility. As the Minister for Education, I and other Government Ministers have a responsibility to ensure that whatever budget we have—whether it is recurrent or capital—is spent as effectively as possible to support students.

We have a budget. The director general and other senior executive members of the Department of Education and Communities have been charged with ensuring that our budget is spent as effectively as possible.

We have given plenty of examples of how we have done it by reinvesting capital works funds. This Government recently announced a saving of \$8.6 million which will be invested in 12 additional capital works projects. A couple of weeks ago the Premier announced that we had saved \$10 million in reduced fees compared to statistics for the Labor Government which is being reinvested into the Connected Communities strategy in western New South Wales and on the North Coast. This Government is making sure that it spends the money as effectively as possible. I say to those public servants who are affected that they provide value and we value the work that they have done, but we have a responsibility to the taxpayers in this State to manage our budget, which is precisely what we will do.

VICTIMS OF CRIME COURT INFORMATION DVD

Mr BRYAN DOYLE: My question is addressed to the Attorney General, and Minister for Justice. What is the Attorney General doing to help victims of crime who face the experience of being a witness in the potentially unfamiliar environment of the court system?

Mr GREG SMITH: I thank the member for Campbelltown for his interest in and support for victims of crime in New South Wales. Just this morning I launched a DVD and accompanying guide that aims to equip witnesses and victims with the knowledge of what to expect when going to court and what is expected of them when giving evidence. This will help to alleviate the trepidation that witnesses and victims may have about going to court. We ask a lot from victims. They are asked to recount their experience and often are the most important witnesses in a case.

Going to court as a witness can be a strange experience for those who have never before entered a courtroom. It is critical to the judicial process that these victims are supported throughout and are prepared for their journey through the justice system. The DVD outlines court processes; provides information about the important role of a witness in the justice system, from the arrest of a suspect to a final decision about the criminal matter; provides an overview of the different courts in New South Wales; identifies the different people in the courtroom and their roles in the justice system; identifies the different ways available for witnesses to provide evidence in court, including the ability to use audiovisual links—

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

Mr GREG SMITH: The DVD also includes information about the opportunity for the victim to provide a victim impact statement at the sentencing stage.

Mr Nathan Rees: You had better make sure you get it back.

Mr GREG SMITH: If the member for Toongabbie wants a DVD we can give him one.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will come to order and cease their childish behaviour. I will take possession of the DVD if it continues circulating among Government backbenchers.

Mr GREG SMITH: The DVD also includes information about the importance of safety during the court process and it provides useful tips about the availability of victims support services and information about victims' rights. I am amazed that members opposite, who have colleagues who have either been sentenced recently or may be in the future, are making such fun of this. There have been victims of assault by a former colleague of those opposite. I remind Opposition members about the Orkopoulos matter.

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

Mr GREG SMITH: The DVD helps to prepare victims and witnesses to come face to face with the accused in court, and it tells them to expect delays when called to court. Perhaps most importantly, it also prepares them for the possibility of an acquittal, reassuring the witnesses that they are not to blame and that they will not be charged or made to pay the costs. The DVD offers important support for the victims and makes the point that an acquittal does not mean the jury thought they lied in their testimony. The DVD was made in collaboration with the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, the NSW Police Force, the Law Society of New South Wales, Courts and Tribunal Services, the Bar Association of New South Wales, NSW Health and the Judicial Commission of New South Wales.

Many volunteers gave up their own time to assist with the production of the DVD. This project could not have been completed without the enormous contribution and professionalism of all those people, and I am grateful to everyone involved. The DVD is an important educational and informative tool to help increase victims' and witnesses' understanding of the court process and to show them what to expect when going to court. I have no doubt about its value to victims of crime who will be attending court. The DVD will be distributed through victims support agencies, the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, all courts, the NSW Police Force, all victims support agencies and, indeed, anyone who works with victims. It also will be available online.

Question time concluded at 3.16 p.m.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Notices of Motions

By leave, Government Business Notices of Motions (for Bills) given.

MEMBER FOR HEFFRON

Personal Explanation

Mr RON HOENIG, by leave: I wish to make a personal explanation. Earlier today, in an answer to a question, the Minister for Resources and Energy, Special Minister of State, and Minister for the Central Coast made reference to the fact that as a lawyer I have appeared for Louie Bayer. Until my election to this House I was a Public Defender for New South Wales and a member of the Bar of New South Wales. I am obliged to appear for and accept briefs from any person—

Mr Chris Hartcher: We've heard all this before.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member has the right to give a personal explanation if he believes his character has been impugned.

Mr RON HOENIG: I am obliged to accept any brief that is provided to me, and as a Public Defender for New South Wales I am required to accept a brief provided to me by the Legal Aid Commission for anyone who is granted legal aid. Mr Bayer has been a client of mine, as have many people who have committed the most serious crimes, including killing a member of this House. There should be no reflection by any member on those for whom I have been required to appear. The suggestion by the Minister that somehow or other it impacts on my character is grossly improper.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders: Routine of Business

Mr BRAD HAZZARD (Wakehurst—Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Infrastructure NSW) [3.18 p.m.]: I move:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended at this sitting to:

- (1) permit the consideration of the Boarding Houses Bill to continue past 4.45 p.m.; and
- (2) provide that from the commencement of consideration of the Boarding Houses Bill until the rising of the House, no divisions or quorums be called.

As I indicated earlier in the week, it is necessary to deal with a number of pieces of legislation this week because of the time constraints placed on this House by the Legislative Council. Members are well aware of that and I thank them for their indulgence thus far. It is necessary for the Boarding Houses Bill to be concluded this afternoon. Members who are not involved in that debate certainly will not be required to be present for the debate because no divisions or quorums will be called. At the conclusion of the debate the House will deal in the usual way with private members' statements.

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

Motion agreed to.

INDEPENDENT COMMISSION AGAINST CORRUPTION**Report**

The Speaker tabled, pursuant to section 78 of the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act 1988, the report of the Independent Commission Against Corruption for the year ended 30 June 2012.

Ordered to be printed.

PETITIONS

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

Wallsend Police Station

Petition requesting funding to reinstate a police station at Wallsend to combat crime in this expanding residential area, received from **Ms Sonia Hornery**.

CRIMES (ADMINISTRATION OF SENTENCES) LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (INTERSTATE TRANSFERS) 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) [3.23 p.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

There are three uniform national model statutory schemes providing for the transfer of community-based sentences, parole orders and prisoners between the Australian States and Territories. The Crimes (Interstate Transfer of Community Based Sentences) Act 2004, the Parole Orders (Transfer) Act 1983, and the Prisoners (Interstate Transfer) Act 1982 are the New South Wales versions of the uniform national model legislation. The Crimes (Interstate Transfer of Community Based Sentences) Act 2004 provides for the interstate transfer of community-based sentences such as community service orders and good behaviour bonds. At present, three Australian jurisdictions have passed similar legislation: the Australian Capital Territory, Western Australia and Tasmania. The Parole Orders (Transfer) Act 1983 provides for the interstate transfer of parole orders. The Prisoners (Interstate Transfer) Act 1982 provides for the interstate transfer of prisoners. All Australian jurisdictions have laws that correspond with these Acts.

The bill before the House makes various amendments to these three Acts, which I will collectively call the interstate transfer Acts. The amendments have been endorsed by the Council of Australian Governments Standing Committee on Law and Justice. All the States and Territories have undertaken to introduce amendments to their own interstate transfer Acts to maintain the national model interstate transfer legislation and facilitate the efficient interstate transfer of offenders and their sentences. One of the major initiatives of this bill is to insert provisions into the Crimes (Interstate Transfer of Community Based Sentences) Act 2004 and the Parole Orders (Transfer) Act 1983 providing for reciprocal arrangements to be made between New South Wales and other Australian jurisdictions for an interstate travel permit scheme, which will permit offenders subject to community-based sentences and parole orders to temporarily travel interstate, and for interstate jurisdictions to administer the sentences and orders of offenders when they travel interstate on an interstate travel permit. This will change the current situation significantly.

Interstate travel arrangements have existed between the Probation and Parole and Community Corrections Services of the Australian States and Territories for many years, where an offender subject to a community-based sentence or a parole order is permitted to temporarily travel to, and remain in, an interstate jurisdiction. As these arrangements have no statutory basis, Probation and Parole officers lack authority to take immediate and effective action against interstate offenders for breaches of their sentences or orders. If an offender breaches his or her sentence or order, he or she remains accountable to the home jurisdiction. The bill will provide a statutory basis for these interstate travel arrangements.

It is envisaged that the schemes for parole orders and community-based sentences in the bill will operate along the lines of the National Operating Procedures for Parolee Interstate Travel Permits, which were approved by the Corrective Services Ministers Conference in 2009, subject to ministerial arrangements for the administration of the scheme to be made between jurisdictions. Establishing a statutory scheme for interstate travel permits and the administration by the States and Territories of the community-based sentences and parole orders of offenders who temporarily travel interstate has a number of benefits. It is more efficient than using the existing provisions for permanent transfer of such sentences and orders, which entail a lengthy and detailed application, approval and registration process by the authorities in the sending and receiving jurisdictions before a transfer can occur. The interstate travel permit scheme permits individual jurisdictions to issue interstate travel permits subject to agreed ministerial arrangements for issuing such permits. Importantly, the conditions of the travel permit will be agreed upon by the jurisdiction issuing the permit and the jurisdiction to which the offender is granted permission to travel.

The interstate travel permit scheme will promote community safety by providing a statutory basis for the administration of interstate community-based sentences and parole orders and the supervision and monitoring of offenders while they temporarily travel interstate. It will authorise the local police or correctional authorities to immediately intervene when an interstate offender breaches the conditions of a travel permit. The interstate travel permit scheme will benefit offenders by providing a formal process for them to travel and reside interstate for temporary periods. It will enable offenders to engage in activities which can assist with their rehabilitation and reintegration into society, such as visiting relatives, or taking up employment opportunities. It will give offenders the benefit of formal supervision and guidance from the local Probation and Parole or Community Corrections authorities while they are temporarily interstate.

I turn now to the main details of the bill. Schedule 1 amends the Crimes (Interstate Transfer of Community Based Sentences) Act 2004. Item [8] of schedule 1 inserts part 5A into the Act, which authorises the New South Wales Minister for Justice to make reciprocal arrangements with corresponding Ministers in the other States and Territories for New South Wales community-based sentences to be administered by interstate jurisdictions and for interstate community-based sentences to be administered by New South Wales. In particular, arrangements may be entered into to facilitate interstate travel between New South Wales and interstate jurisdictions by New South Wales and interstate offenders, in accordance with the conditions of interstate travel permits issued by each jurisdiction.

The local authority for New South Wales will be authorised to issue an interstate travel permit to a New South Wales offender permitting the offender to travel to an interstate jurisdiction. The local authority for New South Wales will be the Commissioner of Corrective Services. Each interstate travel permit issued to a New South Wales offender by the commissioner authorising the offender to travel to an interstate jurisdiction will be subject to conditions. Any compliance or non-compliance by the New South Wales offender with the conditions of the interstate travel permit will be taken to be compliance or non-compliance with the conditions of his or her non-compliance. With respect to interstate offenders who travel to New South Wales on an interstate travel permit, the commissioner will have the authority and may exercise such powers, duties and functions as are necessary, under the ministerial arrangements, to administer interstate offenders' interstate community-based sentences while they are present in New South Wales.

The commissioner will have the authority to issue a warrant for the arrest of an interstate offender, present in New South Wales on an interstate travel permit issued by an interstate jurisdiction, in two circumstances: where advised by the relevant interstate authority that the interstate travel permit is no longer in force, and where the commissioner forms the opinion that the interstate offender has failed to comply with the conditions of the interstate permit. A warrant issued by the commissioner will be sufficient authority for a New South Wales law enforcement officer to arrest the interstate offender and convey the offender to a place specified in the warrant, whether in New South Wales or an interstate jurisdiction, and to convey the offender into the custody of a law enforcement officer of the relevant interstate jurisdiction. A New South Wales law enforcement officer will be defined to include police officers, correctional officers, compliance and monitoring officers, and probation and parole officers. Arrest warrants issued under the corresponding law of an interstate jurisdiction, authorising law enforcement officers of that jurisdiction to convey an interstate offender through New South Wales to the offender's home jurisdiction, or to convey a New South Wales offender to New South Wales, will have legal effect in New South Wales according to each warrant's tenor.

Schedule 1 also provides for a number of other amendments to the Crimes (Interstate Transfer of Community Based Sentences) Act 2004. Item [2] of schedule 1 provides that a combination of community-based sentences may be treated as a single community-based sentence for the purposes of the Act.

Item [3] of schedule 1 clarifies the circumstances in which a community-based sentence under the law of New South Wales is taken to correspond to an interstate community-based sentence. This amendment provides that a New South Wales community-based sentence corresponds, or substantially corresponds, to an interstate community-based sentence when the New South Wales community-based sentence can impose a penalty of substantially the same nature as the penalty imposed by the interstate community-based sentence, and conditions can be imposed on the New South Wales community-based sentence of substantially the same nature as the conditions to which the interstate community-based sentence is subject.

Item [4] of schedule 1 clarifies the application of section 24 (1) (e) of the Act to interstate community-based sentences registered in New South Wales. Section 24 (1) (e) provides that, if an interstate community-based sentence is registered in New South Wales, the penalty for the offence for which the sentence was imposed is taken to be the relevant penalty for the offence under the laws of the originating jurisdiction, which is the jurisdiction in which the sentence was originally imposed, and not the penalty for an offence of that kind under the laws of New South Wales. The amendment provides that section 24 (1) (e) applies only for the purpose of determining the penalty to be imposed for the relevant offence in circumstances in which the offender is, under the laws of New South Wales, resentenced by a New South Wales court in relation to the offence. If an offender breaches the conditions of a community-based sentence registered in New South Wales and the offender is not resentenced for the original offence, the offender may be subject to such action under the laws of New South Wales as could be taken against an offender for a breach of a sentence imposed by a New South Wales court, such as the imposition of further conditions on the sentence.

Item [6] of schedule 1 amends section 27 of the Act to provide that, if a New South Wales community-based sentence is registered in an interstate jurisdiction, a breach of a condition of the sentence occurring before it was registered in the interstate jurisdiction cannot be dealt with under the laws of New South Wales. This amendment will prevent the offender from being subject to separate proceedings in each jurisdiction for the same breach. Existing section 24 (1) (g) correspondingly provides that where an interstate community-based sentence is registered in New South Wales, the offender may be dealt with in New South Wales for a breach of the sentence, whether occurring before or after the registration of the sentence in New South Wales. Item [7] will provide that section 27 does not apply to the extent to which a community-based sentence imposes a fine or other penalty, or requires the making of reparation. To that extent, the sentence will remain in force in New South Wales and may be enforced accordingly.

Item [5] will amend section 24 of the Act to correspondingly provide that when an interstate community-based sentence is registered in New South Wales, that section will not apply to the extent that the interstate sentence imposes a fine or other financial penalty or requires the making of reparation. I turn now to schedule 2 to the bill. Schedule 2 amends the Parole Orders (Transfer) Act 1983. It reorganises the subject matter of the Act into parts for clarification and to make it easier to understand. Item [19] of schedule 2 inserts Part 3 into the Act which will authorise the New South Wales Minister for Justice to enter into reciprocal arrangements with corresponding Ministers in the other States and Territories for New South Wales parole orders to be administered by interstate jurisdictions, and for interstate parole orders to be administered by New South Wales.

In particular, ministerial arrangements may be entered into to facilitate interstate travel between New South Wales and interstate jurisdictions by New South Wales and interstate parolees in accordance with the conditions of interstate travel permits issued by each jurisdiction. It is in similar terms as the provisions for the making of ministerial arrangements for the administration of community-based sentences and interstate travel in schedule 1 to the bill, to which I referred earlier. A New South Wales parolee whose parole order requires the parolee to obtain permission to travel interstate will be required to apply for an interstate travel permit. The permit will be subject to such conditions as are required to be imposed on it by the agreed ministerial arrangements. The conditions of the permit will be substituted for the conditions to which the parole order is subject.

The prisons authority for the interstate jurisdiction will have authority to administer the parole order in accordance with the conditions of the interstate travel permit and the agreed ministerial arrangements for the administration of parole orders. Any compliance or non-compliance by the New South Wales parolee with the conditions of the interstate travel permit will be taken to be compliance or non-compliance with the conditions of the parole order. The permit will cease to have effect in the interstate jurisdiction when that jurisdiction is notified that permission to travel has been revoked, or if the parolee is arrested in the interstate jurisdiction pursuant to a warrant issued under the laws of that jurisdiction.

With respect to interstate parolees who travel to New South Wales on an interstate travel permit, the local prisons authority for New South Wales, who will be the Commissioner of Corrective Services, will have and may exercise such powers, authorities, duties and functions as are necessary under the agreed ministerial arrangements to administer interstate parolees' parole orders while they are present in New South Wales. The

New South Wales State Parole Authority will have authority to issue a warrant for the arrest of an interstate parolee present in New South Wales on an interstate travel permit issued by an interstate jurisdiction in two circumstances: where advised by the relevant interstate authority that the interstate travel permit is no longer in force and where the New South Wales State Parole Authority forms the opinion that the interstate parolee has failed to comply with the conditions of the interstate permit.

An arrest warrant issued by the New South Wales State Parole Authority will be sufficient authority for a New South Wales law enforcement officer, including police officers, correctional officers, compliance and monitoring officers, and probation and parole officers, to arrest the interstate parolee and convey the parolee to a place specified in the warrant, whether that is in New South Wales or an interstate jurisdiction, and convey the parolee into the custody of a law enforcement officer of the relevant interstate jurisdiction. Schedule 2 also provides for a number of other amendments to the Parole Orders (Transfer) Act 1983, including item [11], which inserts a number of matters to which the Minister is required to have regard when deciding whether to direct that an interstate parole order be registered in New South Wales or to make a request to an interstate jurisdiction for a New South Wales parole order to be registered in that jurisdiction. Currently, the Act only requires the interests of the parolee to be considered when making this decision.

