

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Tuesday 20 November 2012

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

The Speaker read the Prayer and acknowledgement of country.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Notices of Motions

General Business Notices of Motions (General Notices) given.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

CAMPBELLTOWN AND AIRDS HISTORICAL SOCIETY AND ALEX GOODSSELL

Mr BRYAN DOYLE (Campbelltown) [12.07 p.m.]: It is with much pleasure that I inform the House about the great work of the Campbelltown and Airds Historical Society and, in particular, Alex Goodsell. On Saturday 17 November 2012 we paid tribute to Alex for his service to Campbelltown and the society at historic Glenalvon House. The Campbelltown and Airds Historical Society began in 1947. In 1956 Alex became secretary of the society and in 1960, after the death of Dr Thomas, he became president, a role he continued in for 40 years. Alex has recently stepped down from the committee, but he still has only one thought, namely, how he can continue to help the Campbelltown and Airds Historical Society.

Alex was a science teacher and has always had a strong sense of the importance of history. On becoming president he ensured that many of the historical items collected by Dr Thomas, including his research files and photographs, found a home in the Goodsell garage. Gradually, as with most good collections, this collection of historical artefacts outgrew the garage and a new home was found for them at the back of the old Campbelltown Town Hall. When Alex undertook a course in town and country planning he came under the influence of Professor Denis Winston, who introduced him to the history of architecture and an appreciation of heritage. Alex also became involved in many of the controversies of the day at Campbelltown, including the tragic demolition of Keighran Mill, the establishment of the Moore-Oxley Bypass and the preservation of the historic Queen Street houses of Glenalvon and Richmond Villa. It was the saving of Glenalvon House that brought the society to its eventual home. Originally the front of the house was leased and the stables and the original cottage were let to the society for use as a museum.

Alex organised tours of the museum, regular working bees and open days. During this time he was well supported by the likes of Jim Munro, Sid Percival, Ed McBarron, Lorraine Voss, Verlie Fowler and Marie Holmes, who all brought their love of history and their love of Campbelltown to the society. Alex was a prolific photographer and would conscientiously and religiously travel around and take photographs of various aspects of Campbelltown. Through the 1950s and 1960s and onwards he would take photographs of any building that it was rumoured was going to be demolished. Sometimes he was just in the nick of time and buildings he took photographs of in the morning were demolished by that evening. In fact, it became a longstanding joke in the area, "Watch out, Alex has a camera in his hand. He wants to photograph your house. Run." All jokes aside, this maintaining of history has been vital in the society and community having so many tangible memories through photographs and videos of Campbelltown as it has grown from its historic, humble beginnings to the thriving metropolis and the opal of the south-west it has become today.

At the function on Saturday there was a full house to honour this great man. I spoke at the function and reminded the group that people who have no history have no future and that those who understand and value their history and heritage have a great legacy to pass on to their children, their grandchildren and their great-grandchildren. Campbelltown is one of the cradles of colonial civilisation in New South Wales and it has a rich Aboriginal culture with the Dharawal people. I invite members to visit Campbelltown to see some of the

historical homes and buildings that are still in use today. Campbelltown is a proud community and, as I told the assembled group, we owe Alex Goodsell a debt of honour because he helped maintain our knowledge, our culture and our heritage. On behalf of a grateful society, I thank him.

Mr DONALD PAGE (Ballina—Minister for Local Government, and Minister for the North Coast) [12.12 p.m.]: I thank the member for Campbelltown for drawing the attention of the House to the significant contribution of Alex Goodsell to the history and heritage of Campbelltown. To be president of a local historical society for 40 years is one hell of an achievement. As the member for Campbelltown said, Alex Goodsell's passion for photography has meant that there are photographs of the history and heritage of Campbelltown that otherwise would not exist. On behalf of the New South Wales Government I thank Alex Goodsell for his contribution to the history and heritage of Campbelltown.

MASCOT PUBLIC SCHOOL PRESCHOOL

Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron) [12.13 p.m.]: I bring to the attention of the House the plight of parents and the parents and citizens association of Mascot Public School who in October this year were informed by the Department of Education and Communities that the preschool hours at their school would be cut from 30 hours a week to 15 hours a week. Mascot Public School has one of the State's 100 government-run preschool centres. I am told that it has been operating for as long as 40 years and is an integral part of Mascot Public School. As has been the case in previous years, applications were open from 18 June to 8 September for parents wishing to enrol their children in the preschool for 2013.

Mascot preschool is heavily supported by parents whose children attend the school, the parents and citizens association and parents of children in the local community. Prior to 2012, the fees for children attending the preschool were \$80 a week, which, in effect, paid for the lunch that was provided to the children from the magnificent kitchen at the school by staff engaged for that purpose. This year, by departmental edict, the fees have been increased to \$160 a week. Some 40 children are enrolled in Mascot preschool on the understanding that it will be open for 30 hours a week, as it has been. Many of those preschool children have siblings at Mascot Public School and the preschool and school operate on a similar schedule.

In October this year an announcement was made by the deputy director general of the Department of Education and Communities that because of the State Government's commitment to the national agreement to provide a minimum of 15 hours of preschool education to every child in New South Wales by next year, henceforth the 30-hour operating period will have to be adjusted across all preschools to provide the agreed service. The National Partnership for Early Childhood Education, which this State and all States of the Commonwealth are signed up to, provides universal access to early childhood education across the State and the nation by mid-2013 to ensure that every child has access to a preschool education 12 months prior to full-time schooling.

The National Partnership for Early Childhood Education agreement was specifically designed to provide preschool education that had not previously been provided. It was never intended to be used by the State of New South Wales to cut an existing service. In fact, the Federal Government had provided funding of \$970 million to help deliver early childhood education for four-year-old children. It was under that funding agreement that all governments committed to providing 15 hours per week of early childhood education. It is not appropriate for the New South Wales Government to cut an existing service and to cut it so late in the term that it causes such inconvenience to the parents of children attending Mascot Public School.

On 9 November 2012 the Gillard Government offered almost \$1.1 billion in new funding for preschools. However, as a result of the New South Wales Government's decision, Mascot Public School has to sack the kitchen staff who were employed to provide food for children at the school and reduce its staff complement to provide for only 15 hours of service per week at the preschool, which will cause maximum inconvenience to parents. I ask that consideration be given to utilising the \$1.1 billion in funding newly announced by the Federal Government to enable Mascot Public School to continue to provide its current preschool service.

ORANGE THEATRE COMPANY *SINGIN' IN THE RAIN* MUSICAL PRODUCTION

Mr ANDREW GEE (Orange) [12.18 p.m.]: I draw the attention of the House to the recent conclusion of the Orange Theatre Company's season of the classic musical *Singin' In the Rain*, which ran from 12 October to 27 October this year. It was yet another outstanding production from the Orange Theatre Company and

affirmed its place as an Orange institution. The production was a faithful adaptation of the original cinema classic that starred Gene Kelly and Debbie Reynolds. Nick Tucknott, who starred as Don Lockwood, did an outstanding job, as did Martina Selwood as Kathy Selden. Sam Fuda played Cosmo Brown, and Bronwyn Platt also put in a stand-out performance as the inimitable Lina Lamont. Trevor Carroll played R. F. Simpson and Greg Pringle played director Roscoe Dexter.

The chorus line was outstanding and I would like to acknowledge a number of other performers who took part in the production: Angela Brocklesby Sattler; Julia Boag; Jasmin Brun; Ali Burgess as Zelda Zanders; Felicity Cantrill; Rachel Crane; Lucy Danson; Madeleine Fisher; Primrose Gorringe; Jacinda Jackson as Dora Bailey; Alex Kelly, who fractured her leg during rehearsals; Brianna King; Lauren Mackay; Tim May as Sid Phillips; Merryn Penny; Alana Pritchard; Liz Richard; Aisleen Rimmer; Erinn Rimmer; Maddy Rosser; Ashleigh Ryan; Troy Sargent as Rod; Nich Schmich as production singer in the classic number *Beautiful Girls*; Katrina Webb; Bethany Westcott; Jordan Wong; and Madison Wong. Also, Tanner Marjoram starred as young Don, Flynn Fisher as young Cosmo and Ben Hoskins-Murphy also as young Cosmo. Lauren Aldrick was the rehearsal répétiteur and did an outstanding job with the orchestra.

Mr Mark Coure: What about the backstage?

Mr ANDREW GEE: The production was directed by Peter Young. Graham Sattler was the musical director and Janice Harris was the choreographer. Jeffrey Thorn did an outstanding job as the production manager, including setting up a rain rig for the classic *Singin' in the Rain* scene. Angela Mason did an outstanding job as the costume designer, and Rod Jones kept everything under control as the stage manager. Besides those I have already mentioned, I also mention the contributions made by Janice Harris and Madeleine Fisher, who ably assisted Angela Mason with costume design; Jeff Thorn and Peter Young on set design; and Jeff Thorn and Peter Young with Trevor Carroll, Rod Jones, Alex Pearson and members of the company on set construction. Marketing was carried out by Peter Young and Felicity Cantrill. The graphic designer was Felicity Cantrill and the photography was done by Jeff D Photography. The follow spot operator was John Visser. The backstage crew consisted of Jeff Thorn, Mitch Colton, Rebecca Brown, Alex Pearson, Scott Brennan, Emma Forde, Cheryl Vangestel, Kai Hemopo and members of the company.

Alison King took care of the front of the house. Hair and wig design was carried out by Chantal McGinley and Madeleine Fisher. The program design and content was done by Felicity Cantrill and Peter Young and the video sequences were produced by Mike Foxall at Central West Creative. Orange Theatre Company makes a great contribution to the cultural life of Orange. The role that a strong cultural scene can play in attracting people to move from the coast to regional centres like Orange must be acknowledged. Orange Theatre Company has a proud tradition that goes back many years of providing and producing wonderful performances for the people of Orange. The company is also a participant in the Canberra area theatre awards and in the past has been acknowledged in those awards in Canberra. Once again I congratulate Orange Theatre Company on a wonderful performance, and I wish the theatre company all the best for its future productions.

GOULBURN ELECTORATE

Ms PRU GOWARD (Goulburn—Minister for Family and Community Services, and Minister for Women) [12.22 p.m.]: Here we are with Christmas decorations already up in the shops and *Jingle Bells* ringing in our ears before Parliament ends for 2012, so I thought I would take the time to reflect on the achievements and the difficulties faced during the year in the Goulburn electorate and the sad loss of some fine friends. I have already spoken in this place of the many significant investments in my electorate. These include the development of a mental health hub in Goulburn, funding of a number of performance and arts projects, new infrastructure for schools, the long-anticipated funding for pedestrian refuges and school zone flashing lights, new bridges and upgraded roads, the piloting of supported independent-living homes for disabled adults, improvements to Goulburn Hospital and the connection of remote villages to mains water.

The list continues with an environmental grant to support forest regeneration and grants to support community events, to improve sewerage and to fix public swimming pools. These announcements get only a tiny paragraph in the local newspapers. However, the long-term appreciation of the new infrastructure and programs will be felt by those who benefit from these improvements, which all mean a safer, stronger, more cohesive community. The residents in my electorate are proud of where they live. They are engaged in local and State issues and they contribute strongly to the many community forums. I am always keen to hear feedback from the community and ensure that their views are shared and their questions relayed to the appropriate Minister for assistance and a response.

As members know, New South Wales has had to face the deepening realisation of the State's true financial situation this year, and Goulburn has not been immune to the restructuring faced by many government departments. This has unfortunately included some job losses in the electorate, which are always very hard to bear in country towns. However, the Government recognises that in the long run business and the agricultural sector will benefit from the streamlined services that cut layers of red tape. Exploration for coal still continues in the Southern Highlands and remains of great concern to local residents. Earlier this year, following extensive community consultation, my colleagues announced new policies and legislation to protect prime agricultural land and, importantly, to prevent aquifer interference.

These conditions and limitations allow for an independent adjudicator to oversee the process. The dark days of Labor's outrageous decision-making processes, or lack of processes, are over. We look forward in coming weeks to the launch of the Southern Highlands and Tablelands Regional Action Plan, which will issue a blueprint for the direction of the region for the next few years. We also look forward to the restructuring of New South Wales trains and rail and the new timetable; and while the widening of the M5 may cause some inconvenience during construction, I hope that commuters will keep their eye on the long view and the benefits that this construction will have for their car journey to Sydney.

I pay tribute to friends, colleagues and community members who died this year. It is a sad moment. Locals Graham Jones, John Edlund, Joan Robertson are among those we have lost and, most recently, we had the sad loss of Southern Highlands patriarch Ted Springett. Their contribution was immense and we thank them for their energy, drive and generosity. I thank them for their generous friendship and guidance. I will miss them all. Both the towns of the Southern Highlands and the city of Goulburn celebrate their sesquicentenary birthdays in 2013 and I look forward to a number of events to mark this milestone. Our challenge will be to ensure that both centres will continue to flourish and grow at a sustainable rate into the future and uphold the legacy of 150 years.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr NICK LALICH (Cabramatta) [12.27 p.m.]: Recently I attended a public meeting organised by the Fairfield Teachers Federation regarding the O'Farrell Government's unprecedented \$1.7 billion cuts to our education system. The meeting took place at the Cabra Vale Diggers Club at Cabramatta. The anger in the room was palpable as staff and teachers spoke about what the proposed budget cuts will mean for them, their school and the children in our community. The Teachers Federation President, Mr Murray Mulheron, was also in attendance and spoke well. The overwhelming sentiment in the room is that the cuts will hit the school system hard.

In a culturally diverse community such as Cabramatta, all of our schools have special needs classes to cater for and directly focus attention on the distinctive needs of our children. Teachers have told me that the special needs classes will be the first to go. That is abhorrent. We, as legislators and representatives, should be working hard every day to provide our children with a better education—not to take it away from them. Unfortunately, that is what this uncaring O'Farrell Government is trying to do simply so that it can cover the budget black hole that it says Labor left behind.

It was surprising then to hear about the Auditor-General's scathing report on the Treasurer's budget and the missing \$1 billion, which has brought New South Wales back into surplus, when the O'Farrell Government had told us that the State was in deficit. But the Government will continue with the education cuts, rather than scrapping them, possibly all in the name of building its coveted North West Rail Link. At the Teachers Federation meeting we heard from many in the audience. One young man of African descent was unfortunately deaf and dumb and required sign language to communicate. He told us that in his homeland the sign language is different to that in Australia, and upon coming to Australia he had to be taught Australian sign language by a special needs teacher. If the special needs classes are axed who will teach such important lessons to those who need them most?