The amendment in item [11] requires consideration to be given to other significant factors, such as community safety and the administration of justice, and largely mirrors the factors that the Minister is required to consider when deciding whether to approve the interstate transfer of a prisoner under the Prisoners (Interstate Transfer) Act 1982. Item [13] amends section 9 of the Act to make clear that where an interstate parole order is registered in New South Wales, any breach of that order that occurred before it was registered in New South Wales and was not dealt with by the parole authority for the interstate jurisdiction, is to be dealt with under the laws of New South Wales.

Item [17], likewise, provides that any breach of a New South Wales parole order that occurred before the order was registered in an interstate jurisdiction and was not dealt with by the New South Wales State Parole Authority, is to be dealt with under the laws of the interstate jurisdiction in which it is registered. Item [15] omits subsection (4) of section 9 of the Act, with the effect that the laws of New South Wales apply to and in relation to an interstate parole order registered in New South Wales, in the same way as they apply to parole orders made under the laws of New South Wales.

Schedule 3 amends the Prisoners (Interstate Transfer) Act 1982. Item [2] of schedule 3 provides that when a prisoner is being transferred from New South Wales into the custody of an interstate jurisdiction, it is sufficient for a prison escort from the interstate jurisdiction to receive the prisoner into their custody at a location nominated by the interstate jurisdiction's prisons authority. Presently, the Act requires a New South Wales prison escort to escort the prisoner to a prison in the interstate jurisdiction to which the prisoner is being transferred. This amendment will enable the transfer of custody to occur at a location which is mutually convenient for both jurisdictions, such as a border town police station. Item [4] of schedule 3 amends the arrest powers conferred on interstate prison escorts present in New South Wales by section 32 of the Act. Section 32 enables an interstate escort to arrest a prisoner who escapes from custody while being conveyed through New South Wales to a prison in another jurisdiction pursuant to section 31 of the Act.

Item [4] amends section 32 to confer the same power on an interstate escort which is conveying a prisoner to a prison in New South Wales pursuant to section 24 of the Act. As I indicated earlier, the amendments in this bill have been agreed to by all Australian States and Territories and they have undertaken to introduce similar amendments to their own interstate transfer Acts to complement the amendments in this bill. The amendments in this bill form part of uniform national model legislation, which will facilitate the efficient and safe operation of the statutory schemes for the interstate transfer of offenders and their sentences between New South Wales and other States and Territories, and thereby contribute to the rehabilitation of offenders, while safeguarding community safety. 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.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AMENDMENT (CONDUCT) BILL 2012

Bill introduced on motion by Mr Donald Page, read a first time and printed.

Second Reading

Mr DONALD PAGE (Ballina—Minister for Local Government, and Minister for the North Coast) [3.43 p.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I am pleased to introduce the Local Government (Conduct) Bill 2012. The bill will amend the Local Government Act 1993 in relation to the conduct and discipline of councillors, and for related purposes. This bill seeks to give effect to a more robust framework for the regulation of the conduct of individual council officials. I will expand on how this bill seeks to improve the existing regulatory framework. The Local Government Act provides for a model code of conduct for councils. This sets the standard of behaviour that is expected of council officials and prescribes procedures and penalties for breaches of those standards. As councillors are leaders of the community, the conduct of councillors and council staff is under constant public scrutiny. The code aims to ensure that all councillors, council staff and delegates act honestly, ethically and responsibly in carrying out their functions, and that decisions are made in a fair, honest, open and impartial manner.

The model code is a key part of the governance framework for New South Wales local government. The model code is supported by provisions in the Act—the misbehaviour provisions—that enable the Division of Local Government to investigate serious or repeated breaches of the code by councillors, and empower the director general and the Pecuniary Interest and Disciplinary Tribunal to take disciplinary action in relation to such serious breaches. Most councils do an excellent job of serving their communities. The overwhelming majority of councillors—and for that matter council staff—demonstrate through their efforts and behaviour a commitment to the highest standards of community service and ethical conduct. Unfortunately, as we are all too aware from occasional media reports into dysfunction in councils, the behaviour of council officials sometimes falls short of what the public rightly expects and deserves.

The model code of conduct aims to set high standards for behaviour and to deter behaviour that does not meet this standard. In recent times it has become apparent that the code was not working as intended. The current model code has at times been misused for political pointscoring and other improper purposes. For example, the code did not prevent council officials from making complaints for an improper purpose, taking reprisal action and disclosing information about an investigation. This has led to misuse of resources and wasted money in needless investigations. Councils have been caught up in long-running investigations and court battles for often very little outcome in terms of better behaviour. With evidence building that the code was not working, I requested the Division of Local Government to conduct a comprehensive review to identify all the issues and develop solutions in consultation with the local government sector. The review revealed a range of problems with the operation of the existing model code and the current misbehaviour provisions.

Concerns were raised by councils and others about the efficacy of penalties as a deterrent to poor behaviour, with repeat offenders continually failing to meet the standards expected and disrupting council business, misuse of the code by vexatious and politically motivated complainants, the cost to councils and poor complaints management and investigative practices. Councils have asked for a stronger code of conduct, more efficient and effective procedures for dealing with complaints and stronger sanctions to deter poor behaviour. Councils have also asked for a more robust regulatory framework to ensure that the new code has teeth. The review involved exhaustive consultation and collaboration with the local government sector and other key stakeholders such as the Independent Commission Against Corruption and the New South Wales Ombudsman. The consultation process comprised a number of steps that were designed to identify the problems with the existing framework.

The consultation process was designed to ensure that the review outcomes addressed the problems that have been identified, were workable and accepted by the local government sector. The review process involved the following steps: A discussion paper to identify the issues, a position paper outlining a reform proposal and workshops around the State to refine the proposal and to ensure that it was workable. Consultation drafts of the proposed new model code, procedures and the legislative changes contained in this bill were issued for comment. Further, I refer to final refinements to the proposed new regulatory framework. The exhaustive consultation undertaken with respect to the review of the model code has ensured that the outcomes contained in this bill are the result of genuine collaboration between this Government and the local government sector. It reflects this Government's commitment to working in partnership with local government to deliver outcomes that address the challenges faced by local councils. These changes are broadly supported by the sector. Importantly, the Local Government Association has expressed its support for the amendment of the Act's current misbehaviour provisions to introduce the concepts of misconduct and pattern of misconduct, and for stronger disciplinary action. The changes will better enable councils to deliver local services and infrastructure to communities.

In response, the review process has led to the development of a proposal for a new robust and streamlined framework for the regulation of the conduct of council officials. The framework includes: a revised model code of conduct for council officials, which has been amended to tighten requirements and prevent

misuse of the code; new procedures for the administration of the code to provide for a simple, more flexible but also more rigorous and effective process at reduced cost; and provisions in the Act that enable the Division of Local Government to investigate serious or repeated breaches of the code, along with a range of penalties that will provide an appropriate deterrent to poor behaviour. The following key changes are proposed in relation to the new model code of conduct and associated procedures. Complaints will be managed from start to finish by an independent conduct reviewer, reducing the role of the general manager and mayor in the management of complaints. There will be greater clarity in relation to the procedural requirements for the management of complaints, including written policies and procedures regarding procedural fairness requirements to ensure rigour and fairness.

It is important to note that decisions of the director general to impose penalties can be appealed to the Pecuniary Interest and Disciplinary Tribunal. There will be greater flexibility in the management of complaints to ensure more appropriate and proportionate outcomes are delivered at less cost to councils. There will be prescribed time frames for certain key steps to minimise delay. There will be an onus on the informal resolution of non-serious matters and more options for doing so, thereby reducing costs. Matters will be dealt with outside of the public domain to minimise the potential for undue reputational damage and to reduce the likelihood that matters will be needlessly contested or escalated to the courts. The reality is that most of what is in the code of conduct is common sense and reflects the principles we would expect of anyone in public office. Most people will adhere to these standards and will never need to look at the procedures for what happens when things go wrong.

However, the code and procedures are necessarily detailed to remove loopholes and address issues that have been raised in corruption inquiries. To balance this we have developed a two-page summary of the model code to help all council officers understand their obligations. This bill is one key element of the changes that need to occur in the management of the behaviour of council officials. The bill updates the regulatory framework that underpins the proposed new code and procedures, and provides the necessary deterrents to poor behaviour for which councils are asking. It seeks to do this by improving the efficiency and effectiveness of investigations by the Division of Local Government, strengthening penalties for misconduct, strengthening the implementation of the code of conduct by councils, and ensuring fairness. I will briefly address these in turn. First, the bill seeks to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of investigations of councillor misbehaviour by the Division of Local Government.

Currently, the process for initiating disciplinary action against a councillor under the misbehaviour provisions is needlessly procedurally complex and time consuming. In serious misconduct cases, the division is not able to refer a matter to the tribunal for the imposition of a stronger penalty if the disciplinary process was commenced at the request of a council, unless the councillor has previously been suspended. This means that in such cases, at most a councillor can only be suspended for up to one month for even the most serious misconduct. These procedural deficiencies are compounded by the fact that the division has no evidence-gathering powers in relation to misbehaviour matters, limiting its capacity to effectively investigate such conduct. This bill seeks to address these deficiencies. It is proposed to simplify the process for initiating disciplinary action under the misbehaviour provisions.

It is proposed to allow such action to be initiated on a simple referral by a council's general manager or on the division's own motion. This will in turn allow the division to directly police misuse of the model code through the misbehaviour provisions. This has become an endemic problem for some councils undermining confidence in the integrity of their codes of conduct at great financial and reputational cost to the councils concerned. It is also proposed to remove the existing procedural restrictions on the referral of serious matters by the division to the tribunal. This will allow the division to refer any serious matter to the tribunal for the imposition of stronger penalties regardless of how the disciplinary process was initiated. It is also proposed to give the division powers to gather the evidence necessary to investigate a matter effectively. The division will be developing procedures on how it exercises these powers in consultation with the local government sector, and these procedures will be transparent and will be publicly available.

Secondly, the bill seeks to strengthen the penalties to deter misconduct. Currently, the only penalty the director general can impose is to suspend a councillor for up to one month. On its own, this is a blunt instrument and one that is largely ineffective as a deterrent. It is proposed to create new "lesser penalties" to enhance the division's capacity to more effectively address the causes of misconduct and its consequences. These will allow the director general to counsel or reprimand a councillor, to issue an order directing a councillor to apologise for the misconduct or to participate in training or mediation, and to suspend a councillor's right to be paid for up to three months. It is also proposed to strengthen the existing penalties by extending the power of the director

general to suspend a councillor from one to three months, and the existing power of the tribunal to disqualify a councillor for up to five years for breaches of the pecuniary interest provisions of the Act for misbehaviour matters.

Crucially, it also proposed to allow the consideration of previous incidents of misconduct in determining a penalty for misconduct, thereby allowing an escalation in the severity of penalties for repeated misconduct. This will enable the division to more effectively manage ongoing disruptive behaviour. Finally, it is proposed to enhance the deterrent effect of disciplinary action by changing the term "misbehaviour" currently used in the Act to "misconduct" to more accurately reflect the serious nature of the conduct the provisions are intended to address. Thirdly, the bill seeks to strengthen the implementation of the code of conduct by councils. It is proposed to separately prescribe mandatory minimum procedures for the administration of the code. This will ensure council officials can easily understand their ethical obligations under the code without needing to read the complex procedural requirements necessary to ensure the appropriate management and investigation of complaints.

Under the proposed new procedures, the division will be able to provide binding procedural guidance in relation to particular matters to resolve procedural disputes, thereby minimising the additional cost of investigations and delay this causes, and to ensure matters are dealt with appropriately and fairly. The division will also be able to provide binding guidance in relation to broader procedural questions to assist in councils' implementation of the code and procedures. It is also proposed to expand the application of the model code and procedures to administrators appointed to councils to ensure they will be required to meet the same standards of conduct expected of the councillors they replace.

Finally, more robust procedures and tougher penalties must be counterbalanced by the need to ensure fairness. This bill seeks to ensure this by a number of means. It is proposed to allow councils to close their meetings to the public to consider code of conduct matters. This will minimise the disproportionate reputational damage that public reporting of such matters may cause and the consequent exposure of councils to legal action. It should be noted that where a councillor is found to have breached the code and a penalty is imposed, this will still be recorded in the minutes of the meeting, ensuring public accountability. It is also proposed to apply the same procedural protections and rights of appeal that currently apply to suspension by the director general to the new "lesser penalties".

These protections will be complemented by the new procedures to be developed by the Division of Local Government for the investigation of councillor misconduct. These will ensure that those being investigated by the Division of Local Government and facing the imposition of a penalty by the chief executive of the division, as a delegate of the director general, will be afforded procedural fairness. This Government has built a positive and collaborative relationship with the local government sector. We have worked with the sector and consulted extensively to design a system that supports the highest standards of behaviour in local government, in a simple, clear and cost-effective way. I commend the bill to the House.

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

RAIL SAFETY (ADOPTION OF NATIONAL LAW) BILL 2012

Bill introduced on motion by Mrs Gladys Berejiklian, read a first time and printed.

Second Reading

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN (Willoughby—Minister for Transport) [4.01 p.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

In June 2009, the Council of Australian Governments voted to establish single national regulators for heavy vehicles, rail safety and maritime safety as well as a national rail safety investigator. These reforms form part of the Council of Australian Governments' National Partnership Agreement to Deliver a Seamless National Economy which aims to: Reduce costs incurred by business in complying with unnecessary and inconsistent regulation across jurisdictions, enhance Australia's longer-term growth, improve workforce participation and overall labour mobility, and expand Australia's productive capacity through competition reform, to enable

stronger economic growth. The main purpose of this bill is to make the necessary legislative amendments to establish the National Rail Safety Regulator in New South Wales which will introduce more consistent regulatory arrangements for rail operators across the country by applying the Rail Safety National Law.

The bill will enable national reforms relating to rail safety to apply in New South Wales. It will enable a decision of the Council of Australian Governments, to establish a single National Rail Safety Regulator [NRSR], to be introduced in New South Wales to streamline rail safety across Australia, whilst ensuring the current standards which apply to rail safety in New South Wales are maintained and strengthened. The bill also makes amendments to the Transport Administration Act 1988 and the Passenger Transport Act 1990 to support the establishment and operation of the national regulators. The National Rail Safety Law sets out the functions, powers and objectives of the Office of the National Rail Safety Regulator which includes: administering accreditation and registration schemes under the law, working with operators to improve rail safety nationally, monitoring and enforcing compliance, providing information about rail safety and promoting public confidence in freight and passenger transport services.

The Rail Safety National Law follows an applied scheme which requires a host jurisdiction to pass the national law and for other States and Territories to pass legislation applying this law as a law of their own jurisdiction. South Australia, as the jurisdiction chosen to host the National Rail Safety Regulator, passed the national law earlier this year. The majority of jurisdictions, including New South Wales, have agreed to pass applying legislation by the end of 2012 so the regulator can commence activities on 20 January 2013. Despite many jurisdictions passing the national law, only one single national entity will be created—the Office of the National Rail Safety Regulator—which will be established in Adelaide. This entity will be comprised of the National Rail Safety Regulator a position which has recently been filled by Mr Rob Andrews, as well as two non-executive members which are yet to be appointed. The establishment of a single national regulator builds on earlier steps to achieve greater consistency between jurisdictions in Australia such as the introduction of rail safety model law.

While that reform went some way to implementing a more uniform safety regulation regime, it became clear that a single instrument and national regulating body would provide greater consistency and certainty for industry and the public. In practical terms, a single National Rail Safety Regulator will mean that rail operators who work across multiple jurisdictions will be able to get one certificate for national accreditation instead of having to apply for accreditation in up to seven States and Territories. Furthermore, one set of rules will apply to an operator's safety management system and operators will need to respond to one national regulator, rather than multiple jurisdictional regulators. In New South Wales, rail safety regulation will continue to be provided by the Independent Transport Safety Regulator under a service level agreement with the national regulator. The agreement is currently being finalised and will outline how the national regulator and the Independent Transport Safety Regulator will work together to continue delivering the high standard of rail safety regulation in New South Wales on what is Australia's busiest and most complex rail network.

Members and the public, however, can rest assured that New South Wales stringent safety standards will be maintained under the new laws. In introducing these important reforms to improve the efficiency and productivity of the rail industry, the New South Wales Government is committed to ensuring there is no lowering of rail safety standards in New South Wales. In fact, the opposite will occur, with a strengthening of the Independent Transport Safety Regulator's focus on rail. That is why the service level agreement approach has been chosen for New South Wales, as it will ensure that adequate local resources remain in place while still delivering the national consistency sought by industry. The Government has ensured the strict provisions relating to drug and alcohol testing of rail safety workers, and the strict requirements relating to fatigue management have been maintained. Regarding drug and alcohol testing: Rail operators in New South Wales will continue to be required to test a minimum of 25 per cent of their rail safety workers each year and report positive results to the regulator for investigation and prosecution where appropriate.

Ensuring operators retain minimum testing requirements and report positive results to the regulator sends a strong message that working on the New South Wales rail network with drugs or alcohol in your system will not be tolerated. Having operators undertake drug and alcohol testing is also important as they can be on site after an incident quicker than the regulator or police, meaning testing can occur in a timelier manner. In New South Wales these arrangements were introduced following the special commissions of inquiry into the Waterfall and Glenbrook rail accidents and represent some of the most stringent rail safety requirements in the country. New South Wales will also retain the maximum shift limits and mandatory break periods currently in place for train drivers which are designed to protect passengers, the public and staff themselves from the risks caused by train drivers whose ability and judgement may be impaired by a lack of rest.

Retaining these provisions does not mean that operators can rely solely on outerlimits to manage fatigue risks. Operators will also be required to consider other potential impacts on fatigue under their safety management system requirements and design work, scheduling practices accordingly. As I have said, the strict New South Wales rules relating to drug and alcohol testing of rail safety workers and the strict requirements relating to fatigue management will remain in place, while still delivering a nationally consistent approach. The Standing Council on Transport and Infrastructure Ministers agreed to retain drug and alcohol testing and fatigue management requirements for New South Wales only in the national regulations, following the position of this Government. As I said in May this year, the New South Wales Government will be taking the necessary steps to ensure the State's current strong fatigue-management and drug-testing standards remain in place.