I have visited many schools in my electorate and I will continue to do so. On Monday morning I was outside King Park Public School, Wakeley, which is a good local school in the Cabramatta electorate. There I spoke to parents and they shared their concerns with me about the \$1.7 billion cuts. They gave me a message to convey to the Premier: Stop the cuts. I was quite overwhelmed by the response at King Park Public School, as well as at other schools I have visited such as Sacred Heart Primary School at Canley Vale and Mary MacKillop College at Wakeley.

I have been in politics for a long time—I was on council for 25 years. For 11 of those 25 years I served as mayor. In all that time I have never seen such a strong reaction against an issue. Parents and school communities are scared; there is no other way to put it. They work hard to put food on the table and provide the best education possible for their children. That is being taken away from them by a government that just does not care. Last Sunday at Tumbalong Park the Teachers Federation held a rally which was well attended by many thousands of mums, dads and teachers. The Leader of the Opposition, John Robertson, and quite a few of my colleagues also attended. Along with anger, the loudest message to come out of the rally was to the Premier to stop the cuts.

WERRIS CREEK MULTIPURPOSE SERVICE

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth) [12.30 p.m.]: Werris Creek in the Tamworth electorate is leading the way in regional health services in New South Wales. Recently with the Minister for Health, Jillian Skinner, I attended the opening of the \$11.2 million Werris Creek Multipurpose Service. This facility has taken the delivery of health services to the next level. It provides health services in modern, comfortable and welcoming settings—particularly for the delivery of primary and elderly health care—and its quiet rooms have some of the best views in regional New South Wales. Under manager Kylie Marquart major features and services of the new facility include: a range of community health services; flexible consulting and examination rooms; four low care hospital beds; 12 residential aged care beds; a first aid and treatment service; home and community care services; Aboriginal health services; a day centre to provide activities for older people; early childhood health clinics; telehealth facilities; and staff accommodation.

The telehealth facilities will provide a new way of delivering healthcare services to regional New South Wales by giving practitioners instant access to senior clinicians, wherever they may be, to help diagnose the problems they are dealing with in their isolated communities. The Werris Creek Multipurpose Service would not have been possible without the support of the community over a long period. Thanks must go to the chair of the Health Services Committee, Keith Moore, and the community which pushed for the facility. I acknowledge the efforts of many before me who advocated for the facility and thank them for their commitment to our region. I will continue to push for our fair share in Werris Creek and will work closely with the Liverpool Plains Shire Council to achieve the outcomes for which we strive. Werris Creek is renowned as the first railway town in Australia, with the first railway being built in 1879. It now has the added attraction of having the very best health services available.

In regional New South Wales we are now seeing long overdue investment not only in health services but also in education facilities. I recently visited the Werris Creek Public School where I met with Principal Michael Windred and I am looking forward immensely to attending the school's presentation day on 10 December. Recently students from Werris Creek Public School visited Parliament for the first time. It was my pleasure to host those students and to give them a VIP tour during which I took them from the Chamber right through to the offices and showed them exactly how Parliament operates. The Government is making great inroads in delivering services to regional New South Wales and Werris Creek is leading the way with the newest health services in the State. Its one-stop shop is specially designed to meet the growing needs of the community of Werris Creek and its population of nearly 1,500. Werris Creek is a great town that I am very proud to represent.

Mr DONALD PAGE (Ballina—Minister for Local Government, and Minister for the North Coast) [12.35 p.m.]: The people of the Tamworth electorate are fortunate to have such an enthusiastic and committed local member. He is a tireless advocate for the people of his electorate, which is demonstrated in particular by his support for the Werris Creek health services and the \$11.2 million multipurpose centre. It is a wonderful achievement for the people of his area and is indicative of the New South Wales Government's increasing investment in regional health.

LAKE MACQUARIE ELECTORATE THREATENED SPECIES CONSERVATION

Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie) [12.36 p.m.]: I place on record my regard for the work of the Coal Point Progress Association, Neighbourhood Watch and Landcare Inc. and inform the House of an important project they are undertaking. Last Friday I had the pleasure of attending the formal launch of the Threatened Species Last Stand on the Coal Point Peninsula project which seeks to protect biodiversity along a 3.5 kilometre stretch of the Coal Point Peninsula, with particular emphasis on a number of threatened plants and animals. It focuses on important areas of habitat on publicly owned land in the suburbs of Toronto, Carey Bay, Kilaben Bay and Coal Point. Most significantly, the project is being funded by a \$250,000 grant from the State

Government through the NSW Environmental Trust. The Coal Point Progress Association, Neighbourhood Watch and Landcare Inc. is a model of a successful community group with a broad interest and a commendable record of achievement.

Since its establishment in 1946 the group has undertaken the activities common to such organisations but, unlike many, it has broadened its role and therefore remains an important part of the sense of community in the area. Its move into environmental matters fits well with residents who choose to live on Coal Point because of the natural environment. The sense of community is added to by the community newsletter, the *Coal Point Chronicle*, printed regularly since 1980. The association's level of expertise, organisation and commitment has enabled it to lodge a successful application for such a large amount. The group's credibility is attested to by the support it has obtained from Lake Macquarie City Council, Lake Macquarie Landcare, Trees in Newcastle, Lake Macquarie Sustainable Neighbourhood Alliance, and the Toronto Area Sustainable Neighbourhood Group. The Office of Environment and Heritage website describes the project in these terms:

The Coal Point Peninsula ridge land and Carey Bay floodplain hold the remnants of a botanically bygone era. The ornamental gardens of early settlers from the 1800s have become environmental transformers. This project will regenerate a 20.2 hectare mosaic of public-private bushland along the Coal Point ridge and 8.7 hectare of wetlands and catchment at Carey Bay. A successful 17 year history of local land caring has inspired the Coal Point land carers to undertake a whole peninsula project to protect and preserve three endangered ecological communities, two endangered populations and five vulnerable species. Social media will support community monitoring, participation and information sharing.

Having already acknowledged the fantastic effort of the group I give special mention to Suzanne Pritchard, who has been president of the group for 18 years and has provided much of the impetus for this and other projects. Suzanne's commitment over this time has inspired those around her who plan and participate in a range of community activities. The Coal Point peninsula includes a bushland ridge that is currently a mosaic of public and private bushland blocks; however, the ridge has for many years been appropriately zoned by Lake Macquarie City Council for environmental protection due to it being an important environmental corridor and because it has significant visual importance to those viewing it from across the lake.

An ongoing process of acquisition by the council has seen a substantial area now in public ownership. The corridor is exposed to multiple key threatening processes as listed under schedule 3 of the Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995 that are associated with increasing urban density, including bush rock removal, predation by introduced species such as cats and foxes, invasion of bitou bush, clearing of native vegetation, alteration to the natural flow regime of streams and their floodplains, invasion of native plant communities by exotic perennial grasses, removal of deadwood, dead trees and logs, invasion and establishment of exotic vines and scramblers, invasion and spread of lantana, and the loss of hollow-bearing trees. This project will enable the bushland corridor to be treated as one entity, enhancing the ecological connectivity and resilience within and between areas of differing ownership. It will enable the regeneration of critical habitat for threatened species and communities to be addressed holistically.

The Coal Point peninsula contains three endangered ecological communities: swamp oak floodplain forest, swamp sclerophyll forest on coastal floodplain and coastal saltmarsh. Endangered populations of the magenta lilly pilly and powerful owl exist. Vulnerable animal species that occur are the squirrel glider, osprey and white-breasted sea eagle. Vulnerable plants are *tetradlea juncea* and *macrozamia flexuosa*. I congratulate the association on its successful application and wish it well with this project, but I also wish to acknowledge the Government, particularly the Department of Environment and Heritage and its Minister, the Hon. Robyn Parker, for providing such significant support to this and to other communities through the New South Wales Environmental Trust grants.

Mr DONALD PAGE (Ballina—Minister for Local Government, and Minister for the North Coast) [12.41 p.m.]: I thank the member for Lake Macquarie for drawing our attention to the wonderful environmental work being done as part of the Coal Point peninsula project. I particularly acknowledge his longstanding commitment to the environment, as local member and as mayor in a previous life. I also appreciate his positive comments in relation to the \$250,000 grant that was received via the Environmental Trust and I thank him for his supportive comments regarding our environment Minister Robyn Parker.

CATHOLIC EDUCATION OFFICE AWARD RECIPIENTS

Dr GEOFF LEE (Parramatta) [12.42 p.m.]: I have the privilege of bringing to the attention of this House the dedicated and excellent work of the teachers in the Catholic Education Diocese of Parramatta. In October staff members were recognised in a ceremony led by Vicars General Father Peter Williams, VG, EV,

and Episcopal Vicar for Education Father Chris de Souza, VG, EV, on behalf of Bishop Anthony Fisher, OP, and presented each recipient with an award. Forty-six teachers, leaders and staff from the Catholic Education Office located in my electorate received awards. Awards were given for work in the Catholic education system for 25 years or more, leadership positions for 10 years or more, or for a combination of service to Catholic education and leadership in Parramatta for 25 years or more. In his address the Executive Director of Schools of the Diocese of Parramatta, Greg Whitby, recognised the increasing importance of celebrating the commitment of each staff member and the quality of their contribution to improving the learning outcomes of the young people in their care.

Mr Whitby talked about the importance of ensuring that staff had a professionally rewarding life with appropriate support, mentoring and development, and that their work is valued and recognised. The 25-year service awards have been presented in the diocese every year since 1990. Ten-year leadership awards were introduced in 2000 as part of the diocese jubilee celebrations. Leadership awards were received by Mr Gregory Whitby, Mrs Sophie Ryan, Mrs Sue Walsh and Dr John DeCourcy of the Parramatta Catholic Education Office. Leadership and 30-plus years of service awards were received by Mr Ian Jordan and Mr Paul Munday of the Catholic Education Office, Parramatta. Dr John DeCourcy of the Parramatta Catholic Education Office received the leadership and 40-year service award and Brother Patrick Howlett of Parramatta Marist High School, Westmead, received award for leadership and 45 years service.

Awards for 25 years of service were received by Ms Joanne Dae, Ms Grainne Flynn and Ms Margery Jackman of Catherine McAuley, Westmead; Mr Gregory Whitby, Mrs Krystyna Carley, Mr Paul Du-Crest, Mrs Jane Edmunds and Mr John Farrugia of the Catholic Education Office, Parramatta; Mrs Pamela Cooke of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Wentworthville; Mrs Bernadette Nolan and Mrs Debbra Wooding of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Catholic Primary School, Wentworthville; Mrs Patricia O'Flynn, Mrs Marian Plummer and Ms Marie Prenderville of Sacred Heart Primary, Westmead; Mrs Gisella Cattermole of St Monica's Catholic Parish Primary School, Parramatta; and Mr Michael Wondracz of St Patrick's Marist College, Dundas.

Awards for 30 years of service were presented to Mr Michael Otter and Mrs Lynette Wooden of Catherine McAuley, Westmead; Mr Kevin Hazel, Mr Chris Anschau, Ms Mary Creenaune, Mr John Penny, Mrs Pat Bentham, Mrs Joy Short, Mrs Anna Dickinson, Mr Paul Munday and Mr Ian Jordan of the Catholic Education Office, Parramatta; Ms Kay Massey-Hale of Our Lady of Mt Carmel, Wentworthville; Mrs Halina Levenets of St Bernadette's Primary, Dundas; and Mrs Gloria Bryant of St Patrick's Primary, Parramatta. Awards for 35 years of service were received by Mr Paul Doolan and Mrs Sue Walsh of the Catholic Education Office, Parramatta; Mr Stanley Stefaniak of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Catholic Primary School, Wentworth; and Brother Robert Sutton of St Patrick's Marist College, Dundas. Awards for 40 years of service were received by Mrs Sophie Ryan and Dr John DeCourcy of the Catholic Education Office, Parramatta. Awards for 45 years of service were received by Mr John Lyons of St Patrick's Marist College, Dundas, and Brother Aengus Kavanagh of the Catholic Education Office, Parramatta.

Finally, I also recognise Greg Whitby, who was honoured with a Papal Knighthood in November. Parish priest of St Oliver's at Harris Park, Father Arthur Bridge, said Greg was honoured for his contribution to Catholic education and his work in reframing schooling for a contemporary world. The Bishop of Parramatta, Anthony Fisher, OP, presented this award at the Parramatta Catholic Education silver jubilee celebration. The Knighthood in the Order of St Gregory the Great was originally founded by Pope Gregory XVI in 1831 and is awarded to acknowledge an individual's meritorious service to the church.

HEATHCOTE HALL

Mr LEE EVANS (Heathcote) [12.46 p.m.]: I inform the House of a historical building that is in the process of being restored to its former glory. Heathcote Hall is an imposing two-storey building designed in the Victorian Italianate style and is one of the oldest and grandest buildings in the Sutherland shire. Built in 1887 by Isaac Harber, a wealthy Sydney brickmaker, it is a particularly striking building and its tower is a prominent landmark in Heathcote. The house is a two-storey structure of brick, rendered and scribed to look like sandstone. On three sides is a two-storey verandah colonnaded on the ground floor with a cast iron balustrade and cast iron columns supporting the verandah roof of bull-nosed corrugated iron. The tall tower, with its glazed turret and balcony, is still a prominent landmark above the surrounding trees.

The development of the setting was primarily in response to construction of the Illawarra railway line and extension of the line to the area in the 1880s. Early in 1886 the line was opened as far as Waterfall. Until then Heathcote was known as Bottle Forest. Bottle Forest proper embraced an area of about 200 acres. This little

pocket of fertile country extended north from Heathcote railway station for about half a mile with the railway as its western boundary, back to the east into the national park for about three-quarters of a mile and over the crest of the dividing range between the watershed of the Port Hacking and Woronora rivers. An interesting fact is that buffalo grass in Australia originated at Heathcote Hall. Abel Harber put seeds from Scotland into little hessian bags around the necks of his sheep and let them spread the seed.

Soon railway camps were set up at Sutherland township, Heathcote and Waterfall. Construction of the long tunnels near Helensburgh employed skilled contractors and consumed millions of bricks, many of which were made at the brickworks established by Abel Harber at Heathcote. The establishment of Australia's first national park, the Royal National Park, in 1879 also began to attract people to Sydney's south. Heathcote was one of a number of suburbs within the shire of Sutherland that were to be established adjacent to land reserved as national park. Heathcote retained its bushland setting for a number of years. It remained relatively undeveloped as a suburb until the 1920s, despite having a station in the vicinity. No doubt the reason for neglect on the part of home-seekers lies in the fact that the Bottle Forest area, which adjoins the railway, embraces the most fertile soil and has the greatest elevation, had been locked up in two large family estates and never been opened to the public for purchase. In the 1920s Heathcote Hall estate was surveyed and the former 50-acre lot was subdivided into numerous quarter-acre blocks. Heathcote Hall was retained on a four-acre lot.

Unfortunately, as a result of subsequent financial losses in connection with building the Imperial Arcade in Sydney, Mr Harber abandoned Heathcote Hall for the benefit of his creditors. However, the mortgagee into whose hands the property fell did not find the estate to be a disposable proposition: New South Wales was in the throes of a temporary financial collapse in the 1890s. The financial institution that had obtained possession arranged with George Adams of Tattersalls to dispose of the property by lottery. With tickets issued from Brisbane, Heathcote Hall was first prize in a lottery and was valued at 7,000 pounds. The winning ticket was held by Mr S. Gillett, who was a Sydney builder. He retained ownership for five years and then sold the whole estate for much less than its worth: A mansion and park at Heathcote before the introduction of the motorcar, with only one train a day service, was not a good proposition for a city businessman who was struggling through the competitive times of the 1890s.

Early in 1901 Mr R. R. Brown purchased Heathcote Hall with the intention of retiring there during the few short months of life that Sydney doctors told him he had left. However, Mr Brown confounded his medical advisers and lived there until 1923. This magnificent building is proposed to be restored and its surrounding grounds will be developed into a retirement community. This exciting development will have Heathcote Hall at its centre. Heathcote Hall will be restored to its rightful place as one of our State's most impressive buildings.

TAREE SQUADRON AUSTRALIAN AIR FORCE CADETS

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) [12.51 p.m.]: I advise the House of the honour I had on 17 November 2012 of attending the 317 (City of Taree) Squadron Australian Air Force Cadets annual parade and review followed by the presentation of awards. The 317 Squadron is the number one air cadet squadron in New South Wales. Air cadets began as the Air Training Corps, which was formed in Australia on 11 June 1941 during World War II, and whose seventieth anniversary was celebrated last year. The original aim of the Air Training Corps was to provide pre-entry training for youths between the age of 16 and 18 years who wished to serve as Royal Australian Air Force air crew.

In 1970, 317 Squadron transferred to Taree under the command of Squadron Leader Ivan Murray. It has achieved a great deal since its inception and was awarded the 2011 Parade Drill Award in a competition held at Richmond last year. The reviewing officer for last Saturday's parade was Squadron Leader Rice; the host officer was pilot officer Laurie Easter, with whom I previously served in the Police Force; the parade commander was cadet flight sergeant Jennings; the number one flight commander was leading cadet Tappert; the number two flight commander was leading cadet Humphries-Ford; and the parade warrant officer was cadet sergeant J. Tuckwell. The colour party was cadet sergeant Stuart, leading cadet Tuckwell, leading cadet Clark and warrant officer Schubert.

The list of 317 Squadron cadets in the parade reflects a healthy enthusiasm for participation in cadet training. The squadron includes: cadet flight sergeant Hayden Spilsbury, cadet flight sergeant Bowen Jennings, cadet sergeant Rhiannon Stuart, cadet sergeant Jaslyn Tuckwell, cadet corporal Carl Schubert, cadet corporal Neil Thornton, leading cadet Lachlan Clarke, leading cadet Bryce Grant, leading cadet Christopher Grimmett, leading cadet Jennifer Humphries-Ford, leading cadet Jordan Mitchell, leading cadet Christopher Sheridan, leading cadet Jasmine Thompson, leading cadet D'arcy Tuckwell, leading cadet Bradley Turner, leading cadet

Daniel Tappert; cadet Heather Adams, cadet Jordan Brookes, cadet Edward Corben, cadet Kayleigh Dillon, cadet Ignatius Dunn, cadet Samuel Hearn, cadet Tyson Hill, cadet Morgan Parry-Grass, cadet Timothy Spicer, cadet Joshua Stidolph, cadet Rachel Walker, cadet Samuel Walker, cadet Callan Wilson and cadet Mitchell Wilson.

The commanding officer of 317 Squadron is pilot officer Laurie Easter, the executive officer is flying officer George Wilson, the training officer is corporal Laurie Munro, the administration and assistant training officer is leading aircraftswoman Yvonne Jennings, and the civilian instructors are Dane Campbell, Mandi Campbell, David Lewis, Matthew Parker and Yvonne Grass. Awards were conferred at the parade and included: Dux of the Recruit Stage, cadet Parry-Grass; Dux of the Basic Stage, cadet S. Walker; Dux of the Proficiency Stage, leading cadet Grant; Commanding Officer's Awards, cadet Hill and cadet R. Walker; the Most Improved Cadet, leading cadet Humphries-Ford; the Cadet's Cadet, corporal Schubert; Non-Commissioned Officer of the Year, cadet sergeant J. Tuckwell; the Outstanding Attendance and Participation, cadet Brookes; the Cadet of the Year, cadet sergeant Stuart; Leadership, cadet flight sergeant Spilsbury; Effort and Consistency, cadet flight sergeant Jennings; Encouragement, cadet Parry-Grass; and the Jim Welsh Memorial Flying Scholarship, cadet Brooks. I also served previously with Jim Welsh in the Police Force. Special mention was made of cadet Hearn who, at 20 years of age, is no longer eligible to remain a member of the air cadets. I am sure he will return to serve in a civilian capacity at some time in the future.

STRATHFIELD ELECTORATE EVENTS

Mr CHARLES CASUSCELLI (Strathfield) [12.56 p.m.]: Last week was extraordinary for me. I attended a number of events, all of which in their own right were extraordinary. I attended the Ashfield-Burwood Justices of the Peace annual gala dinner, a Rotary Club of Parramatta City luncheon, the Santa Sabina College Parents and Friends annual luncheon, and the Royal Australian Corps of Signals dining-in function to mark the disestablishment of 17th Signal Regiment. Perhaps of more importance was the opportunity those functions gave me of catching up with people whom I thought had long since passed away, given that they are of my age. I was delighted to see them again. In touching on each of those events, I will refer first to a brief note I received from the president following the Ashfield-Burwood Justices of the Peace annual gala dinner, which states:

Dear Charles,

Just a brief note in order to convey my sincere appreciation, on behalf of the Ashfield-Burwood Justices of the Peace, for your involvement in securing the attendance of the Attorney General at our 25th Anniversary function on Friday evening. What a triumph! He was nothing short of sensational and really made the night. Several of our members came up to me afterwards to say it was, by far, the best function we have ever staged.

The president concluded his note by asking, "Who do you have in mind for next year?" Given that endorsement, I could only think that the Attorney General should book a return performance. But the highlight of the evening was the Attorney General, in magnificent voice, singing a rendition of *Danny Boy* and *Those Were the Days*. My wife and many members of the association joined in singing both songs. It was fantastic. All those in attendance, including me, express our appreciation to the Attorney General, who is present in the Chamber, for taking the time to address the gathering.

I also attended a Rotary Club of Parramatta City luncheon that was attended by a group of very successful businesspeople who have made it a mission in their lives to contribute to the broader community by being Rotary members and who, within their professional capacities, are advising small businesses on how to be even more successful. I acknowledge the hospitality of Michael Mekhitarian, Marian Haddad, Garry Brown, Glen Wran, Josh Graham, Roger Byrne, Geoff Olds and Vivek Trivedi, who are all members of the Rotary Club of Parramatta City and all of whom hosted the luncheon held last Friday. I congratulate each and every one of them on the wonderful work they do through Rotary.

I had a spectacularly successful lunch, hosting four outstanding members of a parents and friends group that were representing Santa Sabina College. Members will remember from my inaugural speech that an outstanding feature of my electorate of Strathfield is that people generally walk faster than elsewhere in Australia because they have not retired to the shores or the mountains of some other electorate. The four parents and friends are hardworking members of Santa Sabina College. They are wonderful advocates for their school community and outstanding members of the Strathfield community. I pay particular attention to Annette Foley, Kaye Mangos, Elena Ierardo and Dimi Koutis. It is interesting to note that two of them are Italian, one is Lebanese and one is Greek. That does not represent the make-up of my electorate, but nonetheless they all have backgrounds in Europe, which is my birthplace.

The dinner for the Royal Australian Corps of Signals highlighted the remarkable contribution of five members of the Australian Defence Force. The majority of them have completed several service tours of Afghanistan, and between them they have more than 120 years of service in the Australian Defence Force. Their achievements and their feats are remarkable. I will mention more about them at a later time, when I will specifically address the contribution that they have made to Australia as a nation and to their community.

Mr GREG SMITH (Epping—Attorney General, and Minister for Justice) [1.01 p.m.]: I thank the member for Strathfield for his contribution. He referred to the twenty-fifth anniversary dinner of the Ashfield-Burwood Branch of the NSW Justices Association. Justices of the peace, who appear regularly at libraries and shopping centres, do generous and largely thankless work, witnessing statutory declarations, affidavits and certifying copies of documents. There are more than 87,000 justices of the peace in this State and next month I will be distributing certificates of appreciation for 50 years of service to a staggering 465 of them. They do not get paid; much has changed and they have kept up with complex changes in recent times. I pay tribute to all justices of the peace for their sterling service.

CROSS-BORDER ISSUES

Mr GREG APLIN (Albury) [1.02 p.m.]: In April of this year I invited the newly appointed Cross-Border Commissioner, Mr Steve Toms, to Albury for a series of community and private meetings. Prior to the meetings I contacted many local businesses and organisations and was able to brief the commissioner with a full rundown on the inequalities and differences that niggle us as a border community. Some cross-border issues are matters of principle for those affected. For example, Albury's maternity hospital is based in Wodonga, but some parents want their child to have a New South Wales birth certificate. Some issues reflect community confusion. For example, it is not clear what speed limits apply to a learner driver when they drive over the border. In Albury, the learner's speed is limited to 80 kilometres per hour; cross the border and the rule is that a learner can drive to the posted speed limit. The rules for displaying L-plates or P-plates are different. It is an inspired introduction for our young people as they make their first tentative forays onto the roads of the New South Wales-Victorian border.

Some issues appear to be more about State revenue streams than about practical realities. For example, a tourist on holiday along the border can be hooked and caught for having the wrong fishing licence. The Murray River is in the jurisdiction of New South Wales up to the southern high-water mark. A New South Wales fishing licence is required to fish from Victoria's shoreline on the Murray. But it is the money only from New South Wales licences that goes to restocking the river with fish. Some differences, while perceived by many people as cross-border anomalies, are simply the product of the policies enacted by the two governments. This category includes matters such as differences in workers compensation premiums, Seniors Card rules, registration inspection for vehicles, tax rates for payroll tax, land tax and stamp duties, and much more. We now have the first report from the commissioner entitled "Listening Tour Report". Released on 21 May, this report is pleasing for the speed with which it appeared. It was no mean feat for the commissioner, who was appointed in March, to tour the regions in March and April and to release a report in May. He is right to recognise that border residences and businesses want action, not chin-stroking or monastic contemplation; they have endured that before.

I now pick out of the report several matters of importance to my border community. The first is the matter of licensing. It is a fact of everyday life that those working in the building industry range across the border. This involves different trade licences for each jurisdiction; training requirements are different. Home-builder warranty schemes do not dovetail—if I may use that appropriate image. Workers compensation insurance must be addressed in both States. The net result is that these differences make it more expensive to do business in New South Wales, thereby increasing the cost of construction of a modest home by an estimated \$8,000 on our side of the border. School buses must meet differing requirements for lights and signage when they travel across the border. Drivers must have two medicals; two Working With Children Checks; and undergo two regime tests, which is yet another barrier to employment and a burden to the financial bottom line. The commissioner has rightly ascertained that the education of our young people is affected by conflicting State policies from curriculum and bus timetables, to teacher accreditation, vacation dates and obtaining work experience for students. This is collateral damage on a mass scale.

The Cross-Border Commissioner has set his first priorities. I look forward to action resolving problems affecting the transfer of native animals as part of wildlife rescue, the alignment of school holidays and consideration of school student bus travel subsidies. This is a welcome start, although the priorities list involves a measure of disappointment. It does not include our problems for fishing licences and boating regulation.

Duplication and unnecessary costs of licensing in the construction and bus transport industries; the confounding conundrum of what to teach our learner and provisional drivers; barriers to employment flexibility and hospitality; and many other matters were raised with passion at the Albury meetings. When addressing the Albury forum, Mr Toms said:

Albury-Wondonga is one community of interest, so the solutions need to be focused on what is good for the overall population as opposed to what the State is trying to protect.

I agree. He is right to note that Parliaments in Sydney and Melbourne must take more account of how proposed new laws will impact on border communities and their economies. I continue to offer my support and to wish Mr Toms well in his important quest. I remind the commissioner that the Albury region has had some success in managing cross-border problems by developing unique solutions such as our combined health service and ambulance arrangements, which we present to other communities as worthwhile templates. Finally, it is noted that the recent report of the New South Wales Legislative Assembly Committee on Economic Development did not recommend the establishment of special economic zones, but endorsed the work being undertaken by the Cross-Border Commissioner.

HOLROYD LOCAL AREA COMMAND AWARDS

Mr TONY ISSA (Granville) [1.07 p.m.]: It gives me great pleasure to congratulate all recipients of the police awards that were presented on Thursday 15 November, at the Holroyd Local Area Command awards ceremony. Representing the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, the Hon. Mike Gallacher, I presented the special awards to a fine group of NSW Police Force officers. The ceremony was an opportunity to celebrate the contribution of these officers and to show appreciation to those who have chosen to dedicate their working life to the service and protection of the community of New South Wales.