Implementing the Rail Safety National Law and the other national transport reforms has necessitated a review of New South Wales agency responsibilities to ensure alignment with the national approach to rail safety regulation. As part of this review, Transport for NSW examined the safety regulatory functions of all affected New South Wales transport agencies, taking into account the role and objectives of Transport for NSW and other transport authorities, as well as the role of the national regulators. The changes focus the Independent Transport Safety Regulator's role on rail safety regulation—delivering rail safety regulatory services under a service level agreement with the national regulator. This will allow the Independent Transport Safety Regulator to further specialise on the complex issues surrounding rail safety regulation and on implementing the new National Rail Safety Law and regulators.

The Independent Transport Safety Regulator currently has a range of other transport safety functions under the Transport Administration Act for the strategic co-ordination, evaluation and review of bus, ferry and rail safety regulation, and for monitoring and advising the Minister on the safety performance of New South Wales transport agencies. This bill transfers these functions to Transport for NSW, consistent with its role as the Government agency responsible for managing and shaping the future of the New South Wales transport system. The Independent Transport Safety Regulator will have responsibility for delivering rail regulation in New South Wales for the National Rail Safety Regulator, similarly Roads and Maritime Services [RMS] will have responsibility for delivering regulatory services for buses, coaches and ferries under the national laws overseeing heavy vehicles and commercial vessels.

The changes establish Roads and Maritime Services as the bus safety regulator for New South Wales and transfer responsibility for the administration and enforcement of bus, taxicab, hire car and tourist service accreditation, authorisation and license requirements to Roads and Maritime Services. It is important to note that in transferring these functions from the Independent Transport Safety Regulator to Transport for NSW this bill does not establish another regulator. Transport for NSW will not administer safety legislation, nor will it be responsible for enforcing compliance of transport service providers with safety legislation.

These functions will remain the responsibility of the national regulators and will be delivered by the Independent Transport Safety Regulator and Roads and Maritime Services in New South Wales. Further, these changes will not provide Transport for New South Wales with a regulatory oversight role. Transport regulators will continue to have autonomy in the delivery of their regulatory functions. In taking on these functions, Transport for NSW will monitor and review the transport safety regulatory framework and its delivery in New South Wales to ensure that it provides for consistency across transport modes and delivers transport safety outcomes for the New South Wales community.

In addition, as the Minister I will continue to access independent advice on transport safety issues from the Office of Transport Safety Investigation [OTSI] and other existing oversight bodies such as the Audit Office of New South Wales by establishing boards of inquiry which enable reviews into specific safety issues or through the engagement of recognised external safety advisers. Importantly, as the Minister I will have the same recourse to request safety advice or request an investigation be undertaken by the National Rail Safety Regulator—through the New South Wales Independent Transport Safety Regulator or Office of Transport Safety Investigation.

The national reforms currently being introduced will also establish a National Rail Safety Investigator to better facilitate the pooling of investigatory resources from all jurisdictions. To achieve this it was agreed to extend the role of the Australian Transport Safety Bureau to operate as the rail safety investigator in all jurisdictions. As New South Wales already has an established and experienced investigator in the Office of Transport Safety Investigation, it was agreed that rail safety investigations in New South Wales will be conducted by the Office of Transport Safety Investigation on behalf of the Australian Transport Safety Bureau through a collaboration agreement.

To better support this arrangement this bill will align the powers of the Office of Transport Safety Investigation with the Commonwealth's Transport Safety Investigation Act 2003 where possible, ensuring a similar approach to all safety investigations undertaken across rail, bus and ferry services. Once the collaboration agreement is in place, the majority of rail safety investigations within New South Wales will be conducted under Commonwealth legislation. States and Territories currently have no powers to direct the Australian Transport Safety Bureau to conduct an investigation under the Commonwealth's Transport Safety Investigation Act.

To address this the Transport Safety Investigation Amendment Bill 2012 was introduced into the Australian Parliament earlier this year, providing State and Territory Ministers with the capacity to request the Australian Transport Safety Bureau to conduct an investigation into a rail transport safety matter under the Act. New South Wales is retaining legislative provisions under the Passenger Transport Act 1990 in order to maintain the necessary powers for the Office of Transport Safety Investigation to conduct investigations for buses and ferries; maintain the Minister's powers to appoint independent boards of inquiry to investigate New South Wales rail incidents; maintain the Office of Transport Safety Investigation's function to receive and investigate confidential reports of safety concerns by rail workers; and ensure the Office of Transport Safety Investigation has powers to investigate New South Wales rail incidents should the Australian Transport Safety Bureau decline to do so.

The transport reforms that will be introduced in this bill are the culmination of work undertaken over the past three years by Council of Australian Governments members, transport and roads Ministers and agency staff across the country. I acknowledge the role of the Federal Minister for Infrastructure and Transport in that regard. The New South Wales Government engaged Carolyn Walsh as an external safety expert to undertake an independent review of these reforms to ensure the strict safety standards that exist in New South Wales will continue and be strengthened. They are reforms that State, Territory and Commonwealth governments have worked on together to deliver streamlined and simpler safety regulation to those who operate on the transport networks in Australia. I trust honourable members will lend their support to this important bill and the proposed amendments that accompany the bill. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned on motion by Ms Anna Watson and set down as an order of the day for a future day.

BOARDING HOUSES BILL 2012

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 17 October 2012.

Mrs BARBARA PERRY (Auburn) [4.13 p.m.]: The Opposition supports the Boarding Houses Bill 2012, which is an important bill, but I foreshadow that some amendments may be moved in the upper House. The bill has attracted considerable attention in the sector. It focuses on exploitation of vulnerable residents in the State's boarding houses, something many advocates in the sector have clear knowledge of. In a number of examples the balance of power has been firmly in the hands of owners at the expense of many of our most marginalised citizens.

I thank the Minister and those who have assisted with the drafting of the bill. As the Minister stated in the second reading speech, many boarding house residents pay fees similar to those paid in the private rental market. Despite this they have fewer rights and protections than tenants and have no formal mechanisms to assert their rights. This bill seeks to respond to comments by the Ombudsman that the welfare of residents should not be dependent upon the goodwill and favour of individual proprietors. Instead, it should be guaranteed through a robust regulatory and monitoring framework. At the very least it will give us important information about the sector.

The Opposition is pleased that a number of deficiencies in the exposure draft bill have been remedied and I commend the Government for listening to stakeholders and for closing potential loopholes. For example, the definition of "boarding premises" now includes a complex of premises. The Opposition is also pleased that occupancy agreements now have to comply with the occupancy principles, and those occupancy principles have been extended. We are pleased that penalties are now tied to principles and that the names of proprietors will be

included in the boarding house register. The bill will make a great difference, particularly to those in what were previously known as unregistered boarding houses. In its paper entitled "Opening these doors" Newtown Neighbourhood Centre notes that boarding house residents are:

... an invisible group ... isolated and living behind closed doors, in need of access to community services and support to participate in community life.

This bill has many strengths. It reflects the successful Residential Tenancy Act 1997 of the Australian Capital Territory in 2005 in upholding occupancy agreements between occupants and grantors where residential tenancies legislation does not otherwise apply. The 12 occupancy principles seek to remedy many of the problems currently associated with boarding houses in New South Wales. They address issues such as excessive penalties and charges, which are such a problem for international students: for example, excessive utility charges or penalties against those who seek to end their agreements mid-semester. Common issues around bonds are also dealt with by the bill, limiting the amount of bond payable by an occupant to the equivalent of two weeks rent. There is also an effective dispute resolution mechanism relating to an occupancy agreement of both occupants and grantors through application to the tribunal.

However, the Opposition has some concerns about the bill, and I shall deal with these individually. The first is the monitoring of compliance. As the Minister would be aware, a major concern for many stakeholders is the ability of councils to monitor compliance, to ensure that inspections of boarding houses are completed and to implement the proposed registration process. The Opposition is concerned that we are yet to hear of funding for councils to help them monitor boarding house compliance. Additional resources will clearly be required for this. I turn next to the definitions. While the registration of properties under the bill's definition will make a difference, we believe the definitions need to be tightened. Many advocates pointed out in their submissions that one of the main indicators of an exploitative boarding house is the number of residents in a room. No doubt all members will have read and heard of the horror stories of multiple people stuck in rooms, living in squalor and filth. The Opposition believes that this issue is too important to leave to the regulation; it should be highlighted in the definitions. We believe that the definition of a general boarding house should be as follows:

... if the premises provide accommodation, for a fee or reward, where two or more residents are to share a bedroom (any one of whom has a separate agreement with the proprietor), or where the premises may be occupied by five or more residents (any one of whom has a separate agreement with the proprietor).

A number of stakeholders have pointed out that this is a reasonable and sensible inclusion. The issue of evictions is fraught. The lack of low-cost housing in New South Wales and especially Sydney means that the insecurity of boarding house accommodation for low-income and disadvantaged residents cannot be compensated by other affordable or social housing options. Therefore, one option is to have the two weeks notice. We do recognise that boarding proprietors have a strong case for needing to be able to terminate on short notice, particularly where a resident is violent.

We believe there may be circumstances in which two weeks notice is unreasonably short: for example, where an assisted boarding house is closing because the proprietor is converting it to another use. Therefore, we support the present provision that a resident is entitled to know why and how his or her agreement may be terminated and with how much notice. Also, the amount of notice must be reasonable. However, we argue that more work is needed on the development of standard occupancy agreements that set out grounds and related notice periods for different classes of boarding houses.

These could be more specific and could address issues such as eviction, two weeks notice of termination on grounds of rent arrears, one day's notice on grounds of violence and so on. Standard occupancy agreements are a sensible way to deal with particular types of housing and issues that arise from time to time. Those involved in this sector and the community generally are concerned about the welfare of children and young people. The Opposition has proposed an amendment that I urge the Government to support. The amendment proposes to prohibit children and young persons from residing in a registered assisted boarding house. As People with Disability Australia has noted, it is longstanding New South Wales government policy and practice not to allow children and young people to be registered boarding house residents. Licence conditions in the Youth and Community Services Act 1973 clearly state that no person under the age of 18 shall be a resident of such a centre.

This bill should be strengthened with regard to the protection of children and young people. As I indicated, many advocates believe that specific provisions must be added to the legislation to prohibit all children and young people from being residents of any boarding house, whether or not they have a disability.

The Opposition believes that unaccompanied children and young people under the age of 16 should be prohibited from living in any boarding house. One could argue that it is the role of the Department of Family and Community Services to intervene if there is a notification and when concerns have been raised. However, given the strain under which the department is working and its lack of resources, I am very concerned. I believe that prevention is better than waiting for something unfortunate to happen.

Finally, the legislation must extend occupancy principles to marginal tenants. The provisions should be broadened to unlock the full potential of occupancy agreements to uphold the rights of our most vulnerable. That is logical given the Opposition's support of Clover Moore's Residential Tenancies Amendment (Occupancy Agreements) Bill 2011, which was recently debated in this House and which upheld protections for many marginal renters who are not subject to mainstream residential tenancies legislation. Occupancy agreements must also be extended to other marginal renters—for example, occupants of backpacker hostels. The Council of Social Service of New South Wales submission pointed out that long-term residents of backpacker hotels and hostels placed there by Housing NSW reinforce the need for occupancy agreements to be extended. During debate on the Residential Tenancies Amendment (Occupancy Agreements) Bill the Minister said that the Government could consider that proposal. However, it is not too late to include it in this legislation. Extending occupancy agreements is important and it would uphold the rights of persons who experience disadvantage.

To say that assisted boarding houses are not ideal residences for people with disabilities or any other vulnerable assisted people is an understatement. They are contrary to any concept of person-centred support, community participation and the other things we regularly support for people with disabilities. Governments can make as much noise as they like about human rights principles, but the bottom line is that the profit focus of many operators of boarding houses, which house some of our most vulnerable people with disabilities and which sometimes take what little they have, should be an anathema to us all. As the Minister knows, many people in the sector believe that only organisations working on a not-for-profit basis should be involved in the provision of assisted boarding houses, and strong arguments have been put in support of that proposition.

Many people have spent a great deal of time poring over the draft legislation and the exposure bill. I believe that the legislation is stronger as a result of that and I congratulate everyone involved in that process. I thank Tenants NSW, and in particular Dr Chris Martin. As I noted in my speech on the Residential Tenancies Amendment (Occupancy Agreements) Bill 2011, that organisation has been an extremely effective advocate and educator about occupancy rights. I thank Gary Moore from Homelessness NSW for his perspective and his input on behalf of some of the most vulnerable and marginalised people in our community. I also thank Sister Maree Harris for her years of advocacy on behalf of boarding house residents, and Lisa Burns and others from the Newtown Neighbourhood Centre who have provided advice and done important work. I particularly thank Matthew Bowden and Sonia Price Kelly for their work on the impact of this legislation on people with disabilities. I have the utmost respect for them and they are testament to the importance of advocates in the disability sector.

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS (Lane Cove—Minister for Fair Trading) [4.27 p.m.]: I am pleased to support the Boarding Houses Bill 2012. The bill contains a package of major reforms to the boarding house industry in New South Wales, which has been subject to decades of neglect. Boarding houses are an established segment of the low-cost housing market, providing shelter to many people who would otherwise struggle to pay for privately provided accommodation. According to the 2006 census, about 7,500 people in New South Wales live in boarding houses, the majority of which are located in the Sydney metropolitan area.

Boarding houses in New South Wales are either licensed or unlicensed. Boarding houses accommodating two or more people with a disability are required to be licensed under the Youth and Community Services Act 1973. All other boarding houses are unlicensed, although they must comply with planning controls, building standards and fire safety legislation. Boarding house accommodation can have advantages for people who are on very low incomes or who have complex problems. Accommodation charges are lower than in private residential tenancies and the greater flexibility of agreements suits people who move from place to place. The communal living offered by boarding houses can also provide marginalised people with an informal support network. However, these very features mean that boarding house residents are often among the most vulnerable in our community.

The Government has long been concerned that regulatory gaps or flaws are exposing these residents to unacceptable risks to their safety and well-being. For example, standards under the Local Government (General) Regulation 1993 relating to maximum occupancies per room, cleanliness, light and ventilation do not apply to smaller boarding houses. Further, the fundamental differences between private residential tenancies and

boarding houses mean that boarding houses are not covered by the Residential Tenancies Act 2010. This means residents do not have rights in relation to minimum notice periods for evictions or fee increases, or access to dispute resolution procedures.

As my colleague the Minister for Ageing and Disability Services has explained, this bill is the result of a thorough analysis of the issues and extensive consultation with residents, housing groups, local councils and boarding house operators. It represents a comprehensive, modernised legislative approach to the regulation of the boarding house industry, consisting of the following elements: a requirement for boarding houses to list on a central register administered by Fair Trading; provision of occupancy rights to boarding house residents; extension of accommodation standards to all boarding houses; mandatory inspections of boarding houses by local councils and enhanced powers of entry; an enhanced regulatory scheme for licensed boarding houses; and increased penalties for non-compliance with legislative requirements.

The bill applies to two categories of boarding house: general boarding houses and assisted boarding houses. General boarding houses are those unlicensed boarding houses that provide beds, for a fee or reward, for use by five or more residents, who are not the proprietor or manager or a relative of the proprietor or manager, as their principal place of residence. The threshold of five unrelated residents was chosen so as to avoid placing an undue regulatory burden on arrangements, such as families who take in boarders to earn some extra money. Excluded from the definition of general boarding houses are hotels, motels, backpackers hostels, serviced apartments, premises provided in connection with a person's employment or by an educational body, health facilities, nursing homes and aged care facilities, retirement villages, residential parks, social housing, and refuge or crisis accommodation. These exclusions either provide accommodation that is not a principal place of residence or are regulated by other means.

The second category of assisted boarding houses aligns with those boarding houses that are currently licensed, and covers boarding houses accommodating two or more persons with additional needs. Both general and assisted boarding houses are required to comply with the registration and occupancy rights provisions in parts 2 and 3 of the bill. Parts 2 and 3 will be under my administration, with NSW Fair Trading responsible for ensuring their effective operation. My colleague the Minister for Ageing and Disability Services has provided a detailed outline of part 4 of the bill, which will be under his administration and deals with the specific regulatory requirements applying to assisted boarding houses. The proposal for the Boarding House Register established by part 2 of the bill arose out of concerns that there are numerous boarding houses that may not be complying with legislative requirements or in which vulnerable residents may be residing without access to appropriate services and protections. At the same time there is also a lack of robust or up-to-date information about the boarding house industry to inform ongoing regulation and future policy reforms.

Both general and assisted boarding houses are required to notify the Commissioner for Fair Trading of the following particulars to be recorded on the Boarding House Register: the name and the residential or business address of each proprietor of the boarding house; the name and address of the boarding house; whether the boarding house is a general or assisted boarding house; whether development consent or approval is required under the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 to use the premises as a boarding house and whether such consent or approval has been granted; the number of residents; the number of residents who are under 18 years of age; the name of any manager of the boarding house; the total number of bedrooms provided; and any other particulars that are approved by the commissioner or prescribed by regulation.

The Commissioner for Fair Trading may also record on the register details of any enforcement action taken against a boarding house or its staff. The following information from the register is to be made available to the public: the name and address of the boarding house; the name and the residential or business address of each proprietor of the boarding house; whether the boarding house is a general or regulated assisted boarding house; and such other information as is prescribed by regulation. The initial registration of a boarding house is to be accompanied by a one-off registration fee of \$100. This fee will be used to cover the establishment costs of the register and a small proportion of the administration costs for the first year of operation. The ongoing costs will be met from within Fair Trading's existing budget. In order to ensure the ongoing accuracy of the register, boarding house proprietors will be required to notify the commissioner of any changes to the boarding house particulars, either annually or, in the case of a change of proprietor, within 28 days of the change.

Once a boarding house is registered, the relevant local council is required by the bill to undertake an inspection of the boarding house within 12 months of the first registration, following any re-registration after a period of being unregistered or following any change of proprietor. The bill calls this inspection an "initial compliance investigation" and its aim is to ascertain whether the boarding house complies with requirements

under the Local Government Act and the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act, including requirements in relation to building, fire safety, the number of residents, light, ventilation and hygiene. The initial compliance investigation will be invaluable in assisting local councils to gain a comprehensive picture of boarding houses in their area and in bringing sub-standard boarding houses into line with the minimum standards of accommodation we expect in our community.

The bill provides that, for the purpose of conducting an initial compliance investigation, a council employee or authorised person may enter a registered boarding house without a search warrant. That is provided the person possesses written authority from the council, that written notice has been provided and that the visit is at a reasonable daytime hour or during the boarding house's actual or usual business hours. Notice does not need to be given if the inspector enters with the proprietor's or manager's consent, if there is an existing or reasonably likely risk to health or safety, or if entry is required urgently and the general manager of the council has given written authorisation for entry without notice. The bill authorises reasonable use of force to conduct the initial compliance investigation, but only if the council has provided specific written authority for such force to be used. Any use of force must be carried out with as little damage as possible and compensation paid for any damage, except in the case of damage associated with an inspection that reveals a contravention of any applicable legislation.

Part 3 of the bill deals with occupancy rights for boarding house residents. The nature of boarding house accommodation is different from that of private rental accommodation. Boarders do not have a right to exclusive occupation of the whole premises or the right to control over the premises that characterises a residential tenancy. It is not, therefore, appropriate for boarders to have the same rights as tenants under a residential tenancy agreement. However, the fundamental human need for shelter, combined with the vulnerability of many boarding house residents, provide a compelling case for granting boarding house residents some basic rights in relation to their accommodation. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

The bill borrows from the Australian Capital Territory's approach to this issue by adopting a largely principles-based approach to occupancy rights. This means that the rights in the bill are generally expressed in terms of certain broad principles, which can then be adapted to suit different circumstances and different types of boarding accommodation. It is envisaged that, where necessary, the occupancy agreement between a resident and the boarding house proprietor will contain a more detailed description of the rights applying to that specific occupancy. The bill's requirement that occupancy agreements are to be in writing will ensure that both parties are aware of the terms of their rights and obligations.

The occupancy principles are set out in schedule 1 to the bill and provide that a resident is entitled to live in premises that are reasonably clean, are in a reasonable state of repair and are reasonably secure; a resident is entitled to know the rules of the boarding house before moving in; a resident may not be required to pay a penalty for a breach of the occupancy agreement or the boarding house rules; a resident is entitled to quiet enjoyment of the premises; a proprietor is entitled to enter the premises at a reasonable time on reasonable grounds to carry out inspections or repairs or for other reasonable purposes; a resident is entitled to four weeks written notice of an increase in the occupancy fee; if a resident is to be charged for the use of a utility, the resident is to be notified of this before or upon entering the agreement and the amount charged is to be based on the cost of providing the utility and a reasonable measure or estimate of the resident's use; a resident is entitled to know why and how the occupancy may be terminated, and how much notice will be given before eviction; a resident may not be evicted without reasonable written notice; a proprietor and resident should try to resolve disputes using reasonable dispute resolution processes; a resident is to be given a written receipt for any money paid to the proprietor; and security deposits are to be limited to an amount equivalent to two weeks occupancy fee and the proprietor is to repay the security deposit, less certain allowable deductions, within 14 days after the end of an occupancy agreement.

As a result of stakeholder consultation and careful consideration, three of the occupancy principles are drafted in more prescriptive terms than the others. The requirement to provide reasonable notice of eviction provides that in determining what is reasonable the proprietor may take into account the safety of other residents, the proprietor and the boarding house manager. This provision addresses the legitimate concerns of boarding house proprietors about their ability to evict residents who are violent or threatening. The requirement to provide four weeks written notice of fee increases aims to ensure that residents living on very limited means are able to plan their budget. The principle regarding security deposits spells out the expenses that a proprietor can deduct from a resident's security deposit, as not refunding security deposits is a common source of disputes. Allowable deductions are the reasonable cost of repairing damage—other than fair wear and tear—caused by the

resident or their invitee; any occupation fees or other charges owed by the resident; reasonable cleaning costs; the reasonable cost of replacing locks altered, removed or added by the resident without consent; and any other amounts prescribed by regulation.

Of course, equally as important as the granting of occupancy rights is the means for both parties to resolve disputes over those rights in a low-cost, efficient and effective manner. It is of course preferable for disputes to be resolved by negotiation between the parties. NSW Fair Trading will provide advice to both residents and proprietors about the application of the occupancy principles. If the dispute cannot be resolved by negotiation, the bill provides for parties to apply to the Consumer, Trader and Tenancy Tribunal. The tribunal encourages parties to attempt conciliation again before proceeding to a hearing. If a hearing is necessary the tribunal is empowered to make a range of orders including payments of compensation where a party suffers loss as a result of a violation of the occupancy principles.

Overall, the occupancy principles are not onerous but provide a level of protection where currently none exists, whilst also recognising the flexible nature of boarding house accommodation. The reforms contained in this bill are long overdue, and it is time to take action to address issues faced by both residents and proprietors in this vital industry. I take this opportunity to thank the Minister for Ageing and Disability Services for his leadership on this issue—leadership that is well overdue and that should have been taken many years ago—as well as Ms Anne-Marie Elias from his office who has contributed greatly to the final bill before the House today. I also acknowledge the Minister for Citizenship and Communities who has been a major force in driving this new legislation with respect to student accommodation. Lastly, I thank Dr Rhys Bollen and Ms Diana Holy from NSW Fair Trading for their hard work in shaping what is a balanced and effective bill, as well as Mrs Belinda Russell, Mr Tim James and Mr Adrian Pryke from my office. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) [4.41 p.m.]: I am delighted to join my colleague the member for Auburn and shadow Minister for Ageing in speaking in debate on the Boarding Houses Amendment Bill 2012. I state at the outset that the Opposition will not oppose this legislation but it reserves the right to move amendments in the Legislative Council. This is the second bill relating to boarding houses that has been considered by the House this year. Sadly, the Government chose to oppose a far more comprehensive bill that was introduced earlier this year by Clover Moore. The Opposition supports extending protections to residents of boarding houses in New South Wales. The Government undertook a review process, provided Opposition members with an advanced copy of the exposure draft bill and called for comments. I have been advised that the Government has moved to incorporate several of those changes—a commendable approach to a complex piece of legislation that will impact on the lives of vulnerable people.

The Minister for Fair Trading said that this bill is about leadership. But what is not a sign of good leadership is the ramming through of legislation prior to it being reviewed and commented on by the Legislation Review Committee, which is disappointing. I do not criticise the Minister because I do not think it was under his control but it was certainly under the control of the Leader of the House. I am disappointed as many members who are no longer in the Chamber would have liked to speak in debate on this bill. I wish briefly to deal with some aspects of this legislation. This legislation covers both licensed and unlicensed boarding houses in New South Wales. At present licensed boarding houses are covered by the Youth and Community Services Act 1973 which will be superseded by this bill. The bill will establish a two-tier regulatory scheme for registrable boarding houses, including general boarding houses and assisted boarding houses—a proposal that has been amended considerably from the draft bill. I commend the Government for these amendments, in particular, those that have been made to the original proposal of residential centres for vulnerable persons.

This bill, like Clover Moore's bill which was debated earlier this year, features a set of basic rights and responsibilities within an occupancy agreement. As previous speakers have said the 12 occupancy principles include the right to clean and secure premises, the right to be notified of an increase in fees, the right for limitations on bonds and securities and an obligation to undertake dispute resolution processes to resolve issues. As the member for Auburn noted, the Opposition and third parties have previously raised several issues with the Government. I take this opportunity to touch on a couple of those that were mentioned by the member for Auburn.

As both Ministers outlined, local government will be required to inspect the registered boarding houses within 12 months, which is commendable. Additional powers will be given to local councils to inspect the boarding houses but it is important that additional funding be provided to local government. So far I have not been advised whether additional funding will be provided to local government and I ask the Minister to address

that issue. Also of concern to the Opposition is the Government's decision not to cover other categories of marginal renters in this legislation. Vulnerable renters not covered by this legislation include lodgers in private homes, people in share houses and permanent lodgers at hotels and motels.

I agree wholeheartedly with the comment of the member for Auburn that the Opposition is concerned about the need to strengthen this legislation with respect to children and young people under the age of 16 years. It should be an offence if children and young people under the age of 16 years are unaccompanied in boarding houses. I am sure that further consideration will be given to that matter in the Legislative Council. I refer also to the need to expand the definition of "boarding house" to include all facilities where two or more people are required to share a room. The Opposition also is concerned about foreign students who take up residence in several forms of accommodation that are not covered by this legislation but who are in dire need of protection.

This legislation is a step in the right direction but several aspects of it could be improved. I take this opportunity to thank the Minister and his office for providing the Opposition with a briefing which was very much appreciated. I also thank the shadow Minister for Ageing, and Minister for Disability Services for her assistance in the preparation of my notes and for in-detail consideration of the briefing by the Minister's office. As previously stated, I foreshadow that the Opposition will move amendments in the Legislative Council. I commend the Government for introducing this legislation and look forward to continuing to work to protect the rights of vulnerable renters throughout New South Wales.

Mr VICTOR DOMINELLO (Ryde—Minister for Citizenship and Communities, and Minister for Aboriginal Affairs) [4.48 p.m.]: In debating the Boarding Houses Bill 2012 I wish to provide a chronology of the rights of boarders and lodgers since the introduction of the Residential Tenancy Act 1987. As we all know, and has been discussed in this Chamber time and again, without doubt boarders and lodgers are the most marginal and vulnerable people in our society and are commonly referred to as marginal renters. The Residential Tenancy Act, which was implemented in about 1987, did not make provision for the protection of boarders and lodgers which is curious, given that they are so vulnerable. In 1999 the New South Wales Labor Government conducted a review on the position of boarders and lodgers to determine whether they would be afforded the protection of legislative coverage. I refer to the New South Wales Parliamentary Library Briefing Paper No 9/99 entitled, "Tenancy rights in NSW" which was prepared by Rachel Simpson. Paragraph 5.4 provides:

A review of the position of boarders and lodgers is currently being undertaken by the Department of Fair Trading to determine whether or not legislative coverage should be extended to residents of boarding houses.

In 2005 the Government was asked question No. 1323 on notice, which stated:

Does the Government have any intention of giving boarders and lodgers any tenancy rights or legal standing, as most other Labor governments have done in other States and Territories, as a result of the current review?

Mr Gareth Ward: What was the answer?

Mr VICTOR DOMINELLO: The answer provided was:

The issue of boarders and lodgers will not be addressed in the current review of residential tenancy law.

Fast forward four years and we were still in a lacuna in which vulnerable people were not being protected. A September 2009 report of the Standing Committee on Social Issues on homelessness and low-cost rental accommodation contained recommendation 17, which provided:

That Housing NSW should undertake a review of boarding houses in New South Wales, specifically.

... examine methods of protecting the tenancy rights of boarders, including but not limited to legislative possibilities to amend the *Residential Tenancy Act 1987*.

In its response to that report the Labor Government said it supported recommendation 17 in principle and was considering issues around occupancy rights and support options for vulnerable people. That brings me to where I fit into this picture. Four years ago I was elected in a by-election. The growing presence of international students was one of the main issues of the by-election campaign. International students are a great thing for New South Wales because they bring \$6 billion to our economy, but they were increasingly being housed in substandard accommodation. Ten, 15 and sometimes up to 20 international students were being squashed and

squeezed into modified three-bedroom houses that normally would only safely cater for perhaps five persons. There was ample evidence of garages, bedrooms and dining rooms being boarded up and of dodgy electrical wiring connecting the various rooms. The situation was terrible.

We have an obligation to protect international students. Students who had come to the greatest country on earth for a first class education were not being provided with safe or proper accommodation and they did not have any rights because effectively they were boarders or lodgers. In 2008 after we won the by-election we gathered evidence and started building momentum in the local community, particularly in Marsfield, which is close to Macquarie University. On 21 February 2010 we held our first rally, and more than 200 people attended. The current Attorney General also attended in his capacity as the member for Epping. We addressed the rally and heard people's concerns about the amenity of the area and about the safety of boarders and lodgers, who were primarily international students.

On 25 February 2010 I made a private member's statement in this Chamber during which I outlined my concerns for the residents and international students of Ryde. On 19 May 2010 in this Chamber I provided another account of growing community concerns regarding the poor state of accommodation endured by many international students. I called on the State Government to enact legislation to provide some protection mechanisms for international students and for boarders and lodgers generally. I called on the Government to ensure that local councils had the power to call into line unscrupulous operators who effectively were preying on vulnerable international students.

At the time local councils had to go through the cumbersome Environmental Planning and Assessment Act—which, thankfully, is being reviewed by the Minister for Planning as we speak—or the Local Government Act, neither of which had sufficient teeth. Even when councils could do something, the penalties were only of the order of a couple of hundred dollars or the like. Given that the unscrupulous operators were making tens of thousands of dollars in profit, a penalty of the magnitude of hundreds of dollars was hardly a discouragement. On 20 May I gathered 1,013 signatures on a petition. I wrote to the then Minister for Planning, Tony Kelly, requesting a government response to the position I presented to the Chamber in February 2010.

Mr Gareth Ward: Did you get it?

Mr VICTOR DOMINELLO: I did not get a response. It was clear that the then Labor Government was not going to do anything about the issue. I felt it was incumbent on the Liberal-Nationals Coalition to introduce a private member's bill in opposition, and we did. The bill that was introduced on 26 November 2010 is the basis for many of the mechanisms in the bill before the House. It provided powers for local councils. It also provided for investigatory powers and evidentiary provisions and a system of registration. Before anything else could happen the Parliament was prorogued on 22 December 2010 by Premier Kristina Keneally. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

After 10 years of reviews, inquiries, reports, and petitions to this Chamber nothing had been done to protect some of the most vulnerable people in our society. Thankfully the people of New South Wales elected the O'Farrell-Stoner Government, which is providing responsible and stable government and genuine leadership for the future. I commend the Minister for Disability and Ageing for taking the lead on this issue. I do not pretend that this is not a complicated issue; clearly it is complicated. The point is that the Minister for Disability and Ageing took the lead and gathered the relevant Ministers together, in particular Minister Roberts and Minister Page, both of whom I applaud. The Minister made sure that we could introduce to the Parliament a bill to provide protection for vulnerable people in this State.

The bill contains some important and broad-reaching mechanisms. I particularly commend Minister Constance for providing a mechanism in schedule 1 that will essentially enable a system of rights for those boarders and lodgers who were without effective protection under the Residential Tenancy Act. I acknowledge my local parliamentary colleagues Mr Greg Smith, the member for Epping, and Mr Anthony Roberts, the member for Lane Cove, and the Federal member for Bennelong, Mr John Alexander. They have worked closely with the community to ensure that reform was undertaken. Councillor Bill Pickering, Councillor Artin Etmekdjian, Councillor Roy Maggio, Councillor Sarkis Yedelian and Councillor Terry Perram were also very supportive of the community and the proposed reforms.

I commend members of the residents action group Marsfield Against Residential Suffocation [MARS]: Alan Patrick, Eva Patrick, Peter Groenestyn, Gloria Dartnell, Neil Yakalis, Sylvain Flore, Rodney Simmons, Helen Simmons, Doug Sun, Beryl James, Brian Rawnsley and Bruce Taylor. I also acknowledge the work

undertaken by and the advocacy of the Redfern Legal Centre and Tenants NSW for supporting me when I introduced my private member's bill in 2010. In conclusion, the member for Lakemba, like me, is a by-election baby. We came into this Chamber four years ago today. Earlier today the member for Lakemba came to congratulate me—and in that sense himself—on our four-year anniversary. That caused me to reflect on what had brought me to this place and what I had achieved since being here, and I referred to my inaugural speech. I reiterate the words of Javier Perez de Cuellar that appear in that speech:

Let all bear in mind that a society is judged not so much by the standards attained by its more affluent and privilege members as by the quality of life which is able to assure for its weakest members.

I also said at that time that the desire to recognise the most vulnerable is an important value that has driven me throughout my life and my work and ultimately shaped my decision that led me into this House. It is a moment of symbolism for me that four years to the day I was elected an O'Farrell-Stoner Coalition Government has introduced legislation that protects the vulnerable and the needy and gives real strength to those most in need. I am very proud of all who have been involved in this campaign.

Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) [5.02 p.m.]: It is with much pleasure that I make a contribution to the Boarding Houses Bill 2012. I agree with the member for Bankstown that more members would have liked the opportunity to speak to this bill. The term "boarding houses" has, to date, covered both licensed and non-licensed boarding homes, particularly student accommodation, which has recently been investigated by the Social Policy Committee, of which I am a member. The bill sets up a two-tier regulatory scheme. The first tier deals with general boarding houses or registrable boarding houses that provide accommodation for up to five people. The second tier deals with assisted boarding houses that provide accommodation for two or more persons with additional needs, which are defined as aged-related fragility, mental illness or disability. Those additional needs must result in the need for care and support services involving assistance or supervision of daily tasks and personal care.

The former member for Sydney, Ms Clover Moore, who was pushed out of this place by the O'Farrell Government in a shameful use of power, is a supporter of the rights of marginal renters both in New South Wales and nationally. She is a strong advocate for our homes to be a place of respite from the world or a place where we long to be when we are travelling, when we are sick, cold or tired. Our homes should be a place in which we can be ourselves. Our homes should be comfortable, safe and secure. I admire the conviction of the former member for Sydney to represent those living in boarding houses who need to have protections enshrined in legislation that are not covered by the Residential Tenancies Act—for instance, those at risk of eviction without any reason or warning and those who have lost their basic human rights. Accordingly, I support the extra provisions for occupancy agreements.

I am also a supporter of the boarding house register and inspections; however, it comes at a cost. The Government must ensure that councils will not bear any more cost shifting in undertaking these responsibilities—they are already under stress from the cost shifting that has already occurred. The Government should extend the occupancy principles to include the right to the quiet enjoyment of one's home, a clean and secure home, written receipts, being charged for one's fare share of use of utilities and the carrying out of inspections, which is vitally important. Reasonable notice should be given before any rental increase or eviction notice is given and, importantly, renters should have access to the Consumer Trading and Tenancy Tribunal to resolve disputes. These are fair and reasonable rights for any person living in rented accommodation in this State.