As we all know, policing in New South Wales is a challenging front-line career. Police officers face a range of mental and physical challenges every day. Therefore, it is important for us to recognise those who fight to protect lives and property. The extraordinary work that is carried out by police on a daily basis is appreciated not only by the Government but by the community at large. From the minute they put on their uniforms, officers are confronted with crimes such as firearms possession, property theft, drug trafficking, dangerous assaults and drive-by shootings, which is a great concern to us all. These challenges require special commitment and dedication from our police officers to meet the community's expectation that it will be protected. It is a credit to all police officers to see the many successful operations to combat drive-by shootings and organised crime, especially in my electorate.

Today I acknowledge their dedication and commitment to making New South Wales a safe place to live. It is good to know that many of the major crime categories, such as break and enter, motor vehicle theft and malicious damage to property, have reduced significantly in the past couple of years. These pleasing results are a measure of the excellent police work no doubt of all New South Wales police commands, but particularly those areas to which I was pleased to present the awards—namely, Holroyd, Blacktown, Mount Druitt and Quakers Hill. Becoming a police officer is a difficult decision, but remaining one is even more difficult. I commend also local initiatives between police and community leaders, such as Project Eyewatch and Facebook, to connect the community and police proactively, and empower the community to take part in crime prevention activities. It is everyone's aim to keep our community safe.

I congratulate those who received awards on 15 November on their commitment to the Police Force, on their determination to fight crime and on continually striving to achieve excellent results, especially in my electorate of Granville. People in my electorate very much appreciate and acknowledge the continued hard work of police to make their area safe. The Police Force effectively has addressed the issue of drive-by shootings, and increased police presence on the streets has brought comfort and ease to the community. Importantly, I acknowledge the families and friends of police officers, without whose constant support they would be unable to fulfil their role as proud members of the NSW Police Force, securing our communities against crime. I take great pleasure in standing in this House to salute police officers across New South Wales and encourage them to continue to make our community safer.

Mr GREG SMITH (Epping—Attorney General, and Minister for Justice) [1.12 p.m.]: I too pay tribute to the courage and dedication of the NSW Police Force, whose members are our guardians against those who are effectively urban guerrillas shooting up houses. I had the privilege, although it was a difficult role, of prosecuting two trials regarding the murder of Constable David Carty some years ago—one lasting three months and the other four months. A number of convictions were obtained—not all—in a difficult case, but the trials

made me realise the fragility and vulnerability of police when they are outnumbered and face people armed with knives or guns, often at night. I never cease to reflect on their courage and on how fortunate this community is to be so well served.

NSW SCIENTIST OF THE YEAR PROFESSOR JOHN AITKEN

Mr TIM OWEN (Newcastle) [1.13 p.m.]: It gives me great pleasure today to recognise the outstanding achievements of Newcastle-based reproductive biology Laureate Professor John Aitken. In the opinion of many in the scientific community, Professor Aitken's world-renowned research will one day provide a revolutionary chemically based contraceptive that protects against sexually transmitted diseases. So well regarded is his work that last week Professor Aitken was named NSW Scientist of the Year by the Deputy Premier, and Minister for Trade and Investment, the Hon. Andrew Stoner. Professor Aitken is the first regional winner of the NSW Scientist of the Year award since its inception five years ago. I take great pride in informing the House that Professor Aitken leads a research team at the University of Newcastle that is making substantial inroads into human reproductive issues.

Professor Aitken's research achievements include identifying a major cause of male infertility that has resulted in new methods of therapeutic intervention, and the development of a potential contraceptive that would prevent pregnancy and inhibit the spread of sexually transmitted diseases. Professor Aitken and his research team were also responsible for identifying a range of environmental and lifestyle factors, including potential toxins in cigarette smoke and pesticides, that could not only impact on fertility but also create multigenerational DNA damage. Such damage leads to a significant increase in the chances of a man's children developing cancer. Professor Aitken's work addresses not only human but also animal reproduction, and his research is crucial to improving the efficiency of New South Wales' internationally regarded horse breeding industry, worth more than \$4.2 billion annually.

Professor Aitken came to Newcastle in 1999 after forging an impressive international career, which included heading two Geneva-based independent World Health Organization task forces dealing with fertility regulation. He has received multiple honours from universities around the world, including the University of Hong Kong, University of Edinburgh, University of Catania and Monash University—to name a few. The city of Newcastle is extremely proud to have him among its ranks. Professor Aitken's win demonstrates New South Wales' position as Australia's leading research State. In being announced as the NSW Scientist of the Year, he joins a prestigious group of previous winners whose work is revolutionising areas such as quantum computing, robotics, biological sciences and photovoltaics. I am told that Professor Aitken was delighted—obviously he would be—to receive the award and said it highlighted the importance of reproductive biology and the research being undertaken by the University of Newcastle. Professor Aitken said:

We have not had a significant contraceptive breakthrough since the development of the pill in 1960, which is amazing given the advances in other medical fields. With high numbers of unwanted pregnancies and the rise of STDs in New South Wales, especially among young people, it is evident we need better contraception that not only prevents pregnancy but also protects against STDs.

I am pleased to be working alongside such an excellent team of researchers to address these issues and pleased that the work is being recognised through this award.

Professor Aitken is an extremely worthy recipient of this award. His work has the potential to profoundly change the lives of people not just in New South Wales and Australia, but around the world. I congratulate Professor Aitken and his team at the University of Newcastle on their outstanding hard work that not only has great medical outcomes but also promotes the capabilities of our city's only university.

CAMPBELLTOWN CATHOLIC CLUB MAX POTENTIAL PROGRAM

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON (Camden) [1.17 p.m.]: Yesterday I had the pleasure of attending the Campbelltown Catholic Club Max Potential Program showcase expo with my parliamentary colleagues the member for Campbelltown representing that opal of the south-west and the Federal member for Macarthur. The program was launched at the beginning of the year by the Campbelltown Catholic Club, represented yesterday by Director Mary Ellen Bland, and the Future Achievement Australia Foundation. The program's vision is to enhance regional wellbeing through community engagement and common vision to maximise the lives and leadership potential of young people in the Macarthur region. The expo was held for our young leaders from schools, TAFE, university and the community to showcase their experience and the community service projects they have worked on after participating in the 22-week personal leadership development program with a local

business coach. The program allows these young adults to maximise their potential, focus on their local community and think of ways to improve it. During this time participants grow their leadership skills and develop a strong personal relationship with their individual coach.

It was a wonderful experience to see 18 young adults from our area who had achieved something that will stand them in good stead as they start to make decisions about their future and put them into action. I congratulate Damien Bartolo and Callum Walsh from St Gregory's College; Rhett Burraston from Campbelltown Family Support; James Craven, Laura Dillon and Charles McDermott from Elderslie High School; Dean Fa'apito and Lorna Lupeli from Campbelltown Performing Arts High School; Laura Gonzalez, Poppy Mesaros and Dannika Qayyum from St Patrick's College; Eliza Gorey and Joshua Toogood from Mount Carmel High School; Bronson Metua and Emily Newton from Macarthur Anglican School; and Natasha Rodgers, Elizabeth Vella, and Elly Weidner from Magdalene Catholic High School, who are all exceptional young leaders in our community and who yesterday did their schools, families and communities proud.

I congratulate coaches Roger Cubitt, Jennifer Toms, Colin Morse, Wayne Briggs, Kirsten Brumby, Kelly Williamson, Kim McCausland, Raelene Blakeley, Blair Wallace, Lisa Kennedy, Yvonne Porter, Dean Williamson, Sam Ekinici, Sally Fuimaono, Tony Holmes and Danielle Bowman, whose impact on this group of young people was evident on the day. These fantastic coaches represented the Campbelltown Catholic Club, Equine Time, MG My Gateway, Allied Risk Solutions Pty Limited, Campbelltown Family Support Service, Many Hands and W.I.L.M.A. Women's Health Centre.

Instrumental in the organisation of this program and its implementation was 2012 Macarthur Max Potential Coordinator Roger Cubitt and 2012 Macarthur Max Potential Lead Coach and Program Facilitator Dean Williamson. Supporters of the program were Campbelltown Catholic Club, Allied Risk Solutions, Campbelltown Family Support Service and media partner *Campbelltown-Macarthur Advertiser*. I also thank Macarthur identity and local radio host Pat McGeown for his motivational speech. The speech was full of great messages for our future leaders. I particularly enjoyed Pat's encouraging our young people to write to potential future employers to invite them to lunch. Pat assured the audience that not only would nine out of 10 future bosses attend but they would also pay for the maccas.

I also take this opportunity to thank Captain Pat, as he is affectionately known, for his continued and varied support for the people of Macarthur and for his undying love of my region. I enjoyed my time at the expo enormously and took much away from it. I have high hopes for our young people, knowing that they have organisations such as those I have mentioned behind them. I encourage our young people and businesses to continue their participation in this great program. The member for Campbelltown and I look forward to supporting next year's participants and this year's future leaders in their endeavours. I was talking to the member for Campbelltown this morning about the event and we both came away from it knowing that our region and our communities are in great hands given the leaders we have at the wonderful schools that were showcased yesterday. As I said, they are a credit to themselves, their families and their communities.

ROPES CROSSING ROTARY MARKET

Mr BART BASSETT (Londonderry) [1.22 p.m.]: Earlier this year I was asked by the Rotary Club of St Marys and the Rotary Club of Mount Druitt to attend their first community market at the new Ropes Crossing Town Centre at the southern end of my electorate. The market event is a combined project involving the two clubs and it is held at the Ropes Crossing Community Hub. Like all service clubs, the Rotary Club of St Marys and the Rotary Club of Mount Druitt provide a fantastic service through volunteers who give of their time to make our communities better places to live. One hundred per cent of the profit from the market is invested in worthy community projects. The Rotary market at Ropes Crossing, which commenced in March this year after two years of planning, is held on the last Sunday of each month and is an initiative of Lead Lease, which is developing Ropes Crossing.

The market has been steadily increasing in both size and popularity, and it now boasts some 50 stalls. A special community event is also held occasionally in conjunction with Lend Lease. The funds raised are donated to community projects such as the Westmead Children's Hospital equipment upgrade and Rotary youth programs such as Model United Nations Assembly, the Rotary Youth Leadership Awards, the Rotary Youth Program of Enrichment and the Siemen Science Experience summer program—to name a few. Rotary also donates a percentage of the earnings to the Ropes Crossing community for things such as sporting and school equipment and other items required by the community. Ropes Crossing and Jordan Springs are residential estates in my electorate that were planned and developed by Lend Lease.

During the Second World War a munitions factory operated on the Australian Defence Industries site, which is now home to the Ropes Crossing and Jordan Springs communities. The factory was served by a railway line, the remnants of which have been carefully incorporated into the development as a reminder of the heritage of the site. The Australian Defence Industries site was closed in 1994 and work commenced in 2004 on the new development, which will comprise 2,200 homes at Ropes Crossing and 2,500 homes at Jordan Springs. The Ropes Crossing development includes Rochford Place Retirement Village, which I have visited a number of times. The residents of this great retirement village are rightly very proud of their facility. Importantly, a large proportion of the Australian Defence Industries site has been preserved as bushland. Creeks and riparian corridors have been retained for the protection of our natural environment along with ancient Indigenous heritage. Current and future residents will be able to enjoy the amenity and a unique outdoor lifestyle.

I visited the western side of the Australian Defence Industries site on Saturday. The Jordan Springs estate is a great development that focuses on community hubs. It is a great example of developers doing a good job. The community hub is adjacent to a very large lake that will be used to store stormwater and, more importantly, for recreational activities. Land has been set aside within a couple of hundred metres of the lake for a primary school. There will be a Woolworths outlet, the community hub, a primary school and a wonderful water feature, which will hold a large amount of water. The area will also include interactive community facilities such as bushwalks and cycleways, which will be close to the school. This is a great example of how developers can work very well with communities.

Extensive parkland areas will be interspersed throughout the development so that children can readily access a park or activity area and the local school by bike or foot. The developer will also be providing concrete footpaths. Those members who have been involved in local government know that in the past councils were left to provide that sort of infrastructure. The developer will be providing footpaths that connect the community hubs with schools and outdoor activity areas. Of course, work will commence shortly on the upgrade of the Northern Road, which is the main connecting road between Windsor, Richmond and Penrith and which provides access to the Nepean Hospital. This is a good development that will provide infrastructure and will be a great community asset.

Mr GREG SMITH (Epping—Attorney General, and Minister for Justice) [1.27 p.m.]: I pay tribute to the Rotary Club movement in general and in particular to the Rotary Club of Epping, which recently hosted a river cruise for seniors on the *John Cadman II*. Bruce Jacobs and his team of Rotarians, prefects from Epping Boys High School accompanied by their popular headmaster, Peter Garrard, who retires this year, and prefects from Cheltenham Girls High School helped to make it a wonderful afternoon for the 130 or so seniors who attended. Music was provided by The Tokens—a band of which I happen to be a member. This tradition was established five years ago and I hope it will continue for many more years. The seniors enjoyed singing along and dancing with the students, Rotarians and some members of the band. A beautiful afternoon tea was served and it was a great day. All in all, it was a very successful Rotary event that helped our seniors and the many charities that it supports.

Private members' statements concluded.

[Acting-Speaker (Ms Melanie Gibbons) left the chair at 1.28 p.m. The House resumed at 2.15 p.m.]

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

The SPEAKER: I welcome to the Speaker's Gallery a delegation of members of the Portfolio Committee on Local Government and Traditional Affairs from the North West Provincial Legislature of South Africa, led by the Hon. Auchalie Muthupi.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Notices of Motions

Government Business Notices of Motions (for Bills) given.

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

QUESTION TIME

[Question time commenced at 2.25 p.m.]

COMMUNITY SERVICES FUNDING

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: I direct my question to the Minister for Family and Community Services, and Minister for Women. Will the Minister guarantee funding beyond June 2013 for the Wollongong West Street Centre, the Bankstown Women's Health Centre and the Rosebank Good Shepherd Youth and Family Services, all of which provide support services to victims of child sexual assault and are the sole providers of these services in their local communities?

Ms PRU GOWARD: I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. The Government is continuing to reform its grants programs and services to improve the lives of vulnerable children and their families—something that Labor never did despite four failed attempts over 16 years. The preserved services program, which the Leader of the Opposition was referring to, began in 2010 under Labor's so-called reforms to the Community Services Grants program—Labor's fourth failed attempt at reform. Labor put these services into the too-hard basket at that point because they were too hard to deal with and too hard to reform. Members will recall that there had not been an increase in payments under the Community Services Grants program for something like 12 or 14 years.