It is not acceptable that people should be treated as second-class citizens because they rent or live in a boarding house. Landlords should also be held accountable for the speedy return of bonds and not use them as a threat. I have heard of many instances where some grantors have used the withholding of a bond to threaten occupants. This disgraceful practice should be under tighter scrutiny. I also support any further amendments to ensure that marginal renters have access to a dispute resolution mechanism under the Consumer, Trading and Tenancy Tribunal.

It is a longstanding government policy under the Youth and Community Services Act 1973 that children and young people are not allowed to be residents of boarding houses. There are many reasons for that practice and many advocates believe provision must be made to exclude all children and young people as residents of boarding houses. I am one of those advocates. I feel very strongly about it. In many cases children and young people do not have the ability to speak on behalf of themselves nor do they understand legislation or regulation around certain issues, especially those with a disability. I urge the Government to ensure that that is enshrined in the bill along with the amendments foreshadowed by the member for Auburn.

Mr GREG SMITH (Epping—Attorney General, and Minister for Justice) [5.08 p.m.]: I support the Boarding Houses Bill 2012. I also acknowledge the contributions that have been made by members from both sides of the House to this debate. In particular, I acknowledge the contributions of Mr Andrew Constance, the Minister for Ageing, and Minister for Disability Services, Mr Anthony Roberts, the member for Lane Cove, and Mr Victor Dominello, the member for Ryde. As stated by the Minister for Citizenship and Communities, and Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Victor Dominello, Marsfield is partly in my electorate and partly in his electorate.

There is quite a civil war by residents against unauthorised boarding houses. The residents action group, Marsfield Against Residential Suffocation [MARS], is supported by Alan Patrick and many others, and it has played a key role in the Marsfield area. The Macquarie University did not provide sufficient student accommodation. It encourages overseas students to live in the Marsfield area. People were buying ordinary three or four bedroom premises and turning them into dwellings occupied by 15 or 16 people. The premises had few walls and very small spaces. Nearby residents protested against the smell, the noise, the danger of fire, the vermin and cockroaches, et cetera.

Great pressure was applied by the Marsfield Against Residential Suffocation group upon Ryde City Council. I understand that some members of Ryde City Council owned potential boarding houses, but others fought against development approval vehemently, particularly the Liberal members Bill Pickering, Artin Etmekdjian and Roy Maggio. In relation to one application for a boarding house approval which Marsfield Against Residential Suffocation objected to, the group was successful. After considering all aspects of the proposal, the council resolved that the development application should be refused. The council published its reasons. I will quote the council's decision because the complaint describes the typical problems of boarding houses in that area and in many areas particularly where overseas students attend a university or colleges of advanced education. Those students need accommodation, and they cannot afford to pay a lot. The council's decision states:

After carefully considering all aspects of the proposal Council resolved:

- (a) That the development application be refused for the following reasons:-
 - (i) The conversion of the existing dwelling to a boarding house is inconsistent with the desired character of the area.

All of the illegal boarding houses breach the character of the area: The council's decision also states:

- (ii) Approval of this application has the potential to have an adverse impact on local amenity and adjoining residential properties.
- (iii) No information is provided to ensure that the accommodation will provide affordable housing.

The Australian Broadcasting Corporation, particularly through the *7.30 Report* for New South Wales and *Stateline*, ran several programs showing that young Asian women were being exploited and coerced into prostitution in some of the boarding houses, and that was the way they paid for their accommodation. This was a pretty bad situation. The law just was not strong enough to deal with all those problems. We should be supporting this legislation because it gives teeth to the investigation of these issues and to councils that reject applications. The council's decision also states:

- (iv) The proposal is contrary to the public interest and incompatible with the local community as evidenced by the significant number of submissions received.
- (v) No consideration is given to the concentration of boarding houses and their impact on individual streets and suburbs.
- (vi) The imposition on Councillors to consider a development application to an illegal property under local regulations that is already operating in an illegal manner as a boarding house.

The decision goes on to state other conditions and reasons. As I already have dealt with the aspect of international students, I will deal with other provisions in the legislation that are important. Subdivision 2 deals with investigative powers. Under clause 74, which sets out the offence provisions, the bill confers clear powers to require the production of documents and to require answers to questions, even self-incriminatory answers. The bill sets out quite significant offences and quite significant fines. The bill also confers powers of entry into premises, so that premises can be inspected and searched to ascertain whether the property is being used illegally and for issuing compliance notices, and prescribes penalties for failure to comply with notices.

It is important to highlight that the penalties are daily penalties. They are not throwaway amounts, such as a \$500 fine. The penalties will accumulate until the offence is stopped. That is an appropriate form of penalty because of the exploitation that has been occurring, the profiteering, the disregard for the amenity of neighbours and the disregard for the quiet enjoyment of a home by ordinary family people who want to live in a beautiful tree-lined suburb. Marsfield is a beautiful suburb, yet it was absolutely invaded by illegal boarding house operators. I commend the Minister for the introduction of this legislation. I urge all members of the House to support it.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE (Bega—Minister for Ageing, and Minister for Disability Services) [5.15 p.m.], in reply: I thank the members who contributed to the debate on the Boarding Houses Bill 2012: the member for Auburn; the Minister for Fair Trading; the member for Bankstown; the Minister for Citizenship and Communities, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and member for Ryde; the member for Shellharbour; and the Attorney General, Minister for Justice and member for Epping. I also thank the Opposition for its support of the bill. I particularly highlight the efforts of the shadow Minister for Ageing, Disability Services and Mental Health over the past couple of months. As part of her constructive approach, she sought more information and engaged in consultation on behalf of the Opposition. I thank her for her efforts. I acknowledge that the member for Bankstown provided a submission that called for a response to the exposure draft. There were a number of issues in her submission that I will deal with in detail later. The submission conveys a number of incorrect messages, and I will address them.

The Legislative Council requires legislation by 23 October. Given that there has been consultation, an exposure draft, and that the Government has had to very carefully consider all the submissions, there is limited time for further input if the legislation commences operation on 1 January. Of course, that is my first and foremost concern. This bill will be debated in the Legislative Council and amendments will be moved. On behalf of the Minister for Fair Trading and on my own behalf, I will examine the amendments very closely. I again thank the member for Auburn for flagging that the Opposition will move some amendments in the Legislative Council, and of course some of the issues will be addressed during debate in that House. I will not take up too much of the time of the House this evening, but I will touch on a number of key issues that were raised during debate.

In relation to the issue of marginal renters, it is very important for members to recognise that first and foremost this legislation is about boarding houses. I know that other issues confront marginal renters across the State and that there is other legislation that potentially could examine those issues. But I think it is very important to flag at the outset that this bill is designed to address boarding houses. As the member for Auburn, each member of this House and people involved in the consultation know, there is a lack of data relating to the unlicensed sector. That will be picked up once registration is implemented and we can begin to gather requisite information. The Government has made it clear that the legislation will be reviewed after 18 months. As part of that, we want to ensure that while the legislative framework is in place we, informed by the review, will have some flexibility in the regulations that will enable us to examine some of the data that is collected. I will deal with that in greater detail shortly. The issue raised by a number of Opposition members related to local government. I refer those members to clause 26, which refers to the relationship between this legislation and other Acts. The clause states:

Nothing in this Division limits the exercise of powers or other functions by councils under the Local Government Act 1993 or any other Act.

Local government will be responsible for undertaking the inspections. A local council is required to inspect a registered boarding house within 12 months of registration to determine whether the premises comply with planning, building and fire safety requirements and accommodation standards. An initial compliance investigation is not required when the premises have been inspected in the previous 12 months. Ageing, Disability and Home Care is responsible for monitoring assisted boarding houses for their compliance with the standards that apply to those premises. Local council can charge a fee for conducting an inspection. The decision to charge a fee and the amount of the fee is a matter for local council discretion. I am advised that the current legislation covers that matter. However, I note that the member for Auburn raised that concern, and I am happy to have that double or triple checked.

Children living in boarding houses is a difficult issue. It is fair to say that no-one wants to see children residing in boarding house conditions. I suspect—we do not yet have a full analysis of the data and we will not do so until we start to register boarding houses—that we need to know how many children are involved. The issue is difficult because boarding house operators may have to turn away a child who is homeless. We must

find a balance between a boarding house being able to accept that child and requiring mandatory notification to the Director General of the Family and Community Services so that we can start to look at alternative options for that young person. I note that under section 9 of the Act registrable boarding houses will be required to register the number of residents under 18 years of age.

As for assisted boarding houses, processes will be put in place to ensure that managers notify Family and Community Services if a young person without a competent relative is living on the premises so that Family and Community Services can start to build supports around that young person and, obviously, identify alternative accommodation. Under section 85 of the Act, there is power to remove a young person with a disability from unauthorised premises; if the young person remains, he or she will be considered a child at risk under the children and young persons care and protection legislation and the Director General of Family and Community Services can take immediate and appropriate action.

It is not an easy issue. For the information of the member for Auburn, I believe the issue relating to children, including homeless children, will need to form part of the review. That is the challenge. If a child is homeless that child is at risk on the street. If the child is residing in a boarding house we can ensure that there is appropriate notification to the relevant authority and start to build appropriate supports around that child by providing appropriate alternative accommodation. I do not want to send the message that children should be residing in boarding houses; I want to ensure that we have further safety nets to address the issue. The Opposition has flagged amendments in that regard, and the Government will examine them in due course.

Currently, New South Wales has 23 licensed boarding houses. That is a significant decline in the number of licensed boarding houses that existed 10 years ago. Much of that has come about as a direct consequence of governments investing in the specialised disability support system. But this is not only about disability; it is about mental health, chronic illness, elderly people and people with disabilities who require additional assistance. We are talking about private enterprise, private arrangements. I note the feedback from people with disabilities who did not want to be identified as requiring additional assistance. Again, this is about striking a balance. Through the legislation the Government has sought to provide the necessary safety nets to ensure that in the first instance government gets the information and then ensures that people receive assistance through appropriate means.

I hope that covers some of the issues raised by Opposition members. As I said, we have had many reviews of this issue over the years. The Government managed to undertake a consultation process after releasing a draft exposure bill. It is fair to say that people have recognised, certainly through this debate but more broadly in the sector, that some good changes have been made as a result of the submission process. We believe that this legislation will strike the balance between maintaining a viable boarding house sector and providing the necessary safeguards to people who in the past have been left in unacceptable conditions. The Minister for Fair Trading thanked a number of people and I echo his comments. In particular, I recognise Louise Blazejowska, who has done an enormous job in liaising across agencies to get the bill before Cabinet, before the House and now through this place and into the upper House.

I recognise and thank all the organisations that have advocated for these changes over a long period. The bill is an important step. I note that some organisations—in particular the Property Owners Association—are opposed to these reforms. I recognise that the Government has taken on board suggestions made by the Property Owners Association. The association will continue to champion the cause that the legislation should not proceed. But I am sorry—this is about getting a balance and getting it right. I believe all members support that balance and the thrust of the legislation because it is the right thing to do. As I said, for too long everyone has been aware of the unacceptable circumstances in which some people have found themselves. In particular I recognise the Ombudsman and the Coroner, who over the years have made some serious recommendations to government in terms of changes. I am pleased that the O'Farrell Government has taken this step and that the Opposition is supporting the bill. I look forward to seeing what amendments arise in the other place. Of course, the Government will consider those amendments in due course.

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

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Third Reading

Motion by Mr Andrew Constance agreed to:

That this bill be now read a third time.

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

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

TAMWORTH BUSINESS CHAMBER QUALITY BUSINESS AWARDS

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth) [5.29 p.m.]: The Tamworth Business Chamber is one of the most progressive chambers in New South Wales. It boasts one of the largest memberships of any regional chamber. I recognise and acknowledge its efforts in driving the Tamworth and regional economy in support of businesses. The chamber does a terrific job advocating for businesses and, as a previous board member and a current member of the Tamworth Business Chamber, it has my full support. It covers a number of areas very well. It hosts leaders forums and business breakfasts. Led by its president, Tim Coates, it provides advice on a range of issues, which can relate to accommodation, bookkeeping, professional services, employment and training, food, retail, motor vehicles, restaurants, signage, tourism and transport. A unique aspect of the Tamworth Business Chamber is its junior chamber, the membership of which boasts more than 80 local young business people, led by chairperson Jye Segboar. The junior chamber is for people between the ages of 18 and 35; they find their membership a great way to get connected. They are the leaders of tomorrow, feeding into the Tamworth Business Chamber.

Recently the Tamworth Business Chamber held the Quality Business Awards in a number of categories. The 2012 Quality Business Awards were attended by in excess of 600 people. The event was held at the Tamworth Regional Entertainment Complex. The businesses represented at that event were thrilled and honoured to be nominated, as were, of course, the declared winners of each category. At the moment the Government is implementing public sector reform, which creates a number of challenges. I ask everyone to stop and think about small business in the State. Small business is the engine room of our economy; it drives regional development and growth. Small businesses face challenges every day as they try to make a living. I acknowledge the effort of our business sector and the support of the Tamworth Business Chamber.

I would like to acknowledge the winners of the business awards and give them the recognition they deserve. The winner of the Excellence in Innovation Award was Baiada; the 360 Fitness Club won the Excellence in Small Business Growth Award; the Excellence in Export Award was won by Andromeda; Easter's Landscape Supplies won the Excellence in Community Involvement/Service Award; the Excellence in Environmental Commitment Award was won by Tamworth Fodder Farms; the Excellence in Accommodation Award went to Best Western Sanctuary Inn; the Excellence in Cafe Culture/Convenience Food Award was won by The Old Bell Tower; Australian Training and Consulting won the Excellence in Employment, Education and Training Award; the Excellence in Health and Wellbeing Award was taken out by Rural Fit; the Excellence in Hair and/or Beauty Award was won by Plush Hair Design; and the Excellence in Manufacturing/Construction Award went to Redimix Concrete.

The award for Excellence in Motor Transport Sales/Service, Large was won by Nymans Smash Repairs; the award for Excellence in Motor Transport Sales/Service, Small was won by Bob Jane T-Mart; ImagineMORE was awarded the Excellence in Professional Services, Small prize; while the Excellence in Professional Services, Large Award went to Forsyths. The Defence Reserves Support Award was won by Dynamic Fire; and the Outstanding Pub/Club/Licensed Premises Award was taken out by DAG Sheep Station at Nundle. This business will soon receive a New South Wales Tourism award. The Outstanding Restaurant category was won by The Workshop Café; the award for Excellence in Retail, Small was won by Xtreme Cycles; and the award for Excellence in Retail, Large was won by Choices Tamworth. The Excellence in Rural Industry award was won by Tamworth Fodder Farm; the Excellence in Service and Trade Award was taken out by Fiona's Mini Bus Rentals; Capitol Theatre Tamworth won the Excellence in Media and Entertainment Award; and the Excellence in Tourism and Sport award went to Strike.

The Tamworth Business Chamber Regional Business of the Year Award went to Baiada, while the Tamworth Business Chamber Small Business Award was won by Strike. The Tamworth Business Chamber,

Large award went to Nymans Smash Repairs; and the Noel Park Award, which is awarded to the organisation or person who has made a significant contribution to the business community in our region over many years, was this year awarded to Carlo Cavallaro, the king of the IGA supermarket chain in our region. We sincerely congratulate Carlo Cavallaro on the work he does. The Young Business Person of the Year was Chris Watson. The Tamworth Business Chamber is to be commended. It does a magnificent job and it has my full support. I look forward to continuing to support it in any way I can.

ROBERTSON HERITAGE RAILWAY STATION AND UNANDERRA TO MOSS VALE RAIL LINE EIGHTIETH ANNIVERSARY

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) [5.34 p.m.]: I inform the House about the eightieth anniversary of the Robertson Heritage Railway Station and the Unanderra to Moss Vale line held on Saturday 13 October 2012. I am very fortunate to have the beautiful Southern Highlands in my electorate. Along with its beauty, of equal importance is the depth and breadth of heritage in our highlands community. Rail has played a pivotal role in developing farming, business, industry and community in the highlands and continues to be a vital link for trade and commerce. The historic day kicked off with a march from the nearby Robertson school to the station. The march consisted of a piper leading three mounted light horsemen in Boer War regalia, followed by about 50 Robertson Public School children, and then three cars of 1930s vintage.

I met a lot of people on this special day but two wonderful ladies that were a stand-out for me were Violet Lymbery and Gladys Fisk. Violet and Gladys were particularly excited about this historic anniversary as they were still clinging to their original tickets from the maiden trip on 20 August 1932. The line's opening was the culmination of decades of lobbying by highland residents, mainly farmers in Robertson and the surrounding area, for a railway to transport their farm produce to Sydney markets. Later, with the construction of the steelworks at Port Kembla in the late 1920s, representations were made to link the main southern railway with the eastern seaboard, particularly to transport limestone to the new steelworks. Over the 80 years of its operation, the Unanderra-Moss Vale line has been known as the Illawarra Mountain Line and the Mountain Railway Line, amongst other names. This continues to be an important, even vital, link in Australia's railway infrastructure. I am sure members of the House, particularly those who aspired to be engine drivers, would easily fall in love with the 3801 and the beauty of steam travel and transport.

The line was used to carry passengers, but no longer. The last steam-hauled passenger service ceased on 20 February 1967. Steam was replaced by a rail motor but the passenger service ceased altogether on 21 December 1985. The line is still used by tourist trains where passengers are treated to one of the most spectacular railway trips in Australia. Tourist trains often stop at Summit Tank on the way, where beautiful views over the Illawarra escarpment can be observed from the comfort of one's carriage. Over the last couple of years Port Kembla has received vast quantities of coal and grain for export—much of it travelling over the Moss Vale to Unanderra line. The line has also been used for the regular transport of steel products to southern and western destinations. When the main southern or Illawarra lines are closed, it is still used for that purpose.

The line is also used regularly to operate heritage tourism by railway. The Cockatoo Run heritage train brings passengers from Sydney and Wollongong to Robertson and Moss Vale on a regular basis, thus providing additional economic investment in these tourist towns. I am sure the tourism Minister is very interested in this. The New South Wales Rail Transport Museum's Heritage Express also operates steam train specials to Robertson twice a year and they are typically very popular and well booked by tourists in advance, thus providing passengers with the opportunity to travel via the scenic and historic Illawarra line and the Unanderra to Moss Vale line.

Such is the local enthusiasm to preserve and protect this important local heritage that Robertson Heritage Railway Station Incorporated began in 2002. Some inaugural committee members remain on the present day committee. The brief of the committee is to enhance and maintain the station and grounds. This includes station maintenance and the development and maintenance of the garden areas, as well as hosting events like the Spring Fair—which this year is incorporated into the eightieth anniversary celebrations—and the Vintage Car day, usually held in April, and steam train and other tourist train visits. Like most volunteer organisations, the vast majority of work is carried out by but a few. This small band of dedicated individuals should be very proud of their considerable achievements.

I thank and acknowledge committee member Neil Harvey, who did a stellar job organising this very successful event, along with Steve Carey, President of the Robertson Heritage Rail Society, and Robert Goldsack, who acted as the master of ceremonies on the day. I acknowledge my good friend the Federal

member for Throsby, Stephen Jones, who also attended the celebrations with his two young children. Mayor of Wingecarribee shire, Councillor Juliet Arkwright, also attended this historic day and continues to represent her residents with distinction. Deputy Mayor, Councillor Larry Whipper, also attended, and I acknowledge his contribution as a foundation member of Robertson Heritage Railway Station Incorporated.

It gives me great pleasure to acknowledge also Vivian Harrison, the principal of Robertson Public School, and all the students of Robertson Public School who participated. I particularly acknowledge the Robertson Public School Choir, which performed with clarity and brilliance. I know that everyone enjoyed their beautiful voices and truly wonderful performance. I acknowledge also the hard work and dedication of committee members Vice-President Ian Wallace, Anne Wilson, David and Helen Tranter and, again, Neil Harvey, as well as all the dedicated volunteers and families who made this day a memorable and nostalgic moment in our Highlands community history.

LIVERPOOL CAMBODIAN COMMUNITY

Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool) [5.39 p.m.]: I draw to the attention of the House a function I attended last Saturday in my capacity as the member for Liverpool. This was the 2012 Pchum Ben celebrations. These are celebrations observed by the Cambodian or Khmer Buddhist communities. The celebrations are also referred to as ancestor festivals. It is a time for Cambodian Buddhists to remember those who have died—parents, grandparents and other relatives. The event was held at the Khemarangsaram Wat, the Buddhist Temple at Tarlington Parade, Bonnyrigg. Also present were my colleagues the Federal member for Fowler, Chris Hayes, and mayor of Fairfield, Frank Carbone. One of the speakers was Mrs Kimsour Sovannary, the First Secretary of the Royal Embassy of Cambodia, who was representing His Excellency Mr Chum Sounry, the ambassador from the Royal Embassy of Cambodia. I note that Mrs Sovannary drove up from Canberra for the event.

The official part of the festivities included speeches from Mrs Lina Tjoeng, President of the Khmer Community of NSW Inc. and Mr Kin Hou, President of the Cambodian Buddhist Society of NSW Inc. The official program commenced with a prayer and blessing from the Venerable Abbot and monks associated with the Khemarangsaram temple. The audience was entertained by the Khemara Angkor dancing group, which was established in 2003. They were accompanied by the Khemara Angkor traditional band. Both these groups place a very high value on maintaining, protecting and performing traditional Khmer music and dancing. At the 2012 Pchum Ben celebrations they performed the Wishing dance, the Bopha Loekey dance, the Phoung Neary dance and the Garuda dance. One of the dancers was only four years of age.

The festival was arranged and sponsored by two organisations, the Khmer community of NSW Inc. and the Cambodian Buddhist Society of NSW Inc. There was also generous financial support from a number of sponsors whose contributions were acknowledged on the day. Special mention should be made of the contribution of Mrs Lina Tjoeng and her husband, Eric, who have devoted a vast amount of voluntary effort, not just to the Pchum Ben festival but to the many and varied endeavours of the Cambodian community in south-west Sydney. The Khmer Community of NSW Inc. was established in 1975 and incorporated in 1988. It is a non-profit organisation to assist the Khmer community in New South Wales.

The objectives of the organisations include the following: to develop and maintain a harmonious community of Khmer people in New South Wales; to assist and support the successful settlement of Khmer people and their descendants in New South Wales; to preserve and promulgate Khmer culture; to represent all Khmer people in New South Wales; to promote friendships and understanding between Khmer people settled in New South Wales and other people and ethnic groups; to include Khmer people everywhere; and to represent the interests and views of the members of the association to government and other organisations.

To pursue these objectives the Khmer Community of NSW Inc. has successfully sought government funds to deliver a number of services. They have received funding from the Federal Department of Immigration and Citizenship [DIAC] under the Settlement Grants program. There are three main aspects to the work of the Settlement Grants Program officer: casework, which is advocacy and referral to mainstream services aiming for self-reliance and early participation in society; developing communities, especially through providing information with other agencies, and assisting the newly arrived to identify and belong to their local communities; and integration, inclusion and participation to assist the newly arrived to understand and interact with the broader community and to encourage the broader community to be responsive to new arrivals.

The Khmer Community of NSW Inc. is also funded by the New South Wales Department of Education and Training to run the Links to Learning program which is aimed at encouraging young people in junior high

school to continue in school. That program is also aimed at students with multiple learning barriers. Many of the parents of the young people in this group have, for obvious practical reasons, only a limited opportunity to help their children. The program has a coordinator and five tutors who are role models and mentors. They assist with, among other things, literacy, numeracy and self-esteem. Leaving school early can result in disadvantage for the rest of one's life and action to prevent that is valuable, not just for the Khmer community but for the whole community.

The other organisation involved in the Pchum Ben festival is the Cambodian Buddhist Society of NSW Inc. It commenced in 1984, leasing a house in Fairfield to act as a temporary Buddhist temple. In 1987 the Wran Government granted a lease of land in Tarlington Parade, which has now become the site for a temple, monastery and offices. The temple was officially opened on that site in 1998. A stupa was added in 2004. The Pchum Ben celebration is yet another example of the diverse, vibrant, multicultural society of south-west Sydney. We get great strength from that diversity and it is one of the reasons that it is such a good place in which to live. One of the reasons for that is the contribution made by communities such as the Cambodian community.

GLADESVILLE HOSPITAL

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS (Lane Cove—Minister for Fair Trading) [5.43 p.m.]: Gladesville Hospital is one of the most significant mental health facilities in the history of New South Wales. I say this not because it is in my electorate but because it was the first hospital at which Frederick Norton Manning practised. The practices pioneered by Dr Manning at Gladesville Hospital led the way in shifting established mental health treatments away from prison-like asylums to modern hospital facilities. The Friends of Gladesville Hospital is a local community action group that was formed to ensure that the whole of the Gladesville Hospital site, including the priory and its curtilage, remain in public ownership and control to ensure the site is properly preserved, protected and managed.

A leader in this venture is Mr Peter Colthorpe. Peter is a leading member of the Friends of Gladesville Hospital. He has worked tirelessly to have the many people who were treated or passed away at the hospital or who worked at the site recognised and respectfully remembered. He realised that there are many people who have relatives and ancestors who were afflicted with mental illness or associated with the hospital in some way. He also recognised that there are many who would like a physical site where they can pay tribute to their relatives and ancestors. The cemetery is the last resting place of more than 1,200 people. All but two of the burial sites are unmarked and over 300 have no names recorded. One of Dr Manning's actions was to record the names of the dead in the records so that the ancestors of those who died after 1869 could be traced. I share some of Mr Colthorpe's concerns that the site should remain in public ownership so that it can be properly preserved, protected and managed. However, I am aware that Peter and the Friends of Gladesville Hospital want more to be done with the site.

I have met with the group on numerous occasions about the future of the site. We have spoken about how best we can memorialise and mark the site and maintain the memory of those who passed away while being treated at Gladesville Hospital. I know that Peter is passionate about the site and that many in the community share this passion. The Friends of Gladesville Hospital have worked tirelessly to achieve great outcomes for the site and to establish a memorial to past patients of the hospital. They have a friend and supporter of their work in me. I have pledged and will continue to pledge my commitment to fight for a fitting memorial for the site. I want to see the site properly marked for future generations.

I acknowledge the work of the Minister for Mental Health, the Hon. Kevin Humphries, who announced the establishment of the NSW Mental Health Commission in July this year. The NSW Mental Health Commission has been established at Gladesville Hospital, and I applaud the symbolic importance of this decision in its implicit recognition of the great history of the hospital. It also has the practical result that this facility continues its historic role as a leading institution in the mental health system in New South Wales. Finally, I commend the hard work of Peter Colthorpe and the Friends of Gladesville Hospital for the community. As a local representative in Parliament, it is heartening to see that there are passionate people who are willing to fight for their community and to give up their time for a project that they believe will benefit others.

REACH FOR THE RAINBOW FOUNDATION

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET (Castle Hill) [5.46 p.m.]: Castle Hill is one of the finest places to live in New South Wales. Our community is ever growing, with more and more people choosing to raise their

families among the trees, playing fields and schools of The Hills district. Something even bigger and more important than this growing population is the spirit of service within The Hills. Every time the people in Castle Hill reach out to help others—whether it is by way of a quiet word over a cup of tea, assisting in a school carnival or participating in a motor bike charity ride—I tell myself that it cannot possibly get more amazing than this. However, I have been proven wrong once again.

The Run for the Hills charity run seeks to raise funds for and awareness of the Reach for the Rainbow Foundation, a vital organisation that provides early intervention services for babies and young children who live with a disability. When children have access to such services the positive impact on the child's life can be transformative. For nine out of ten hearing impaired children who are enrolled in early intervention services the hearing impairment can virtually be removed from the child's life. These services are critical. Early intervention improves a child's development, socialisation and learning ability. It assists in reducing the future cost of care and reduces or eliminates feelings of isolation and stress. Early intervention allows young children to grow up into productive, independent and fully participating members of our community.

The eight-kilometre course wound through the rolling hills of the historic Heritage Park and took in some of the steeper streets in The Hills district. Both competitive and fun runners were satisfied with the course, despite its being one of the tougher courses that I have run. Run for the Hills saw over 400 runners and a 1,500 strong crowd brave the early morning cold on a Sunday to participate in a community event that is surely here to stay. I had the honour of shooting the starter's gun and I was impressed by the level of enthusiasm amongst the runners at such an early hour.

I congratulate 20-year-old Hugh Williams, who finished the eight kilometre course in 25.49 minutes, and Milly Clarke, who finished in 29.10 minutes. I make special mention of West Pennant Hills resident Ryan Besso, who not only took it upon himself to dress up as superman in a cape and tights but also was the single highest fundraiser, raising a total of \$1,330. In my opinion all the runners were superheroes, as more than \$30,000 was raised towards the important work of the Reach for the Rainbow Foundation. I finished the race in 37 minutes, well in front of the member for Baulkham Hills, who finished in over 80 minutes—although he says he was carrying his nine-year-old son.

The Hills district not only has the highest proportion of traditional families in Australia but also holds the highest concentration of children aged between zero and six years than anywhere else in the nation. Our community has a high need for intervention services. One person particularly recognised this need and did something about it. Reach for the Rainbow was conceived and established by Yvonne Keane, the 2012 NSW Woman of the Year, the 2012 Hills Shire Citizen of the Year, a recently elected councillor for The Hills shire and, more importantly, a mother and someone who understands how important it is to do whatever it takes to ensure the very best for children in our community.

I commend Yvonne's vision for establishing an array of service providers to operate from one purpose-built facility within The Hills district to be known as an Early Intervention Hub, which will offer a one-stop shop for parents of children with special needs. The centre will be a world first and undoubtedly will change for the better the lives of so many children. Of course, such a dream is not without its challenges. The Run for the Hills event is just one fundraiser that will assist in making this dream a reality. Often it is said that if you are going to dream, dream big. Yvonne's dream is assisting young children to realise their potential. I can think of no better goal to strive towards. I congratulate all those who helped organise the event, including *Hills News*, Transurban, Castle Towers and Henry Davis York, who assisted in providing legal advice to establish the Reach for the Rainbow Foundation. The generosity of all sponsors and participants at this inaugural event reflects the Castle Hill spirit. I thank councillor Yvonne Keane for her tireless efforts in ensuring a great day. I commend to the House her work with the Reach for the Rainbow Foundation.

SPANISH MENTAL HEALTH CARERS SUPPORT GROUP

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) [5.51 p.m.]: This year National Carers Week is 14 to 20 October. The Spanish Carers Support Group Corazon Latino Fairfield and Corazon Trabajo Liverpool kindly invited me to celebrate National Carers Week at its function themed Back to the Seventies. On Monday 15 October I was fortunate to have the opportunity to meet Fairfield and Liverpool's unsung heroes. The Bonnyrigg Community Centre was transformed into a seventies retro hall. The outstanding decorations were pictures of all carers dressed in seventies fancy dress, and seventies icons and images were placed around the room to really step back in time. Even vinyl records were used effectively as decorations, creating a truly 1970s experience. Mr Carlos Encina was the disc jockey for the event and played some seventies classic hits, which were well received by everyone.

The event primarily was organised to promote and celebrate the valuable role of carers who take care of sufferers of mental illness in the Spanish community, and to recognise their hard work. Back to the Seventies was an event to spark some happiness and laughter for the carers who otherwise face trying situations dealing with loved ones suffering from mental illness. All of the carers at the event were presented with a Certificate of Appreciation for their tireless and outstanding efforts. The day belonged to all those who work in the community to support people with mental illness. Carers Week events took place across the nation—indeed, they are still taking place as we speak.

Minister Andrew Constance acknowledged the Fairfield electorate's Spanish Carers Support Group for its work. I thank the Minister for providing the package to present to the group. Mrs Blanca Arely Espinoza accepted the certificate on behalf of the group. Blanca is a wonderful support to the Spanish carers. Her drive and positive outlook in life inspires those who seek guidance from her. Members of the Spanish Carers Support Group come from many different South American countries where stigma is associated with mental illness. Each month the support group awards carers with a crown and birthday sash to celebrate their birthday. This might seem to be a simple gesture, but it goes a long way to brighten up the lives of carers. Other activities include a photo exhibition, cultural day and excursions.

Workshops are available on topics such as better choices, better health, and hope for people living with mental illness. These beneficial activities provide support for carers. Talking with the carers present I got the true sense that loved ones who suffer from mental illness are in good hands. Overall the group contributes to the holistic approach and wellbeing of members so that they can deal with strategies daily to assist them with dealing with discrimination. The group's success is attributed to the partnership with the Latin American Association and the Liverpool Migrant Resources Centre. I acknowledge also the Transcultural Mental Health Centre for its support of the Spanish Carers Group. The Transcultural Mental Health Group provides support to 27 other cultural groups.

Anglicare in Cabramatta also provides assistance to the Spanish Carers Group and I thank it for its ongoing support of carers and sufferers of mental illness. Other organisations that made the event a success were Fairfield City Council and Carers NSW. The Spanish Speaking Support Group for Carers helps people with relatives or friends who experience depression, anxiety, learning difficulties, schizophrenia and other psychological or emotional health problems. Participants have the opportunity to access information and education, make new friends and share experiences, and learn from other carers. The program is free and is held in the Fairfield Community Centre at 25 Barbara Street and the Liverpool Migrant Resource Centre at 108 Moore Street. On behalf of the Fairfield electorate I congratulate the Spanish Carers Support Group on its service to the community.

MUSWELLBROOK DISTRICT HOSPITAL

Mr GEORGE SOURIS (Upper Hunter—Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Hospitality and Racing, and Minister for the Arts) [5.55 p.m.]: I take this opportunity to speak about nursing home residents at Muswellbrook District Hospital. This hospital successfully gained a grant of more than \$4 million from the Resources to Regions Program under the Deputy Premier to construct a new emergency department on the hospital's ground floor. Presently the ground floor houses 18 licensed nursing home beds on behalf of the State—one of the few hospitals that do—and the emergency department is on the second floor. I do not need to explain the difficulties posed in receiving emergency patients and attending to their needs. The grant was very much wanted by the local community.

The question is what will be the ultimate disposition of the 18 licensed nursing home beds, of which 15 are occupied at Muswellbrook hospital. In roughly a year from now construction will commence on the new emergency department. The administrators of the Hunter New England Area Health Service and the managers of Muswellbrook District Hospital intend to minimise any necessary disruption to aged care patients and ensure that ultimately none is required to go to accommodation outside Muswellbrook. That also is our intention and I give that assurance to the residents, carers, friends and relatives, and particularly the group known as the Aged Care Facility Carers Group. This group, comprising Anthony Neate, Jane Dyson, Judy Harman and Sandra Button, recently saw me and Federal member Mr Joel Fitzgibbon. We assured the patients, carers and the facility carers group that we will do everything we can to ensure that the disruption is minimal but, if necessary, patients will be transferred to other parts of the hospital or to places within the Muswellbrook township. I have had discussions with Mr Michael DiRienzo, Chief Executive, Hunter New England Area Health Service. In a recent letter to me he said:

I want to assure you and your constituents that we will do everything possible to minimise disruption for the aged care residents and their families.

Later he said:

I do want to stress that there are no immediate plans to move any of the residents at this point in time; yet we do have a responsibility to plan ahead and canvass the full range of options for residents and their families, pending the final location of the new ED.

Whilst I, the Federal member or the chief executive of the Hunter New England Area Health District do not have the ability at this time to guarantee that no-one will be moved or required to leave, I give the assurance, which the Federal member also gives, that we intend to work together to make sure that where possible we will do everything we can to ensure those residents are not required to leave Muswellbrook and preferably do not leave the hospital. As I have said, the move downstairs of the emergency department ultimately will require the transfer of these 18 nursing home licences to another aged care facility that will need to construct the accommodation. That may need to be supplemented from the Federal sphere with additional nursing home licences that would make the facility that is ultimately provided more sustainable.