In 2011-12 an independent review of the preserved services program was undertaken and the Department of Family and Community Services is currently considering its results. The purpose of the review was to determine whether the 36 services fitted with the department's responsibility to protect children and young people at risk of significant harm. On 14 November this year the Chief Executive of the Department of Family and Community Services wrote to 34 services advising them of the progress of the review. Some 26 services were advised that their funding will continue until 30 June 2013. In the coming months the department will work to transition them to other programs such as the Early Intervention and Placement Prevention program or family and domestic violence programs.

The Department of Family and Community Services intends to continue to fund these organisations beyond 1 July 2013. Those 26 services include Lifeline, the Gay and Lesbian Counselling Service of New South Wales, the Margaret Jurd Learning Centre, Newcastle, and the 12 non government-based child and adolescent sexual assault counsellor services such as Wollongong West Street Centre and the Bankstown Women's Health Centre. The chief executive has advised that funding will be continued for eight services until 31 March 2013, including for the Welfare Rights Centre and the Redfern Legal Centre. No final decision has been made about those eight services at this stage. The Government is reforming its grants and services programs to improve the lives of vulnerable children and families.

RUGBY LEAGUE STATE OF ORIGIN MATCHES

Dr GEOFF LEE: I address my question to the Premier. How did the Premier secure more State of Origin games for New South Wales?

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I thank the member for the Parramatta Eels for his question and for his long-term interest not only in sporting and major events held in Sydney but also for the economic benefits and the jobs that they bring to this city. I am delighted to confirm that New South Wales has turned the tables on our interstate rival in securing two additional home State of Origin matches in 2013 and 2016. This will mean that New South Wales will host a total of seven games in this five-year deal. Hopefully, that will make possible something that will unite members from both sides of this Chamber—next year we will bring home the State of Origin trophy. In making that comment I am looking in particular at the member for Lismore and the member for Oxley because I know they are strong supporters of the return of that shield to New South Wales.

I was delighted to see the front page of the *Daily Telegraph* today—indeed, as I am most days—and its screaming headline "Blues Win Origin". I am sure rugby league fans across the State are hopeful that that will come true in the middle of next year. I was even more delighted to see the front page of Brisbane's *Courier Mail*, which claimed this was a rout. To Queenslanders getting a fairer deal for New South Wales is a rout. We know that we have a winning percentage of about 67 per cent at ANZ Stadium, where Paul Gallen is the true king of rugby league. We also know that at Queensland home matches our winning record is only 27 per cent. So we have sought, if not to tilt the scales in our favour, to at least create a balanced playing field so that on

those two additional occasions those magnificent players who pull on the blue jersey can do the job we know they are capable of whilst playing the finest game in the world, without that home ground advantage from which Queensland has benefitted and—the Minister for Sport and Recreation assures me—without those shocking refereeing decisions that we saw in this year's series. The Minister for Sport and Recreation knows that if we see any repeat of that, he will be out of his seat and back in the pink gear and on the field quicker can one can say "Noreen Hay". It is a pity that the member for Wollongong is not here. No doubt she and the member for Kogarah—

Mr Gareth Ward: No, it's not. It's happy hour.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: It is a pity that the member for Wollongong and the member for Kogarah are not here. I am sure they are not still over in the other room in this building. However, one thing the member for Wollongong and I can agree on is a love for rugby league. I was delighted that the Minister for Sport and Recreation not only delivered a new roof to the stand at WIN Stadium but also has ensured that the St George-Illawarra rugby league team will be playing more home games at that stadium this year. State of Origin games are important because it is estimated that they bring something like \$9 million to \$10 million per game into this city. People from overseas, interstate and intrastate come to Sydney for the State of Origin matches, fill every seat in ANZ Stadium and in the process spend their dollars in this city, which supports existing jobs and creates new jobs for casual workers. Something like \$65 million will be injected into our economy over the course of this deal.

I congratulate the new rugby league commission on its wisdom in this deal: for acknowledging that the traditional home States of rugby league are Queensland and New South Wales, and that we need to level the playing field to ensure that New South Wales gets its fair share of State of Origin games; and for ensuring that what we saw last year with the State of Origin match in that village south of the Murray will not be repeated every year. This deal delivers a great boost to this city and a great fillip for rugby league fans. But it is just part of a continuing effort by the Minister for Sport and Recreation, and for the Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Hospitality and Racing, and Minister for the Arts to ensure that Sydney's position as a global events city with a great sports calendar continues.

The deal covers all codes of football, with the NRL Grand Final week, the 2014 FIFA World Cup Asian qualifiers, the first Bledisloe Cup match played under a 10-year deal—we will host a Bledisloe Cup match in Sydney every year from 2012 to 2019—and the British and Irish Lions tour in 2013, when we will host three matches, including one in Newcastle on 11 June, along with the third and final test match between the Qantas Wallabies and the Lions on 6 July. It is a good time for sports supporters. [*Time expired.*]

COMMUNITY SERVICES FUNDING

Ms LINDA BURNEY: My question is addressed to the Premier. In light of the Minister's refusal to guarantee ongoing funding at or above—

Mr Tim Owen: She's making it up as she goes along.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Newcastle will cease interjecting. The member for Canterbury has the call and will be heard in silence.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: In light of the Minister's refusal to guarantee ongoing funding at or above current levels to support victims of child sexual assault in western Sydney, the inner west and the Illawarra, will the Premier step in and rule out any reduction in funding to child support services across New South Wales?

The SPEAKER: Order! Government members will cease interjecting.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I thank the member for Canterbury for her question. I am happy to continue to support the Minister for Family and Community Services, who has not only focussed on ensuring that the most vulnerable across the community get the care and support they need but is also doing so in a way that uses taxpayers' dollars wisely. When the member who asked the question was a Labor Minister she went to the election campaign in 2007 promising to inject more than an extra \$1 billion into community services and

within nine months was forced into a commission of inquiry, headed by respected judge James Wood. What did that commission of inquiry show? It demonstrated that, despite Labor's election policy of pumping more than \$1 billion into community services, we got worse outcomes.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: Not only did they leave the most vulnerable in our community at risk; members opposite should never forget their shameful record.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Marrickville will cease shouting.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: More babies known to the Department of Community Services died under Labor than they did under any other government.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: In other words, notifications to the Department of Community Services from relatives, friends and neighbours of children believed to be at risk from the care they were in were ignored by members opposite.

Ms Linda Burney: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Order! Government members will come to order so I can hear the point of order. The Premier will resume his seat.

Ms Linda Burney: My point of order is Standing order 129. I have a letter—

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Canterbury must elucidate her point of order. This is not an opportunity for the member to go into further detail. The member for Canterbury will resume her seat. The Premier is being relevant to the question asked and he has the call.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I have an iPad that documents the member for Canterbury's sorry management of Community Services.

Mr John Robertson: You are a disgrace.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition will cease shouting.

[Interruption]

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: Let the record show that the Leader of the Opposition—

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: Let the record show that the Leader of the Opposition is proud of the Labor Government's record of allowing more children to die after notification than was the case under any other government. The point is that simply throwing money at services does not deliver the best possible outcomes.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will cease shouting across the table. The member for Maroubra will come to order. I call the member for Mount Druitt to order.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: The member for Mount Druitt should remember the Building the Education Revolution at public schools across the State. Despite the billions of dollars on offer to New South Wales from the Federal Government, less than 65¢ in every dollar went into a classroom being built at a school across New South Wales. The Labor Government failed to deliver a third of the benefit of that program, and public schools across the State are living with the result. Members opposite must understand that we have a process to ensure that the programs meet—

Ms Linda Burney: Point of order: The Premier may note that we did not—

The SPEAKER: Order! That is not a point of order. I call the member for Canterbury to order. I call the member for Marrickville to order for the second time. I will not tolerate a repeat of the behaviour members engaged in last week. When members take a point of order they must articulate their concerns. It is not an opportunity for members to approach a microphone at the table to argue or shout. I warn members that if they persist with that type of behaviour, they will be ejected from the Chamber. I remind members that a number of them are on a call to order and some are on two calls to order. The Premier has the call.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: As I said, it is a two-stage process. The Minister has indicated that reviews are underway. She has also indicated her determination to ensure that services meet the needs that exist across the most vulnerable communities in this State but to do so in a way that ensures that every dollar spent delivers a better result—

Ms Linda Burney: No guarantee.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: That is more than the member for Canterbury did when she was Minister. It is disgraceful that she does not hang her head in shame.

The SPEAKER: Order! I warn members that those who continue to shout across the Chamber—some quite aggressively—will find themselves out of the Chamber until they have cooled down.

SYDNEY HARBOUR FLOATING HELIPORT

Mr RAY WILLIAMS: My question is directed to the Deputy Premier. How is Government ensuring that Sydney and New South Wales are attractive tourism and business destinations?

Mr ANDREW STONER: I thank the member for Hawkesbury for a very good question. This Government is committed to ensuring that Sydney is a truly international city attracting increased numbers of tourists and business people from around the world. That is why the Government is working with industry to create Australia's first fully integrated convention, exhibition and entertainment precinct at Darling Harbour. It is also why we are getting on with the job of delivering the \$6 billion Barangaroo precinct, creating 9,000 jobs and re-emphasising Sydney's position as a global city and financial services hub in the Asia-Pacific region. There is always more we can do. As the Tourism and Transport Forum noted in its HarbourView report:

Since the late 80s, Sydney has been one of the few global cities without a helicopter service.

Indeed, New York has a heliport on Pier 6 on the East River and London has one on the south bank of the River Thames. Even Melbourne has a heliport: it is on the Yarra River at Docklands. I am pleased to inform the House that from next month Sydney Harbour will be home to a new floating heliport. Currently, helicopters operate only from Sydney airport, Bankstown airport and a private heliport at Rosehill. The Government understands that our State's tourism industry is operating in a tough global environment due to highly competitive market conditions as well as a high Australian dollar. We also know that world-class experiences help coax visitors to our city. The Sydney Harbour floating heliport will play an important part in achieving that. From early next month, Sydney Harbour will be home to an innovative new flat-top powered barge accommodating at least two helipads and sufficient deck accommodation to manage passenger operations.

People and cargo will be taken to and from the heliport by existing water taxis and other commercial operators. By mid-2013 the Sydney Harbour floating heliport will be a purpose-built vessel with meeting rooms, aircraft storage and refuelling facilities. NSW Trade and Investment has been working with Newcastle Helicopters and the company has now achieved the necessary approvals to operate the heliport for an initial period of 12 months. The heliport will operate from agreed locations remote from shipping channels and residential areas, and will be made available to any preapproved helicopter operator during the agreed operating hours of 7.00 a.m. to dusk. Helicopter flight paths will conform to existing routes and follow established procedures in the Sydney Harbour airspace. The response from industry to this announcement has been swift and very positive. The Chief Executive of the Tourism and Transport Forum, John Lee, said this:

Sydney's reputation as a global city was let down by the fact it did not have a heliport in or near the CBD.

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

Mr ANDREW STONER: Those opposite ought to know about John Lee—a good Labor man. He also noted that the heliport would provide a boost to regional tourism, stating:

Many international visitors are interested in visiting regional areas, but they simply don't have the time to drive or travel by coach or train. A CBD heliport will give them access to regional destinations for half a day or a day trip, helping with the dispersal of high-yielding visitors and supporting jobs in regional areas.

Listen to all the whinging and moaning from those opposite. They are whinging and moaning because for 16 long years they sat on their hands and did nothing to help move this city and this State forward.

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

Mr ANDREW STONER: Despite the golden opportunity handed to them—the Sydney Olympics—by the previous Liberal-Nationals Government, they presided over a regime to ensure that our State's economy slowed down. We are not about to do that. That is why the Sydney Business Chamber said this:

I congratulate the Deputy Premier on seizing this opportunity. Making New South Wales number one again is very much about not allowing great opportunities and exciting new ventures to pass our great city by. Sydney faces a tough and competitive tourism environment. We need to be continually introducing new experiences that will entice visitors to make what can be for overseas visitors a very long journey to Sydney.

It is a good thing—and it is about time. Those opposite failed. [*Time expired.*]

COMMUNITY SERVICES FUNDING

Ms LINDA BURNEY: My question is to the Treasurer. Given the Auditor-General has found \$1 billion—

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Canterbury will be heard in silence. The member for Monaro will come to order. I would like to hear the question and so would the Treasurer, who has to answer it. Government members will come to order. The member for Kiama will come to order. The member for Canterbury has the call.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: Given the Auditor-General has found \$1 billion in the budget that the Treasurer did not seem to know existed, will the Treasurer now reverse his \$500 million in cuts to community services and guarantee funding to child sexual assault support services?

Mr MIKE BAIRD: The member raises an important question. The question is: Is the O'Farrell Government committed to providing funds to the most vulnerable in the community? Absolutely, we are, and for those opposite to argue that it is any other way is absolutely wrong.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Let us be clear on the budget financial management. Those opposite knew when in government that there was a problem. The Auditor-General said there was a decade of problems. They knew about it, so what did they do? They stuck their heads in the sand like ostriches and said, "It does not exist." What was next? They then come into this place and say, "Hang on, you have to fix up our mess."

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: They say, "We know we left behind all these problems. You need to fix them up." They come in here on their moral high horses, up and down—

The SPEAKER: Order! The Treasurer will not incite Opposition members.

Ms Linda Burney: Point of order: My point is relevance under Standing Order 129. I find it abhorrent to make jokes—

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

Ms Linda Burney: The question was very clear. It was: Can the Treasurer guarantee no cuts to community services and make sure that child sexual assault services have ongoing permanent funding? That is the question.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Treasurer was setting about answering the question and he has been relevant thus far. There is no point of order. I remind the member for Canterbury that she should not use points of order to set up an argument. The Treasurer has the call.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: It is a fair point from the member for Canterbury. I am in no way belittling the issue. The member is bringing politics into the issue. Providing money to the most vulnerable is critical and I am not denying that in any way, shape or form. What I am saying is that those opposite, when they are pushing financial management, are on their moral high horse and they have no justification for it whatsoever. We are fixing it, yet they say it is an obscene waste of money. That is what they did. We inherited a very difficult budget position. Between the time we came to power and now, we have \$2.5 billion less per year to spend.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Every Minister on the frontbench and every Minister in this Government is determined to fix it.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: We will not live beyond our means and leave problems for future generations to resolve. We are very happy to take the decisions that mean we are not leaving those problems for someone else to deal with. We are dealing with them today. They are not easy decisions and they are not popular, but they are the right decisions for this State. In relation to the member's question, I say this: We are determined, as members have seen from the Minister for Disability Services. On budget day, one of the three planks of the budget was that we must live within our means and, while doing that, we must enhance and provide services to those most vulnerable in this State.