BLUE MOUNTAINS ELECTORATE EVENTS

Mrs ROZA SAGE (Blue Mountains) [6.00 p.m.]: Spring has sprung in the Blue Mountains with a very busy community calendar over this last break. I would like to inform the House of some of the activities in the Blue Mountains electorate. Being spring, numerous spring gardens were open for inspection with the intent of fundraising. I was privileged to attend the inaugural opening of the Leura Gardens Festival, held at the historic National Trust property Everglades, which has a fine example of a Sorensen garden. There were 11 cool climate gardens on display, with stunning azaleas, rhododendrons and many tulips, set in breathtaking views in and around Leura. There were garden clinics during the week at the Fairmont resort and shuttle buses were supplied by Trolley Tours and the Blue Mountains Explorer bus. I also saw one of the Blue Mountains Grammar School vans ferrying garden-goers around the various gardens.

Music also played a part in the festival, with various local groups performing at Shenstone garden at Craigend Street, Leura. Some of the groups performing were the Blue Mountains Ukelele Group, the Mountains Opera Chorus, the Orpheus Quartet, the barbershop singers of Silver Fox, the David Glegg Swing Trio, Simon Watts, Penrith City Harmony Chorus, Hawkesbury Nepean Pipe Band and the Blue Mountains Grammar School string group. All the performers and volunteers who manned the gardens gave their time for free over a nine-day period. Of course, in the usual Blue Mountains way all moneys raised were for the benefit of the Blue Mountains District Anzac Memorial Hospital and related Blue Mountains medical foundations. Last year the festival raised over \$70,000. I look forward to knowing this year's takings.

I congratulate the gardens committee, headed by Ray Wiles, the volunteers coordinator John Sowdon, other committee members, the 300 volunteers who gave up their time and the numerous local businesses that sponsored and supported the event. The Leura Gardens Festival is an event that the community welcomes and embraces and participates in wholeheartedly. The Lower Mountains also had its spring open gardens with the Blue Mountains Lantern Club, which is the fundraising arm of the Royal Institute for Deaf and Blind Children at North Rocks, and of which I can proudly say I am a member, having open gardens at Yellow Rock. There were four gardens on offer, with Devonshire teas at Old Farm, the property of Ross and Robyn Ingram, who are always generous supporters of many community organisations. There was a thankyou celebration at the end of a very long weekend for the many volunteers who helped with gardens and catering, and sponsors and garden owners. I congratulate President Diane Marris, Peter McTaggart, John and Pam Berkhiut, Dorothy Brandley and the many other helpers for a great effort.

Keeping with the outdoor theme of events, I was privileged to help launch Blue Mountains Lithgow and Oberon Tourism's second year of the Festival of Walking. This tourism festival ran over nine days. Like last year the launch day was a very misty mountains day at Wentworth Falls. The guided walks proved very popular, with many having been booked out online. These guided walks were taken by the many National Parks and Wildlife Service rangers in the Blue Mountains. National Parks had done a sterling job in preparing these walks for the festival and they play an integral part in the Blue Mountains tourism industry. Weather aside, the opening was a great event. Marie Wood, from whose idea this event grew, was present at the launch. We were welcomed to country by Kathleen and Trevor Brown of the Gundungurra people and were treated to the Gundungurra Mulyang dancers. The many children at the opening were invited to join in the dance as well.

The junior rangers choir arranged by Sandy Holmes of the National Parks and Wildlife Service performed some light-hearted songs about bush safety emphasising the importance of personal locator beacons if one is going bushwalking and camping. Randall Walker, the chairman of Blue Mountains Lithgow and

Oberon Tourism, launched the Aboriginal Experience Guide, a very worthy part of the tourism offering in the Blue Mountains. Jacqueline Reid of the National Parks and Wildlife Service launched Bush Trackers, a project facilitated by National Parks and created by kids for kids and families. There was also a preview of the Blue Mountains crossing bicentenary in 2013 with Blue Wave's re-enactment of Blaxland, Lawson and Wentworth's crossing. This will be one of the big events during the commemoration of the 1813 crossing. As members can see, it was a very busy time in the Blue Mountains. All of these wonderful community-based events, which many people give up their time to support, make me very proud to be the member for Blue Mountains.

ST GEORGE COMMUNITY AWARDS

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) [6.05 p.m.]: On 4 October the annual St George Community Awards were held at Club Central in Hurstville. These awards are a way of saying thank you to the many volunteers and community organisations that work with little recognition to make our area a better place. There were over 80 nominations and on the night 67 people and organisations received awards. The event was attended by more than 420 family and friends. These people and organisations have made an outstanding contribution to the St George area. There were five categories: volunteers of the year, young person of the year, sport awards, older person of the year, and community groups of the year. I would like to highlight a couple of community groups that have done an outstanding job in my community and that received an award on the night.

The first is the New South Wales Southern Region Chinese Business Association. This association represents businesses in the southern Sydney region to government agencies. The work is not merely advocacy; the service provides a bridge between the Chinese business community and other community-focused groups. This organisation is a true example of how multicultural groups work to assist in contributing to society. The next group to receive an award was the St George Area Tenant Council, an organisation that prides itself on social advocacy and assisting those most vulnerable in the community. Their work is often difficult and sometimes even thankless; however, the programs they have set in place, such as community forums and tenancy meetings, give confidence and encouragement to many throughout my community. Their work is truly worthy of this award.

The Lamrock Committee of St George Hospital is the beating heart of the hospital. The Lamrock Committee is passionate about fundraising for the hospital. Its efforts over the past 20 years have raised close to \$1 million for the purchase of much-needed medical equipment and patient amenities. Its signature event has been the annual bed race, certainly an event that has brought a great sense of community spirit and pride. Another organisation to receive an award was the Mulga Road Bookstore, which is run by the Rotary Club of Hurstville, whose members were here yesterday during question time. This project is designed to fundraise for the Rotary Club of Hurstville and currently generates funding through an antiques and collectibles fair. This is a terrific initiative. Those who started the Bookstore are to be commended for their achievements, but the Mulga Road Bookstore would still be a dream without its group of volunteers dedicated to serving the St George region.

Another community group to receive an award was the Resourceful Australian Indian Network, known as RAIN. This network began in 2006 to service the needs of those from a subcontinental background residing in the St George region, particularly seniors. RAIN operates a number of education programs and holds regular social meetings and networks with other community organisations such as the St George Migrant Resource Centre. It has a dedicated team of volunteers to assist with other community groups. It has done an exciting job over the past few years helping seniors, young people and those at work. Lions Club of Lugarno also received an award. The Lions Club of Lugarno commenced in 1974 and over its 38-year history has been an active community organisation across the southern St George region.

The Lions Club of Lugarno has raised \$2 million over that time for those in need and contributed \$150,000 to the community in 2011-12. It has also raised money for medical research. Recently it held the thirty-third Lugarno Fair, which raised money for local community groups. It is the largest carnival south of the Royal Easter Show and attracts over 45,000 people. Another organisation that received an award was the Lugarno Progress Association. It was founded in 1922 and has a 90-year history advocating improvement of the lives of residents in Lugarno. The Lugarno Progress Association advocated for the establishment of Lugarno Public School, major upgrades to Evatt Park and with regard to environmental and traffic concerns.

The St George Migrant Resource Centre, which turned 30 last year, has been a light in the St George region providing much-needed support for vastly differing multicultural communities. I have highlighted the number of community groups that received awards this year. The New South Wales Commissioner of Police,

Andrew Scipione, a volunteer and terrific ambassador for the St George region, was a special guest and presented the awards. I am committed to being an energetic community-based member of Parliament who strives to improve services to my community and recognises the hard work of people who have dedicated themselves to helping others. These are our annual awards and we will do the same thing next year.

TRIBUTE TO BRENDAN TEASE

Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) [6.10 p.m.]: It is with great delight that I speak tonight about a special young man in my electorate by the name of Brendan Tease. Brendan has a list of achievements and is an impressive young man worthy of mention. Brendan has achieved through a public education system over the past two years at Warilla High School the following: In year 11 in 2011 Brendan came first in Mathematics Extension 1, first in English Extension 1, first in 2 Unit Physics, second in 2 Unit Chemistry and first in 2 Unit Biology. He was awarded a distinction in the 2011 Australian School Science Competition and a credit in 2011 Australian School Mathematics Competition.

He was also awarded a Victor Chang Cardiac Research Institute prize for outstanding studies in year 11 science. He received a 100 per cent attendance certificate for the year as well. He was awarded the 2011 Warilla High School year 11 overall academic achievement award. Brendan studied 14 units for the year 2011. That is two more units than a regular full-time student completes. The volume of study required him to be at school for seven hours and 15 minutes from Monday to Friday each week of the school year. That is quite an onerous task for a 16-year-old boy.

In year 12 this year Brendan has achieved the following: first in 2 Unit Advanced English, first in Extension 1 Mathematics, first in Extension 2 Mathematics, first in 2 Unit Physics and first in 2 Unit Chemistry. He was awarded a distinction in the 2012 Australian School Science Competition and a credit in the 2012 Australian School Mathematics Competition. Brendan was awarded Warilla High School year 12 overall academic achievement award for 2012. In 2012 he was awarded the Warilla High School platinum achievement award for behaviour, academic excellence and a contribution to school life. He was awarded the Warilla High School 2012 Steven Trajkoski Memorial Award for Academic Excellence and he achieved 100 per cent attendance for 2012.

Brendan has managed the academic load he started in 2011 by picking up Extension 2 Mathematics. Due to the extremely difficult, advanced nature of the course, Extension 2 Mathematics has very few students capable of undertaking it. Through the efforts of a couple of teachers, Mr Ian Morris of Warilla High and Mr Warren Black of Lake Illawarra High, a combined Extension 2 Mathematics class to cater for them was held at Lake Illawarra High prior to school hours—at a 7.30 a.m. start, three mornings a week. That is dedication. The class being taught by Mr Black has catered for one student each from Lake Illawarra High, Warilla High and Kiama High.

Brendan attended Windang Public School from kindergarten to year 6. While in year 6 he was diagnosed with Asperger's syndrome and as a result of that he received some in-kind Department of Education and Training aid funding and a transition program to help him cope with the move into secondary school. It was an amazing feat for this boy. He was fortunate enough to be allowed to attend Warilla High School as an out-of-area student. Warilla High School is a comprehensive school which has built a wonderful record for dealing with students from many diverse backgrounds, developed a great special education unit and has a wonderfully committed teaching staff and support unit within its structure.

For the first four years of high school Brendan was allowed a small amount of help due to his Asperger's, which took the form of supplementary aid funding to help him cope with high school life and study needs. It is a shame to see that this funding will soon disappear for children still facing a large part of their school years. Brendan has had an outstanding two years of senior school at Warilla High School and it is worth noting some of the comments from his teachers in his 2012 semester two school report. Mr Warren Black, Extension 2 Mathematics, states:

His knowledge of difficult concepts [in mathematics] is impressive. He would be among the best students I have taught.

Mr Phil Chapman, Extension 1 Mathematics, states:

A talented mathematician whose ability and dedication to his studies will see him have a future at tertiary level and beyond. He has a quick mind and a lot of ability.

Brendan has been lucky to benefit from a small amount of support funding. To the detriment of those schoolchildren in our society who will follow Brendan, that funding will soon disappear. Many of those students are not in a position to fund it themselves.

VENERABLE ORDER OF SAINT JOHN

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT (Baulkham Hills) [6.15 p.m.]: Since 2000 I have had the immense privilege of being involved in the Venerable Order of Saint John, an organisation of volunteers which does invaluable work in communities across Australia and the Commonwealth. St John Ambulance in particular is a well known and trusted icon that many thousands of Australians depend on each year. In 2001 they provided more than one million man-hours in volunteer services to the people of Australia. There are few organisations that have served the public for so long and with such dedication.

As I stated in my maiden speech, the Order of Saint John can trace its modern-day genesis to the Industrial Revolution. Its ancient traditions go back many centuries prior to that. The achievements of the Order of Saint John in contemporary times has been exhibited by a commitment to service that is made all the more impressive given that it is largely run by unpaid individuals. I am sure all members join me in commending the Order of Saint John and its thousands of committed volunteers. It is hard to imagine our State without the priceless and professional services provided by the Order of Saint John to our community.

It was an honour to have worked with so many of these dedicated and generous volunteers when I was an employed member of the Order of Saint John as its State operations officer. It goes without saying the officers and volunteers of Saint John discharge their duties with the utmost professionalism and diligence, whether they are a cadet or a cardiothoracic surgeon. They are the cornerstone of the volunteer ethos in the State. One of my most proud moments was joining their ranks when I was granted my officer's warrant in the order. Equally, it was a privilege to have been part of the group of members from both sides of the House who founded the Commonwealth's first parliamentary auxiliary of Saint John last year in this Parliament.

It would be remiss of me not to mention His Royal Highness Prince Richard, The Duke of Gloucester, who visited this Parliament on 24 May this year in his capacity as Grand Prior of the Order of Saint John. We briefed Prince Richard on what the parliamentary auxiliary does and communicated to Prince Richard that governments across the Commonwealth should have a deep respect and appreciation for the work of Saint John. In this vein it was great to see so many deserving Saint John volunteers being recognised and congratulated at the Saint John annual awards two weeks ago. Particularly impressive was Mrs Betty Stirton, OAM, the Saint John archivist, who received her 70-year service bar.

Deserving of special commendation also are those officers and volunteers who received citations for offering life-saving first aid, who are members of both the Order of Saint John and other combat agencies. It is only fitting that we give the volunteers of the Order of Saint John the acknowledgment they so richly deserve for what they have done for the communities across this State. The current chairman of Saint John, Peter Collins, QC, is a former member of this House. I commend both him and the chief executive officer, Mr Mark Newton, for the work they have done. I am sure that all members of this House will join me in commending the order and its volunteers for their work and wish them a very successful 12 months.

EAST HILLS ELECTORATE SCHOOLS

Mr GLENN BROOKES (East Hills) [6.20 p.m.]: In July this year and last year I visited every school within the East Hills electorate. It is a big undertaking because even though East Hills is only 34.3 square kilometres in area there are approximately 30 schools operating within the 10 suburbs that make up my electorate. The tour is a real eye-opener for me, if for no other reason than it highlights the depth and the richness of the local history that exists within each school community, particularly Picnic Point High School. Picnic Point High School is one of the largest schools within the electorate, and this year marks the school's fiftieth anniversary. Although it is a comparatively young school—Revesby Public School, for example, is 116 years old, having been established on 13 April 1896—nonetheless, its fiftieth anniversary is a significant milestone for any institution and worthy of both praise and mention.

Commencing with an opening day and a reunion dinner on Saturday 31 March, the school held many activities this year to celebrate its golden anniversary. Celebrations have been held all year, but this Saturday 20 October is the anniversary date and the school's parents and citizens association has organised a fair. One of the more unusual activities that has been organised as part of that fair is a billycart derby. At about

approximately 11.00 a.m. Councillor Jim Daniel of Bankstown City Council and the Federal member for Hughes, Craig Kelly, will be racing against each other, as well as others, in the derby. Members are most welcome to come to Picnic Point and watch the event.

While open days, dinners, fairs and billycart derbies are fun ways of celebrating a school's fiftieth anniversary, let us not forget that without dedicated teachers and staff there would be nothing to celebrate. From its humble beginnings in 1962, Picnic Point High School now boasts a student population of 1,025 boys and girls and a teaching staff of 69. The school offers a diverse set of courses that caters for the academic needs of its students and, at the same time, ensures that their welfare is looked after. I am pleased to say that Picnic Point High School has a good reputation within the community as a provider of quality education. As stated on its website, the school strives to create a dynamic learning environment that encourages all students to achieve their personal best and become responsible, informed citizens.

The Picnic Point High School's motto is: Knowledge is life. Over the past 50 years that saying has been a strong guiding light. The East Hills electorate is blessed with many quality schools, and I am pleased that over the past 16 months many millions of dollars have been invested by the New South Wales Government to improve several high schools in my electorate that were in need and had been neglected by the previous Labor Government. I look forward to continuing to work with the schools in the East Hills electorate and I take great pleasure in congratulating the entire school community of Picnic Point High School on achieving its fiftieth year anniversary.

CRONULLA FISHERIES RESEARCH CENTRE

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla) [6.25 p.m.]: I was absent on leave from Parliament this morning during the motion moved by the member for Keira which recognised the work that staff and research professionals do at the Cronulla Fisheries Research Centre and called for a reversal of the decision to close the centre. I will take this opportunity to comment on that motion. I remain opposed to the closure of the Cronulla Fisheries Research Centre for the reasons I gave during the debate on a petition on 19 October 2012 and at an upper House inquiry on 25 July 2012. I have repeatedly given numerous reasons for my opposition in submissions and face to face with the Premier and the Minister for Primary Industries both this year and last year. My reasons have not changed.

I wholeheartedly support the recognition of the important work of the staff and research professionals at the Cronulla Fisheries Research Centre, which has led to the centre gaining an international reputation. The centre has many wonderful staff and I pay tribute to the director, Professor Steve Kennelly, a constituent of mine, who plans to leave the centre shortly. His skills and experience exemplify some of the extraordinary talent at the centre. Steve Kennelly has an international reputation for leading projects and providing research and science-based management advice. He has worked in various academic and advisory roles and has run large industry-based fisheries observer programs and overseen hundreds of wild fishery, ecosystem, aquaculture, agriculture and forestry research programs. He holds a doctorate of philosophy and a doctorate science from the University of Sydney. Since 2011, he has been the Director of Fisheries Research, NSW Fisheries, and has supervised all wild fisheries, aquatic ecosystems and aquaculture research and scientific activities.

From 2004 until last year he was the Chief Scientist for the Department of Primary Industries. He was responsible for the delivery of world-class research and scientific advice in cooperation with more than 1,000 scientists and technicians in agriculture, fisheries, forestry, mining and biometrics. He also was responsible for the provision of expert guidance and scientific advice and the development and promotion of ongoing research and other scientific activities. He was also the director of the Systems Research Branch, Department of Primary Industries. In 2009-10 he was a consultant with the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation in Rome, where he drafted the International Guidelines on Bycatch Management and Reduction of Discards, which was endorsed by the United Nations Committee on Fisheries in 2011. He was involved in several other fisheries projects in protein-poor countries, visiting and preparing country profiles and future directions for fisheries management and research in Nigeria, Cameroon and Madagascar.