On budget day National Disability Services said, "Historically, disability services were moved to the bottom of the priority list when times were tough. The Premier and the Minister for Disability Services deserve great credit for delivering the promised new funding for disability services." Historically it was not on the priority list. Under this Premier, the Minister for Disability Services, and the Minister for Family and Community Services it has gone to the top. We have a tough budget position but we are determined to do everything possible to deliver and improve the services for those who are most vulnerable across the community. That is something we will never shirk. It will be front and centre of every budget that we are a part of because it is the responsible thing to do and it is something that we are proud of.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET: My question is directed to the Minister for Transport. How many extra public transport services has the Government provided since March 2011?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I thank the member for his question and his interest in public transport. It is a pity those opposite did not take such an interest in it when they were in government. Whether it is big infrastructure projects like the North West Rail Link or practical lateral-thinking measures like trialling marshals at central business district stations, we already have a very proud record in public transport. If there was one area in which Labor failed abysmally in government it was in public transport. Rather than make it easy for people to leave their cars at home and catch the train or jump on a bus, the former Labor Government turned people away. We know their shameless record. We know they slashed 416 daily rail services; we know they slashed 1,500 weekly bus services; we know they slashed 233 weekly ferry services and the Leader of the Opposition signed off on those cuts himself. But I am pleased to say that the days of broken promises, wasted millions and diminishing services are over. They ended in March last year.

The SPEAKER: Order! I call the member for Kogarah to order for the second time. The member for Kogarah will cease shouting across the table and interjecting.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Recently I had to apologise to the House because I misled the House by saying we had introduced more than 1,000 weekly services; I said it was 2,000 weekly services. But I have transgressed again. People who use public transport now have the benefit of more than 3,000 new rail, bus and ferry services per week. I stress that since we have been in government we have introduced 3,000 extra weekly services. We have introduced 107 new train services every week. This includes 35 new weekly peak services for

western Sydney residents; 20 new services a week for the Eastern Suburbs and Illawarra line; eight new weekend services for the Blue Mountains; and a new daily Bathurst return service. As well as new services we have boosted the number of seats on existing rail services by tens of thousands to increase capacity for customers.

For commuters who catch the train from Newcastle and the Central Coast there are now tens of thousands of extra seats available every week. I know that is welcomed by those residents. We have also delivered 7,000 extra seats every weekend on the South Coast line. We are rewriting the train timetable from scratch to deliver even more services by the end of next year. We have also introduced or restored 165 weekly ferry services, made up of 140 services slashed by the Leader of the Opposition plus 25 new services for the inner west, a growing area. We have also done a lot in relation to bus services. This includes new bus services made possible by growth bus allocations. We have introduced more than 2,800 new bus services every week. Labor slashed 1,500 every week and we have brought in 2,800 services.

I am pleased to say there is something for everyone. I will be specific because members opposite do not like the truth. We have introduced 679 new bus services for western Sydney, the Blue Mountains and Bathurst; 11 new bus services for the eastern suburbs; 565 new bus services for the North Shore and northern suburbs; 295 new bus services for the Campbelltown area; 315 new bus services for the Hurstville and Sutherland area; 853 new bus services for the long-suffering Hills District; and 107 new NightRide bus services on various routes across Sydney. We are always very happy to be judged on our record when it comes to public transport. It is a positive record. Labor slashed services and bloated the bureaucracy. We are bringing back those services and I am very proud to say that the long-suffering commuters of this State now have 3,000 extra services every week.

SYDNEY PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Ms CARMEL TEBBUTT: My question is to the Minister for Transport. Which of the following does her Government support for the Sydney central business district: an underground bus tunnel or light rail down George Street?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I love the fact that in 16 years of government those opposite did absolutely nothing about congestion in the central business district.

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: All they did was slash services and bloat the bureaucracy, and let down the people of this great city. I am pleased to say that since we have been in government we have done a lot to address congestion in and around the central business district and that work is continuing. I am very pleased that a number of buses that come from the North Shore and the Hills area now divert into Grosvenor Street. That was a positive move we made to reduce congestion. We have also announced that from the beginning of next year more buses will be using the Cahill Expressway to further reduce congestion. I want to know when members of the Opposition last used public transport. I am often one of those commuters who use buses and I know what commuters are going through. Members opposite do not like to face the truth. They do not like to accept the fact that while they slashed services, we are getting on with the job. Not only have we diverted buses to deal with congestion problems but only yesterday we trialled new door managers at Town Hall station. I am happy to say that was a resounding success.

Dr Andrew McDonald: Point of order: This is a very difficult call. I did not know whether to take a point of order under Standing Order 59, tedious repetition, or Standing Order 129, relevance. The question was about the bus interchange and light rail, and which one is more appropriate.

The SPEAKER: Order! First, it is my decision as to whether it is tedious repetition. Secondly, the Minister is being entirely relevant to the question.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I will tell him about the South West Rail Link, but he does not want to hear good news. Only yesterday at Town Hall station we trialled new door managers. It is early days but they were a resounding success, and I will explain why. Members opposite can laugh and giggle all they like, but we know they failed when it came to public transport. Our timetable says we should be able to get 20 trains through that particular platform during the morning peak, but for years and years we have managed to get only 17 trains

through at that time. Members opposite did nothing about that for 16 long years. Yesterday, because of the trial of door managers, we managed to get an extra 3,000 people through during that peak hour. Instead of 17 trains an hour in the morning peak we got 20 trains through yesterday. Next time members opposite want to ask me a question about central business district congestion they had better do their homework. They slashed services and had no solutions. We are getting on with the job of fixing public transport. Members opposite might not like to face the truth, but when it comes to central business district congestion there are more solutions to come.

SPORT AND RECREATION GRANT PROGRAMS

Mr GEOFF PROVEST: My question is directed to the Minister for Sport and Recreation. How are the Government's revised Sport and Recreation Grant Programs better servicing the community?

Mr GRAHAM ANNESLEY: I thank the member for Tweed for his question and for his interest in grant programs throughout the State. Sport and Recreation traditionally administered grant programs to support the development of growth and physical activity for the health and social benefits it brings to our communities across the State. It will not come as any surprise to members that, historically, all grant programs are heavily oversubscribed and demand significantly outstrips supply. Although I would like to fund every worthwhile sporting and recreational activity in New South Wales, the reality is that funds are limited in the current economic climate.

When I commenced my responsibilities as Minister for Sport and Recreation, it soon became obvious that the existing, well-intentioned grant schemes in my portfolio needed re-engineering to better meet the needs of the industry. As a result, I directed a comprehensive review of all sport and recreation grant programs to be undertaken with the key objectives of reducing over-subscriptions, introducing multiple application rounds to provide more flexibility and improved time lines, requiring contributions by applicants in either cash or kind, and engaging local members of Parliament in the process, as well as encouraging applications intended to increase participation, and incentivising the staging of regional, State and national events in local communities across New South Wales. Members are aware that as a result of the review I announced the revised grant programs, which feature fundamental changes.

The combined participation and facility program now has two funding rounds per year instead of one. Grants are capped to ensure available funds are spread as fairly as possible, and applicants must now contribute 50 per cent or more to the project in cash or kind to filter the number and the value of applications. The first round for the 2012-13 program opened on 2 August 2012 and closed on 3 September; 805 applications were received with a total value of \$14.8 million. By comparison, last year applications for the stand-alone facility and participation grants totalled almost \$45 million. It would appear the new scheme has already had the effect of reducing overall demand, thereby increasing the success rate of applicants. Applications are being independently evaluated, and it is expected that successful applicants for the current round will be announced in the near future. The second round of the 2013 participation facility grants program opens on 21 January 2013 and closes on 26 February, which is good news for those organisations that missed the deadline for lodging an application.

Recently I have introduced the new Sports and Recreation Events Program, which replaces the previous International Sporting Events Program. The primary focus of the events program is to attract small-sized to medium-sized sporting events to New South Wales. This program should not be confused with those larger major events handled by Destination NSW through the excellent work of Minister Souris. There are three distinct event types in the Sport and Recreation Event Program: those with some form of international component, national championships, and regional community participation events. Grants are also capped for this program, with applicants being required to contribute 50 per cent or more towards the cost of staging the event. This will ensure that as many quality applications as possible receive financial assistance. Applications are open continuously with assessments undertaken at the end of October, January and April each year.

The aim of all of these revised grant programs is to assist to meet the needs of the New South Wales sport and recreational community whilst ensuring there is a greater level of ownership on their part rather than placing the entire financial burden on Government. Whilst Sport and Recreation is not immune to the need to find savings and efficiencies and play our part in the Government's efforts to turn the State's finances around, I am pleased to announce that despite the testing financial times confronting us, the overall funding pool for the new grant programs has been maintained. As someone with a lifetime involvement as a sports participant and administrator, I know and appreciate how important these programs are to struggling sporting organisations around the State. I encourage all members on both sides of the House to make their constituents aware of these programs, and to be aware of their opening and closing dates.

JOHN HUNTER HOSPITAL EYE CLINIC

Dr ANDREW McDONALD: My question is to the Minister for Health. Following the Government's decision to close the John Hunter Hospital eye clinic, how far will public patients with conditions such as glaucoma, cataracts, macular generation and diabetes now have to travel for a consultation?

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: I appreciate and welcome the question, because I am pleased to inform the House of the situation regarding ophthalmology patients in the Hunter, particularly those at John Hunter Hospital. Each year John Hunter Hospital treats approximately 4,000 urgent patients through the emergency department. It is a heavy load and I am pleased to say they are treated well and then followed up in ophthalmology clinics provided at the hospital.

Dr Andrew McDonald: I agree with that.

The SPEAKER: Order! I remind the member for Macquarie Fields that this not a private conversation between him and the Minister.

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: Can you believe him? In November last year, ophthalmologists said they were not willing to continue non-urgent routine clinics without a significant increase in resources, which the local health district was unable to provide. I have made inquiries about exactly what the significant resources are.

The SPEAKER: The member for Maroubra and the member for Shellharbour will cease interjecting.

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: The member for Maroubra thinks that these resources are cash, which shows how little he knows about health. He should at least talk to the shadow Minister for Health, who is a doctor, knows that it is not about cash; it is about very expensive equipment.

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

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: I can assure members that I will be making inquiries, but as a result, patients have been advised that clinics are no longer available at John Hunter Hospital.

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

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: They have been offered alternative pathways, including general practitioners, private ophthalmologists, and the State referral facility for ophthalmology at Sydney Eye Hospital. These changes to the routine non-urgent ophthalmology clinics have not impacted on the provision of ophthalmology surgery at John Hunter Hospital, and referrals for planned surgery continue to be accepted and attended to within clinical time frames. We inherited huge ophthalmology waiting lists from the former Labor Government. In our first Health budget, we increased funds considerably to reduce ophthalmology waiting lists.

The SPEAKER: I call the member for Maroubra to order for the second time.

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: Ear, nose and throat surgery waiting lists, for example, at places like Westmead Hospital were legendary, and we have managed to bring that one down considerably. Outpatient clinics, which are what we are talking about, are generally funded by Medicare, so I suggest that the shadow Minister for Health speak to the Federal Minister for Health about making sure that funding is available through Medicare to maintain these outpatient clinics at John Hunter Hospital. In the meantime, I will liaise with the local health district to ascertain the level of funding.

The SPEAKER: Order! I remind the member for Kogarah that she is already on two calls to order.

Dr Andrew McDonald: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Order! I do not know what the point of order could involve because the Minister has been entirely relevant.

Dr Andrew McDonald: I was having difficulty hearing.

The SPEAKER: Order! Perhaps the member could not hear the Minister because he has been interjecting so much.

Dr Andrew McDonald: Did the Minister say that outpatient centres were funded by Medicare? Will she confirm that, because I did not hear her correctly the first time?

The SPEAKER: Order! I suggest that the member could not hear the Minister because he and those around him have been interjecting, arguing and shouting. There is no point of order.

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: I have indicated that I will ascertain from local health districts exactly what the ophthalmologists want in the way of resources. Do they want different equipment? They ran these clinics under the Labor Government without complaint. I want to know exactly what they need that is so important and urgent and I will address the issues as needs be.

PUBLIC EDUCATION

Mr CHARLES CASUSCELLI: My question is directed to the Minister for Education. Can the Minister inform the House of some of the many key improvements being made in Sydney schools?

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: I welcome this question from the member for Strathfield. I am very upset about some of the reports on the changes being made in the education sector in New South Wales. I am particularly concerned about the people who continue to denigrate public education. Even in their attempts to discuss the changes—and there are many—they succeed in denigrating public education. I refer to an article written by Maralyn Parker, a well-known columnist, headed "Future of public education in NSW in dire straits". That kind of headline in an esteemed newspaper such as the *Daily Telegraph* does nothing for public education. I know that passions are stirred when changes are made and reforms are introduced, but that is not the kind of headline that public education in New South Wales either needs or deserves. I understand that people hold different views about how the changes are being effected, but that is not the kind of headline that the public education sector needs.

The Government has implemented a number of positive initiatives in public education. Of course it has introduced controversial reforms and implemented savings measures. Members opposite want the Government to wind back the travel expenditure savings that have been implemented; they want bureaucrats to travel more. They also want the Government to wind back the savings made on consultancies; they want us to employ more consultants. My response is no, no, no. The Government will spend the money that it has saved on the front line. I will provide the House with some real examples of how this Government's reforms have benefited our schools. There is no better way to do that than to examine the 40 schools that the Leader of the Opposition visited in 40 days.

The SPEAKER: Order! Government members will come to order. I can hardly hear the Minister.

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: The Leader of the Opposition has not diverted far from the M4 as he has travelled from Blacktown to the city. He has not visited one school in regional New South Wales, in the Hunter, on the Central Coast nor in the Illawarra. However, he has visited Parramatta West Public School. While he was condemning public education he did not bother with the facts. Why would he let the facts get in the way of a good story? This year Parramatta West Public School has 1.3 more teachers than it had last year; Leichhardt Public School has 2.5 more teachers than it had last year; and Maroubra Bay Public school has two more teachers than it had last year. The students who will benefit were not mentioned in his press release. It was all doom and gloom. He did not talk about how much more Parramatta West Public School will have to support students with disabilities. It will receive \$41,000 extra and 1.5 days more teacher time each week to support those wonderful kids who need that extra assistance. Earlwood Public School, in the electorate of Canterbury, will receive \$32,000 extra and 1.5 days more teacher time each week.

Mr John Robertson: Point of order: The Minister is welcome to join me this week and next week on my tour.

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

Mr John Robertson: I just want him—

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

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: It would be very bad for my reputation if I were to be seen anywhere near the Leader of the Opposition. I am happy to provide all this information to any member. The Leader of the Opposition has visited two schools in Kogarah. Perhaps the Opposition is worried about its hold on that electorate. Kogarah Public School will receive \$36,000 extra and—

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Kogarah is already on two calls to order and has had two further warnings.

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: Earlwood Public School will get \$26,000 under the Public School Upgrade Program and Kogarah High School will get \$69,000. The Leader of the Opposition said that he visited 40 schools in 40 days. That was over the term—not 40 schools in 40 days. That is very clever wording. Given that he has been out and about, surely people would recognise him. Surely his visits would be good for his profile. I am sorry but I have bad news for him: Not even Channel 7 knows who he is. Last time I looked, this was not John Robertson.

The SPEAKER: Order! I warn the Minister about using props. He should dispense with it.

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: Like 97.8 per cent of the population of the State, Channel 7 does not know who he is. [*Time expired.*]

Question time concluded at 3.17 p.m.

VARIATIONS OF RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ESTIMATES AND APPROPRIATIONS 2012-13

Mr Baird tabled, pursuant to section 26 of the Public Finance and Audit Act 1983, variations of the receipts and payments estimates and appropriations for the Department of Family and Community Services arising from the provision by the Commonwealth of specific purpose payments in excess of the amounts included in the State's receipts and payments estimates.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders: Discussions on Petitions Signed by 10,000 or more Persons

Mr BRAD HAZZARD (Wakehurst—Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Infrastructure NSW) [1.28 p.m.]: I move:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended to permit, on Thursday 22 November 2012 at 4.15 p.m. or at the conclusion of Government business if earlier consideration of the petition on palliative care funding and services presented by the member for Ku-ring-gai, followed by the petition on the proposed development called "The Landing" presented by the member for Gosford.

As members know, usually on a Thursday afternoon we deal with one petition. Given that the parliamentary session will conclude this week, I propose that the House deal with two petitions, one relating to the palliative care funding and services and the other to "The Landing" on the Central Coast.

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

Motion agreed to.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders: Bills

Mr BRAD HAZZARD (Wakehurst—Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Infrastructure NSW) [3.20 p.m.]: I move:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended to permit the passage through all stages, at this or any subsequent sitting, of the Ombudsman Amendment Bill 2012 and the Saint John's College Amendment Bill 2012.

Earlier today the Premier gave notice of the Saint John's College Amendment Bill 2012. All members would be aware of the need to urgently address issues relating to Saint John's College. Accordingly, it is proposed that the Saint John's College Amendment Bill 2012 proceed through all stages at this sitting. Notice also was given

earlier today of the Ombudsman Amendment Bill 2012. Members also would understand the urgency in relation to providing the Ombudsman with certain powers to undertake investigations on behalf of the community. The member for Maroubra, on behalf of the Opposition, has agreed to the bills being dealt with contemporaneously. I propose that the second reading speeches of both bills are given today or early tomorrow and that the House debate the bills tomorrow.

Mr MICHAEL DALEY (Maroubra) [3.21 p.m.]: I have had discussions with the Leader of the House and I can indicate that the Opposition is keen to cooperate with the Government in relation to these two bills. However, I note that the Ombudsman Amendment Bill 2012 in particular contains amendments to important Acts. Therefore, in the spirit of cooperation, I ask the Leader of the House to provide the shadow Ministers with copies of the bills and, perhaps, Government briefings as soon as possible.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD (Wakehurst—Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Infrastructure NSW) [3.22 p.m.], in reply: The Government will certainly seek to do that. I appreciate the cooperation of the Opposition.

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

Motion agreed to.

COMMITTEE ON LAW AND SAFETY

Reference: Inquiry into Management of Donor Conception Information

Mr JOHN BARILARO: I inform the House that, pursuant to Standing Order 299 (1), the Legislative Assembly Committee on Law and Safety has resolved to conduct an inquiry into the management of information relating to donor conception in New South Wales, the full details of which are available on the committee's home page.

JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON ROAD SAFETY

Reference: Inquiry into Use of Non-registered Motor Vehicles

Mr GREG APLIN: I inform the House that, pursuant to Standing Order 299 (1), the Joint Standing Committee on Road Safety has resolved to conduct an inquiry into the use of non-registered motorised vehicles to commence in February 2013, the full details of which are available on the committee's home page.

LEGISLATION REVIEW COMMITTEE

Report

Mr Stephen Bromhead, as Chair, tabled the report entitled, "Legislation Review Digest No. 29/55", dated 20 November 2012, together with the minutes of the committee meeting regarding Legislation Review Digest No. 28/55, dated 13 November 2012.

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

PETITIONS

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

Education Funding

Petition calling on the Government to stop cuts to education, TAFE and school funding, received from **Mr Richard Amery**.

Eastern Suburbs Bus Service 311

Petition requesting the retention of the 311 bus service link to Central and Circular Quay and improvements to frequency and reliability, received from **Mr Alex Greenwich**.

Pet Shops

Petition opposing the sale of animals in pet shops, received from **Mr Alex Greenwich**.

Pig-dog Hunting Ban

Petition requesting the ban of pig-dog hunting in New South Wales, received from **Mr Alex Greenwich**.

Container Deposit Levy

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

Cooks River Sewage Flows

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

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

The Hon. Jillian Skinner—Central Coast Palliative Care Services—lodged 16 October 2012 (Mr Richard Amery)

The Hon. Jillian Skinner—Palliative Care Services—lodged 16 October 2012 (Mr Barry O'Farrell)

The Hon. Jillian Skinner—Inverell and Glen Innes Hospitals Redevelopment—lodged 16 October 2012 (Mr Richard Torbay)

CONSIDERATION OF MOTIONS TO BE ACCORDED PRIORITY

Public Transport Infrastructure

Mr BART BASSETT (Londonderry) [3.25 p.m.]: This motion deserves priority because good-quality and reliable transport services are a priority of this Government, and they should always be a priority of governments. The Liberal-Nationals Government is delivering a better transport system. That is in stark contrast to the former Labor Government, whose only priority in relation to public transport and infrastructure was more spin and media-driven public relations. This motion deserves priority because we finally have a Minister for Transport who knows what she is doing. The Minister is getting on with the job of building a better transport system for New South Wales. That is in stark contrast to Labor's last Minister for Transport, none other than the current Leader of the Opposition, who was the unions' choice and appointed by the backroom boys to look after the unions' interests rather than to build a better transport system for the benefit of commuters.

The Leader of the Opposition was the last on a conga line of failed Labor transport Ministers. The Labor leader even failed to convey the detail of his Government's botched transport priorities. That was the icing on the cake of Labor's failed record on transport. This motion deserves priority because now we have a Minister for Transport who will listen and deliver better transport services for all of New South Wales. On the other hand, when the Leader of the Opposition was the Minister for Transport he took his instructions from Unions NSW and was kept out of the loop by former Premier Kristine Keneally. The high watermark of Labor's incompetence occurred during the 2010 Federal election campaign when the Leader of the Opposition wrote to the then deputy lord mayor of Parramatta advising that a key transport infrastructure project, the Parramatta to Epping link, was not to be part of the New South Wales Labor Government's transport priorities. At the same time his boss, Premier Keneally, together with the Prime Minister, was playing out a political sting by announcing an unfunded, uncosted project. We all know that that was just a political mirage created by the former Labor Government in a desperate attempt to win votes rather than deliver a better transport system for New South Wales.

Finally, New South Wales has a Minister for Transport who is prepared to roll up her sleeves and get to work to rebuild the system, which for too long was ignored by those opposite. This motion deserves priority

because those who oversaw the decline of the public transport system in New South Wales are now being promoted by the Opposition. I refer to the member for Keira, the Opposition's new road spokesman, who was chief of staff to the former Minister for Transport. His big idea was the CBD Metro. Half a billion dollars, which should have been invested in more buses, better rail services and improved ferries, was wasted on expensive consultants. Not one metre of track was laid. This motion deserves priority because the Liberal-Nationals Government came into office with a clear commitment. Any member of this House who supports public transport should support this motion.

Child Sexual Assault Services

Ms LINDA BURNEY (Canterbury) [3.28 p.m.]: This motion is about guaranteeing long-term funding for child sexual assault services in New South Wales and recommitting to organisations that are noted in the motion. This motion is urgent because during question time the Opposition asked three questions in relation to a guarantee for this long-term funding, and the Treasurer, the Minister or the Premier did not provide a guarantee. Child sexual assault knows no boundaries; it is a serious crime and an abuse of human rights. The services provided in New South Wales deal with the results of sexual assault for both children and adults. Children often do not recover from such dreadful experiences. In fact, for many it is almost an unspeakable experience.

Shamefully, in question time today the Premier refused to give a guarantee for the ongoing long-term support of these services, and the Treasurer—I am sure in a rush of blood to his head—made jokes about it. That says a lot about this Government. Last week members on both sides of this Chamber supported a royal commission into child sexual abuse; this week the Government will not give a guarantee for the ongoing long-term funding of these services. During the budget estimate hearings it was revealed that \$500 million will be cut from the funding of the Department of Family and Community Services. This will mean we will lose more experienced staff.

The Auditor-General has found a \$1 billion error in the budget figures. The Treasurer should re-evaluate the funding of these services. This is about investing in the future of our children and healing those who have had their basic human rights abused. Let me make it clear to those opposite, the result of this motion will not go unnoticed by those who work in these services and are uncertain as to their future. If those opposite vote against this motion they will be putting transport infrastructure before the needs of children. [*Time expired.*]

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

The House divided.

Ayes, 62

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

Noes, 22

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

Pairs

Mr Elliott	Ms Hay
Ms Sage	Ms Hornery

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Motion agreed to.

Ms Linda Burney: You are shameful, the lot of you.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! I direct the member for Canterbury to remove herself from the Chamber for a period of 30 minutes.

[Pursuant to sessional order the member for Canterbury left the Chamber at 3.40 p.m.]

PUBLIC TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE**Motion Accorded Priority**

Mr BART BASSETT (Londonderry) [3.41 p.m.]: I move:

That this House congratulates the New South Wales Government on delivering improved transport services for the people of New South Wales.

During lunch I took a call from a constituent, Mr Ken Moriarty. Ken is a long-term resident of St Marys North who has lived in the area for more than 40 years, raised a family of three and continues to be actively involved in a number of community activities. Before the last election Ken and a number of elderly residents called me as they had received some very distressing news that their regular bus service, the 782 from St Marys to Penrith, had been cancelled as part of Labor's reforms to bus services. I visited Ken at his home with the Parliamentary Secretary for Western Sydney, the member for Hawkesbury, and we shared a cup of tea with Ken and other regular users of the 782 bus service, who all had been ignored by Labor. The people who were being affected by the cancellation of the 782 service were pensioners and low-income earners—the battlers who Labor claims to represent—and their pleas for help fell on deaf ears. Like many other communities across New South Wales, my constituents in western Sydney were being deprived of public transport that they relied on to take them to and from work, medical appointments, shopping and other basic everyday tasks that many take for granted.

In opposition the Coalition had a Transport spokesperson who got to know the issues. She did not sit in Governor Macquarie Tower all day but went out into the community to meet real people who had real issues with transport. At that time the shadow Minister, together with the member for Hawkesbury and me, met regular bus users not only in Mount Druitt, St Marys, Werrington, Cambridge Gardens and Kingswood but across New South Wales to hear first-hand the effects of Labor's botched management of the transport system. Ken Moriarty called today to express his thanks and appreciation as he had just been advised that the 782 service would be fully restored. After the election the Minister took an active interest in this matter and we conducted a temporary trial of the service. This story is one of many about the experiences of communities across New South Wales during Labor's time in government and it stands as a living testament to Labor's legacy in transport—Labor's legacy of failure in transport. Let us have a look at Labor's record. The list is long, but I will highlight just a few examples.

[Interruption]

I note the comments of the member for Mount Druitt. He should stay silent on this matter because I did not see him at any of the meetings with Mr Ken Moriarty or in the community seeking restoration of the St Marys bus service from Mount Druitt to Penrith.

Mr Richard Amery: I was on the stage with you, you dope. Don't you remember anything?

Mr BART BASSETT: No. The member for Mount Druitt was not in the community doing any of that. He was simply playing with his Labor mates and looking after internal Labor Party matters. While they were doing that Labor promised 12 new rail lines and delivered half of one. There were massive cost overruns, with billions of dollars of taxpayers' money wasted. Labor promised a new ticketing system in 1997, to be in place for the Sydney Olympics in 2000. Yet three Olympic Games have come and gone and \$95 million of taxpayers' money has been wasted and we still do not have an integrated ticketing system. But our transport Minister is delivering an integrated ticketing system; it will be on trial shortly.

As we heard earlier today, Labor axed 416 daily rail services in 2005, 1,500 weekly bus services in 2006 and 233 ferry services in 2010. Under Labor, there was a decline in patronage because of the poor service offered and Labor's constant increase in fares, which rose a massive 59.8 per cent during its 16 years in office, compared with the average consumer price index increase of 37.1 per cent for the same period. The Liberal-Nationals Government is getting on with the job of delivering what it promised: better public transport for all of New South Wales. We promised to build the north-west and south-west rail links, and we are getting on with it. We promised to improve services and we have delivered 63 additional weekly rail services, 44 weekly services and more capacity in October.

We have delivered to regional and country New South Wales, with the Bathurst return rail service, 10-year peak services on the Western line and 7,000 extra seats on the South Coast line every weekend. And the list goes on in public transport across New South Wales. We have delivered 165 additional ferry services. I have been a long-term advocate for transport and infrastructure going back to my days as a helicopter pilot, when I could see the need for investment in better public transport and facilities. I am pleased that the new Liberal-Nationals Government is getting on with the job of rebuilding the transport system in New South Wales that was neglected by members opposite for far too long.

Mr RYAN PARK (Keira) [3.46 p.m.]: It is interesting if we measure improvement and quality by on-time running. I assume that members opposite consider on-time running to be important.

Mr Dominic Perrottet: No comment.

Mr RYAN PARK: Okay, no comment. On-time running is a basic benchmark of public transport success in any city in the world. For those who do not understand, the international benchmark for on-time running sits at about 92 per cent. At the moment this Government has the worst on-time running percentage compared with the on-time running percentage for the past four years. But it gets worse. The Minister for Transport is meant to advocate on behalf of commuters to improve public transport services. That is a reasonably simple way of understanding her role in government. Is she out there doing that? No. She is advocating that on-time running is no longer important. So what is important? Is cleanliness on trains important? Is that something that commuters consider valuable and worthwhile?

Mr Greg Smith: Yes.

Mr RYAN PARK: The Attorney General, and Minister for Justice says it is. That is funny because at the moment we have some of the worst examples of cleanliness when it comes to stations and trains, particularly on the Western line and the South Coast line. But it gets worse. One would have thought that when the Minister for Transport announced her transport master plan she would be in agreement with Infrastructure NSW and there would be some sort of commonality. No, we do not see that. It is worse because a few months ago the transport Minister delivered an unfunded transport master plan and a few weeks later Infrastructure NSW delivered a plan that conflicted with the Minister's plan.

People in my community are saying, "We voted you lot out because we wanted a coordinated plan." Fair enough. Now they have two plans that do not relate to each other. We have no idea how they will be funded and no idea about time lines, project costs or deliverables. I am happy to give those opposite a pat on the back when they do good things in transport—more than happy to do that. But we are not going to give them a pat on the back when basic benchmarks such as cleanliness and on-time running are suddenly considered unimportant. Is the helipad that was announced today and that we all got to have a look at—

Mr Greg Smith: Point of order: It relates to relevance. I submit that that is not relevant to debate on the motion before the House.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! The motion is rather wide ranging. The member is referring to transport matters and is being relevant. The member for Keira has the call.

Mr RYAN PARK: The people of western Sydney will get a lot out of a helipad in the middle of Sydney Harbour. There is no doubt that the people of Keira are screaming for it! What I want to know is this: Is the helipad the second airport? [*Time expired.*]

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET (Castle Hill) [3.51 p.m.]: I support the priority motion of the member for Londonderry congratulating the New South Wales Government on delivering improved transport services to the people of New South Wales. We have delivered those services for the past 18 months as a result of a greater focus on efficiency, innovation and safety. These improvements are the result of a sincere consultation process with the community. As the member for Castle Hill, I have witnessed a number of landmarks over the past 18 months with the rapid progression of the north-west rail line, from introducing geotechnical drilling, the first environmental impact statement and now a second environmental impact statement. We have seen significant advances in the project and at the same time a sincere and well thought through community consultation process. Probably a highlight of my time as a new member in this place has been seeing the genuine nature of the community consultation process and the project development amended to take account of the consultation that the Government has undertaken. It is a bit rich being lectured to by those opposite. I would have thought the member for Keira would shy away from debate on this issue. As the former director general for transport—

Mr Ryan Park: Deputy.

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET: My apologies. The member for the Rozelle metro himself comes into this place and lectures our Government on transport initiatives in New South Wales. As the Minister said during question time, his Government axed more than 400 daily rail services in 2005, 1,500 weekly bus services in 2006, and more than 400 ferry services in 2010. That is what we got from the other side, and Labor members have the hide to come into this place and debate the issue. It is great to see the member for Mount Druitt in the Chamber—I assume he is padding up to come in next. He was probably part of the Labor Government that last closed the train line to Castle Hill in 1932.

Mr Ryan Park: It was 1928.

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET: It was 1928. During the past 16 years of Labor Government, which the member for Mount Druitt was part of, we saw broken promise after broken promise in respect of the north-west rail line. Our Government has turned that around and provided much better transport services—not just rail, but bus and ferry services—to commuters in New South Wales.

Mr RICHARD AMERY (Mount Druitt) [3.54 p.m.]: I join the member for Keira in opposing this nonsense motion. Two Government backbenchers spoke to a motion congratulating their Government on delivering better transport for the residents of New South Wales. But the motion begs the question: Where are the improvements? I turn to the contributions of those members who spoke on behalf of the Government. The member for Londonderry, who moved the motion, had five minutes to outline why the Government should be congratulated on its improvements to transport. I can advise the House that for four minutes and 20 seconds he made various exaggerated claims about the former Government.

The member for Londonderry had five minutes to put his case and for four minutes and 20 seconds he waffled on, rehashing the past 18 months of attacks on the former Government by the Minister for Transport. In the last 40 seconds he switched to arguing why the Government should be congratulated, and then used the last 10 seconds talking about his service as a helicopter pilot. Obviously flying a helicopter shakes a few things loose. That was evident from the member's speech today as it obviously shook up his memory. The member for Londonderry asked where I was when meetings were held in Mount Druitt. I can answer that question: I was sitting alongside him, together with the member for Hawkesbury, who was also present.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! I advise the member for Mount Druitt that he has one minute in which to conclude his contribution.

Mr RICHARD AMERY: The member for Castle Hill gave three key reasons for congratulating the Government: consultation, plans and drilling. I want to know how many passengers are carried by consultation,

plans and drilling. The answer is nil. He said the Government should be congratulated because it is delivering services. That is rhetoric; there is no detail. Previous governments made many changes to bus services in western Sydney. Have they been reversed by this Government? No. Those opposite talk about plans and new bus services. But train on-time running is worse now than when they inherited the service. We met international benchmarks but this Government has dirtier trains that run slower. It is cramming people onto overcrowded trains, and if its new sheriffs cannot get the passengers into the carriage they leave them on the platform. Those opposite want to be congratulated? They have got to be joking.

Mr BART BASSETT (Londonderry) [3.57 p.m.], in reply: I especially thank the member for Castle Hill for his contribution, as well as the member for Keira and the member for Mount Druitt. It was interesting listening to the member for Keira talk about transport. As the transport guru in the previous government—the deputy director general—his claim to fame is wasting \$500 million on the metro. Those opposite have tried to steer away from that, but it is a fact. The NSW Business Chamber conducted a survey and stated that the previous Government slowed the timetable to ensure that it met its on-time targets.

The chamber said, "Each day hundreds of thousands of commuters are slowed to help CityRail meet its PR spin objectives." That is exactly what we have said all along. The Labor Government's whole focus was on spin and the daily media cycle. We are not focused on that; we are getting on with the job of fixing things. The member for Mount Druitt tried to bait me to provide a précis of what we have been doing. He won. In October 2012 we provided 44 new weekly services and more capacity; a new daily Bathurst return rail service; 10 new peak services on the Western line; 7,000 extra seats every weekend on the South Coast line; 20 additional weekly services on the Eastern Suburbs and Illawarra line; and additional carriages on selected weekend services on the Newcastle and Central Coast line.

In regional areas we have provided 30,000 additional seats each week for Newcastle and Central Coast commuters; quiet carriages were trialled on the Newcastle and Central Coast, Blue Mountains and Illawarra lines and are now permanent; daily return rail services to Bathurst began in October; and a feasibility study was done of North Coast rail services, including Casino to Murwillumbah. The budget provided \$127 million for 269 new low-floor, wheelchair-accessible air-conditioned buses; competitive tendering of private bus contracts began to deliver better services for commuters; peak buses were re-routed down the Cahill Expressway to reduce congestion and improve travel times; some northern beaches services were re-routed, such as the E85 down Grosvenor Street to relieve congestion on York Street; double-decker buses were ordered in a two-year trial. I could go on and on.

A pre-feasibility report has been finished on the northern beaches bus rapid transit; a school bus safety committee has been established; and extra night-time bus services from Kings Cross have been trialled. There are 91 additional NightRide services, including two brand-new routes. In south-western Sydney there are 553 new bus services for Oran Park, Narellan, Campbelltown and Minto. In north-western Sydney there are 24 new buses and 46 new services for Baulkham Hills. The list of things that have been done in 18 months by this Government and the Minister for Transport is incredible.

Pursuant to sessional order business interrupted and motion lapsed.

**PARLIAMENTARY ELECTORATES AND ELECTIONS AMENDMENT (REDISTRIBUTIONS)
BILL 2012**

ELECTION FUNDING, EXPENDITURE AND DISCLOSURES FURTHER AMENDMENT BILL 2012

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

OMBUDSMAN AMENDMENT BILL 2012

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

Second Reading

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

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Government is pleased to introduce the Ombudsman Amendment Bill 2012 to modify the jurisdiction and powers for the NSW Ombudsman to inquire into matters that simultaneously touch upon the New South Wales Crime Commission and the Police Integrity Commission. Since this Government took office last year, the Parliament has passed legislation to reform the governance arrangements for both the New South Wales Crime Commission and the Police Integrity Commission, the PIC. This reflects the Government's commitment to effective integrity settings for the State's law enforcement institutions. However, as members may be aware, there is a long-running matter involving these two commissions and the NSW Police Force that is yet to be resolved to the satisfaction of the Government and the community. That matter is commonly known as Strike Force Emblems, and it has its roots in crime investigation and police integrity operations that began more than a decade ago.

Strike Force Emblems was an internal NSW Police Force inquiry established in 2003 to investigate aspects of Operation Florida, a joint operation involving the Crime Commission, the Police Force and the Police Integrity Commission. The report of Strike Force Emblems has not been made public. In May this year the Government asked the Hon. David Levine, QC, Inspector of the Police Integrity Commission, to review the report and advise whether it could be released. However, while undertaking the review Mr Levine received a number of complaints and submissions in connection to matters in the Emblems report. The NSW Ombudsman also received complaints concerning matters arising from the report. On 7 October this year the Premier announced that the Ombudsman and the Inspector of the Police Integrity Commission had conferred and agreed that the Ombudsman would be well placed to undertake an independent inquiry into Strike Force Emblems and any relevant matters leading up to it.

The breadth of the complaints received by both offices meant it was appropriate for the Ombudsman to investigate. The Ombudsman is the appropriate independent body to comprehensively review these matters. The Government will ensure that the Ombudsman has the appropriate powers to undertake his work. The first step to providing the Ombudsman with additional powers was taken when the Act was amended by proclamation on 10 October 2012. That amendment authorised the Ombudsman to investigate certain complaints regarding the conduct of executive officers of the New South Wales Crime Commission and members of the committee. This extension was limited to circumstances where the conduct in question is referred to the Ombudsman by the Inspector of the Crime Commission or the Inspector of the Police Integrity Commission. The Ombudsman Amendment Bill 2012 that I am introducing today will deliver the further powers that the Ombudsman requires to conduct his inquiry.

The intention of this bill is to provide the Ombudsman with the necessary authority to inquire into operations and matters that traverse the functions and activities of the organisations involved in crime detection and crime agency integrity. The bill provides the Ombudsman with a framework in which he is able to conduct an effective inquiry covering all the relevant agencies and officers connected with Strike Force Emblems. The Ombudsman already has broad powers concerning investigation of police conduct, including coercive powers to compel witnesses to attend private hearings and to produce evidence.

Under the provisions in this bill, these coercive powers are extended to the Crime Commission and the Police Integrity Commission where there has been a referral from an appropriate inspector, being either the Inspector of the Crime Commission or the Inspector of the Police Integrity Commission. The bill will not authorise the Ombudsman to exercise coercive powers unless there has been a referral from an inspector. It will remain the function of the Police Integrity Commission and the Inspector of the Crime Commission to oversee the conduct of the Crime Commission and the Inspector of the Police Integrity Commission to oversee the Police Integrity Commission where there is no relevant overlap.

Turning now to the detail of the bill, schedule 1 amends the Ombudsman Act 1974. Item [1] of schedule 1 provides for the Ombudsman to appoint legal counsel, who must be an Australian legal practitioner, to assist in an inquiry. Such an arrangement is consistent with those for other integrity agencies. New powers for the Ombudsman to restrict the publication of evidence or information provided to an inquiry, and the prohibitions against the publication of evidence or information provided to an inquiry, are set out in item [2]. These will provide a significant forensic benefit to an Ombudsman's inquiry by maintaining strict confidentiality of investigation-related information. The provisions mirror those that apply under the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act and the Police Integrity Commission Act. Schedule 2 to the bill amends the Crime Commission Act 2012.

Item [1] in schedule 2 requires that a referral by the Inspector of the Crime Commission to any public authority, which includes the Ombudsman, must include written terms. Item [2] of schedule 2 supports the

provision of Crime Commission information to the Ombudsman, notwithstanding the secrecy provisions of the Crime Commission Act. New subsection 80A (1) permits the voluntary disclosure of Crime Commission information to the Ombudsman. The Ombudsman may instead, under new subsection 80A (2), rely on the coercive powers to compel the giving of evidence or production of a document. These powers are only available, however, if the evidence or document is relevant to a matter referred to the Ombudsman by the inspector of either the Crime Commission or the Police Integrity Commission. Item [3] of schedule 2 clarifies that the secrecy provision of the Crime Commission Act—section 80—applies to all material that was previously subject to section 29 of the repealed New South Wales Crime Commission Act 1985.

New section 80 is preferable to section 29 of the repealed Act in a number of respects, including because it allows for regulations to be made prescribing persons to whom information can be disclosed without breaching the secrecy provision. It is appropriate to adopt the more up-to-date formulation for all relevant material. The final schedule to the bill is schedule 3, which amends the Police Integrity Commission Act 1996 to provide the Ombudsman with coercive powers in relation to the Police Integrity Commission upon referral of a matter from either the Police Integrity Commission inspector or the Crime Commission inspector. In conclusion, these amendments will support an important inquiry by the Ombudsman into a matter that has remained unresolved for far too long.

The Ombudsman, the Inspector of the Police Integrity Commission, the Police Integrity Commission, the New South Wales