In 2005-06 he led a ministerial delegation to the West Bank and Gaza Strip which assessed and identified numerous projects for collaborative research and development between the New South Wales Government and Palestine. He lectures on fisheries science, marine biology and ecology at the University of Sydney, the University of New South Wales, Macquarie University and the Australian Maritime College. He has supervised and examined doctorate and other post-graduate students throughout Australia. He has published 90 papers in international refereed journals and books and has been a referee for numerous international

journals, including *Fish and Fisheries*, *Reviews in Fish Biology and Fisheries*, the *Journal of Experimental Marine Biology and Ecology*, the *Marine Ecology Progress Series*, the *Journal of Marine Biology, Fisheries Research*, the *Australian Journal of Marine and Freshwater Research*, the *Fishery Bulletin*, and the *ICES Journal of Marine Science*. He has presented 42 papers at international conferences and has been a keynote speaker at the World Fisheries Congresses in Beijing in 2000 and in Vancouver in 2004.

He has made 46 unrefereed reports in "grey" literature. He has written three theses and made three video documentaries. He is a member of the *Fish and Fisheries* editorial board, the *Reviews in Fish Biology and Fisheries* editorial board, the *Fisheries and Aquaculture Research* national and south-eastern hubs, the National Research Network, the Scientific Advisory Committee for the Sydney Institute of Marine Science, and the Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Center's Network of Fishing Technology Experts. He has chaired the Australian Fisheries Management Forum Research Committee, the NSW Commercial Fisheries Catch Monitoring Committee, the Australian Fisheries Management Authority's Western and Southern Tuna and Billfish Management Advisory Committee and the New South Wales Estuarine Prawn-trawl Management Advisory Committee. For family reasons Professor Kennelly is unable to move from the Cronulla area. Cronulla is not just a hang-out for beach babes and sports stars but for leaders in science. Professor Kennelly is a great Australian. His expertise will be sorely missed by all people in New South Wales and I wish him well in his future endeavours.

CAMDEN STATE EMERGENCY SERVICE

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON (Camden) [6.30 p.m.]: Recently I had the great honour of presenting the Camden State Emergency Service Officer Frank Battam with a New South Wales Government community service award. Mr Battam received this award for providing Camden State Emergency Service with exemplary training and support to its volunteers. Mr Battam is indeed an invaluable asset to the Camden State Emergency Service and to our community. I thank Controller Andrew Ellis for welcoming me to the State Emergency Service headquarters for the presentation and allowing me to see the headquarters located in Queen Street, Narellan and to have a glimpse of the dedicated members in attendance.

The Camden State Emergency Service, as it is today, was born from the Camden Civil Defence Organisation in 1955 from Barry Feld, who had undertaken a nuclear attack course. Bruce Ferguson was appointed local controller two years later and led the organisation for the next 17 years during which time a basic flood warning system for the Nepean River was developed. A flood boat was also gifted to the organisation by the local Apex club during this time. Until the mid-1980s memberships were informal, with volunteers responding to callouts from the controller when there was an emergency. Equipment was sparse and volunteers used council equipment during operations. Local controllers after Bruce Ferguson were David Yong, Russell Moor, Gregg Johnson, Peter Murray, Nicholas Willey, Philip Murray and the present controller, Andrew Ellis.

In 1984 Camden Council allocated the State Emergency Service part of a council building on the corner of Mitchell and John streets in Camden, giving Camden its first real State Emergency Service unit. To grow the unit and purchase equipment many fundraising activities were undertaken. The funds allowed the unit to purchase its first vehicle in 1990, a second-hand Land Rover. Three years later a second vehicle was purchased by the unit and the Quota Club donated trailers to carry equipment to the field. The support of this unit by the local community and council resulted in a garage and extension to the headquarters.

In 2009, when I was mayor, the decision was made to relocate the headquarters to an unused council building in Queen Street, Narellan. The unit invested a lot of time and work into the building and after gutting, painting and carpeting, their headquarters in Narellan were ready for business. Since then, a three-bay garage, some serious operational equipment and a type 1 vehicle have been acquired. Currently, NRMA insurance is the New South Wales State Emergency Service principal partner, with Camden Council locally continuing to support the Camden State Emergency Service.

Over the years not only has Camden State Emergency Service assisted my local area in times of need, including the 1988 and 1998 floods, the Cobbitty storm of 1996 and the evacuation of residents in the 2001 bushfires at Silverdale in which members protected five homes with garden hoses and subsequently received a citation for their extraordinary action, it has assisted our fellow Australians far and wide. The service has assisted in responses to the Ku-ring-gai and eastern Sydney storms, the Sydney south bushfires, the Thredbo landslide, the Wollongong floods and the Hunter Valley and Blacktown storms. In good times the service also pitched in as Olympic volunteers for the Sydney 2000 Olympics.

Camden State Emergency Service provides support by way of traffic control to many community events including Celebrate Camden, Anzac Day, Australia Day, Light Up Camden, Camden Show and community-based organisations that do a great job also. I mention the Lions clubs of Macarthur, Narellan, Camden, the Lioness Club of Camden, Camden RSL sub-branch, the Camden Show Society, the Rural Fire Service and the Carrington Aged Care Facility. All events also have a mounted display for community education and engagement. I wish there was never the need but Camden State Emergency Service provides regular support to the police during searches. Also, something that is less commonly known is that they provide lighting at road crash sites for the gathering of evidence.

I thank and acknowledge current members Andrew Arthurs, Christine Banzer, Garry Barnott-Clement, Frank Battam, Timothy Battam, Adrian Beattie, Joshua De Vries, Andrew East, Domenico Evangelista, Bruce Everett, Darren Furniss, Andrew Goonan, Dianna Goonan, Francis Hobbins, Geoffrey Hook, Peter Humphries, Erin Ivsic, Herman Janssen, Nicholas Manley, Marlene Mazlin, Michael McCall, William McCole, Elisha Meyers, Alice Moore, Judith Morris, Raymond Morris, Ben Muller, Venessa Nasso, Patricia Rawnsley, Neil Robinson, Louis Scicluna, Michael Schultz, Daniel Shanks, Jari Timonen, Stephen Wood and Controller Andrew Ellis. Every one of these members is remarkable for the support they offer to our community. Camden would be a sorry place if it were not for these volunteers.

MOUNTAIN LAGOON RURAL FIRE BRIGADE

Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Hawkesbury—Parliamentary Secretary) [6.35 p.m.]: The Hawkesbury electorate encompasses vast areas of natural bushland, which unfortunately is regularly threatened by bushfire. The New South Wales Government continues to praise the efforts of our brave Rural Fire Service volunteers. At the beginning of a summer that has already been declared a potential dangerous bushfire period, it is appropriate to bring to the attention of the House a recent bushfire incident that took place in Mountain Lagoon and the report provided to me by Captain Tim Bourke that is a snapshot of the situations these wonderful volunteers confront every summer. The Mountain Lagoon brigade was called out to a report of a fire at 7.00 a.m. on Friday 28 September, a working day. The communications officer, Carole, received a great response from members and both the CAT1 and CAT9 trucks were rolling in just 20 minutes. Lawson, Michael, Harold, Charlie and Sam Gauci were on the CAT1 truck, which was joined a short time later by Bill Palmer, Warwick and Captain Tim on the CAT9. The brigade found the fire as reported, three kilometres up the Mountain Lagoon fire trail from the lagoon.

The report noted that the weather was warm for that time of day, with a blustery westerly blowing. The fire had four fronts and the brigade immediately called for assistance. Two crews were deployed down the two leading edges of the fire on the eastern side of the road. They worked fast and hard to establish a control line. They were soon joined by Bilpin brigade members, who assisted to complete the eastern control line and started working on a south-western line. The fire had deepened quickly down the western slope, which was more like a cliff. The wind increased, swinging to the north, taking the fire at the bottom of the western side to the south.

Bill Shields, captain of the Bilpin brigade, quickly identified this as a dangerous development. The wind then suddenly increased and moved back to the prevailing westerly direction, bringing the fire swiftly up the western slope, becoming a crown fire as it topped the ridge, where both trucks were parked. There was no way of stopping the fire as it leapt across the road into unburnt ground to the south of our eastern control line. The brigade called their CAT9 crew working the south-eastern line, telling them to leave their hoses and move to safe ground. The hoses were later found burnt to a cinder.

More crews began to arrive, including Bilpin's second CAT1. Kurrajong Heights, Yarramundi, Grose Vale, Grose Wold, Upper Colo, Tennyson and Kurrajong brigades all attended the same fire a short time after. The fire was declared a section 44 major incident and helicopters were deployed to assist, using water from Mountain Lagoon. The new crews worked with the choppers to establish control lines to the south-west and south-east. Already exhausted from the morning's work, the crews now had to chase the fire down to the bottom of Gosper's Creek, one of the steepest and deepest gullies in the Blue Mountains. They had to move fast to stop the fire getting in behind them. Lawson, Charlie and Sam, in particular, showed tremendous energy to achieve this successfully. With about three-quarters of the descent covered by about 3.00 p.m. they were relieved at the fire front by National Parks and Upper Colo brigades. They then spent the rest of the shift maintaining the line and water supply to the fire front.

At 5.00 p.m. the Mountain Lagoon relief crew arrived. Alan, Greg, Bill Chapman and Sam Ramaci, another member on his first time out, continued on with the task until knock-off, when they then pulled out

14 lengths of canvas hose. Each hose is 30 metres in length, which means that over 420 metres of hose or almost half a kilometre of hose was rolled out from that one brigade alone, which is an amazing effort. The next morning the Mountain Lagoon brigade sent out a new crew—Peter Henchman, Bill Palmer, Bede, Greg and Captain Tim—to assist with the mop-up. A little overnight rain made the job a whole lot easier, although there were still plenty of hose relays to do.

Captain Tim sent this report to me following the fire. He said that the upgrade to Mountain Lagoon Road made a tremendous difference. It increased response times and the subsequent conduct of operations. This fire proved the need for the upgrade to this section of Mountain Lagoon Road, and Tim has no doubt that this fire would have been a much bigger problem if the road had not been upgraded. I supported the upgrading of this road a few years ago through the Community Building Partnership program. That funding resulted in 10 kilometres of road being upgraded, which, at the time, was impassable. I commend Tim Bourke, Captain of the Mountain Lagoon Rural Fire Brigade, his members and all the other brigades that attended the fire, on a job well done. I extend to them the appreciation of the community. Once again, they have made an outstanding commitment to the safety of our area. As a member of Parliament, I am extremely proud that the funding for the upgrade of this road was money well spent.

W.A.S.H. HOUSE

Mr RICHARD AMERY (Mount Druitt) [6.40 p.m.]: This year the W.A.S.H. House, which is in my electorate, celebrates its thirtieth anniversary. Last week I attended the lunch following the annual general meeting held to celebrate the three decades of service that the W.A.S.H. House has provided to my electorate, and in particular to the women of the local district. Being the member for the area for 29 of those 30 years—the anniversary of my arrival in this place is next Monday—I have been in a position to watch this organisation grow from what was described in a report to the annual general meeting as very humble beginnings.

My area is always mentioned when people talk about high rates of domestic violence. The position of women caught in this environment is known to us all. No-one can be proud of the fact that Mount Druitt often turns up at the top of statistical lists dealing with domestic violence. I am certainly not proud of it. I have often said that our position at the top of those lists is not because of the high incidence of domestic violence but because with organisations like the W.A.S.H. House and refuges like Essie's Women's Refuge, women in the electorate are more likely to have support in reporting these crimes.

The relationships between the police local area command, the staff of the Local Court and other agencies have also contributed to an environment in which women in crisis have someone to talk to and some place to go. I will not deal now with the wide variety of services available to women in my electorate, but I will put on the record that for an organisation like W.A.S.H. House, which must compete for funding from different sources, to change its operations to meet changes in society and legislation, one must recognise that people involved in the W.A.S.H. House must be doing something very well to evolve and expand its services for 30 years.

The W.A.S.H. House began its operations in a Department of Housing dwelling in Myrtus Crescent, Bidwill. It fought to have the location expanded, the dwelling was damaged by vandals and set on fire, and there were security issues when offenders came looking for women who sought their assistance. However, nothing stopped them. I have been approached many times about the needs to relocate the W.A.S.H. House to the Mount Druitt central business district. The location selected was owned by government agencies that were not keen to let go of their land. However, again, the people at the W.A.S.H. House did not take and still do not take "No" for an answer. In 1997 they moved to the current location, just metres from the centre of the Mount Druitt shopping complex. Catherine White, the manager, stated in the annual report:

As always I must thank the team here at the WASH. Early this year I was humbled to be named the Blacktown Woman of the Year. This is an amazing honour, but an accolade really to be shared with our whole team: dedicated and talented staff; generous and wise Board of Management; hard working volunteers and supportive community partners; and of course the courageous and resilient women we work with. I shine in your light. I couldn't do what I do without you. And the WASH wouldn't be what it is without you.

The committee comprises: Linda Oliver, chairperson; Widad Idelbi, vice chairperson; Jo Fuller, secretary, who has been very involved in community services for many years; Angela Jones, treasurer; Pat Smith, member and former senior Department of Housing officer; Tarsa Linsdell, member who is a current employee of Housing NSW; and, of course, Catherine White, who is not only the manager but also the public officer. Margaret Mead does not hold a position with the W.A.S.H. House but she has been an excellent supporter and has written many

reports. I will highlight some of the achievements of the W.A.S.H. House in recent years. In 2009 May Reeve, a volunteer, received the Chifley Senior Volunteer Award, Norma Whitby, also a volunteer, received the Blacktown Woman of the Year Award and the organisation was a finalist in the Mount Druitt Standard Business Achievers Awards.

In 2010 Mary Widdett was a finalist in the Blacktown Woman of the Year Award and the organisation was the winner of the Mount Druitt Standard Business Achievers Award for Community Service. In 2011 Denise White, a volunteer, was a finalist in the Blacktown Woman of the Year Award, the organisation again won the Mount Druitt Standard Business Achievers Award for Community Service, and was a finalist in the Mount Druitt Business Excellence Awards. Catherine White not only was the winner of the Blacktown Woman of the Year Award in 2012 but also was nominated for a Pride of Australia Award. Catherine and the community are very proud of those achievements. I am pleased to acknowledge the 30 years of service that the W.A.S.H. House has given to the community. I should probably say "the first 30 years of service", because I am sure it will be assisting women for another 30 years.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr RICHARD TORBAY (Northern Tablelands) [6.45 p.m.]: Cuts to education funding are always dangerous because their full impact can be assessed only in the long term when it is usually too late to undo the damage. Access to a good education is the cornerstone of our national fair-go culture and it should be regarded as our most important investment in the future and not as another cost centre to be raided to meet expedient budget demands. All schools—public, Catholic and independent—throughout the State will be affected to achieve the estimated \$1.7 billion the Government is seeking to save over the four-year period. TAFE has been targeted, with plans to shed 800 positions and a 9.5 per cent rise in fees. Student concession fees will almost double. In addition, 600 jobs from the department and about 400 school administrative positions will go. The Minister has indicated that the public sector cuts will be from the back office and should not affect front-line staff, and he expects it will be the same in the private sector.

Recently I met with representatives of the New South Wales Teachers Federation regarding their concerns about the cuts to support services that will impact negatively on the public school system. The independent and Catholic school sector is facing funding uncertainty with the cap creating an erosion in the value of State funding over the next four years of the order of \$118 million. This erosion of funding, along with the increasing costs of education, place undue pressure on schools and school systems, which could trigger fee increases that many parents will be unable to afford. This may create a drift to the public system and possibly threaten the very existence of smaller Catholic schools, which now run very lean and depend on cross-subsidisation from larger schools within the system to remain operational.

Recently I was asked to meet with members of a local Catholic school community to discuss the implications of the State policy to freeze its funding over the next four years. State funding to the Catholic education sector supports teachers' wages. The school has estimated that if the effects of the cap to school funding were passed on this would equate to the loss of half a full-time teacher and an educational assistant. The loss of an educational assistant would reduce the support for students with a range of learning difficulties and add to the stress and workload of teachers faced with larger class sizes. Overall, the Armidale diocesan Catholic school system will have to meet the increased costs of education without the usual increase in State grants over those four years. The diocese is one of the largest geographically in New South Wales and includes 24 schools and 5,644 students. The Catholic schools office already runs a very lean operation channelling most of its Federal and State funding back to schools. Any further reductions would need to occur in areas in which the Catholic schools office provides support, such as addressing student disadvantage, learning, disabilities and English language issues. School-based literacy and numeracy programs and teacher professional learning may also have to be pruned back.

In the Armidale diocese this funding cap puts pressure on schools to increase fees more than they would normally expect. In a typical Catholic school in my electorate school fees are scaled to assist families, but this cap will place pressure on families in our region that they cannot afford. Although parents make some contribution to extracurricular activities such as excursions and travel for sporting and cultural activities, these are heavily subsidised to allow all students to participate. The cuts mean that some schools may not be able to afford to employ the casual teachers they need to allow permanent teachers to lead these activities, which are so vital to young people living in rural and regional areas in which distance and remoteness are major issues.

Put together the increasing costs of utilities such as power and gas, insurance, meeting both State and Federal compliance and accountability obligations, pressure on staffing and classes sizes as well as struggling to

support students with additional needs, cuts to extracurricular activities and extra costs to parents and there is a challenging scenario for any educational institution. It is ironic at a time when the Gonski recommendations for a larger investment in education are being seriously considered that New South Wales is moving in the opposite direction. Most people are shaking their heads at these ill-advised cuts, which remove much-needed resources from schools in both the public and private sectors and from TAFE. I urge the Government to consider more carefully the long-term impact of education cost-cutting measures which may prove more costly in the long term than would a more shrewd investment in the education sector now.

Private members' statements concluded.

**The House adjourned, pursuant to standing and sessional orders, at 6.50 p.m. until
Tuesday 23 October 2012 at 12.00 noon.**
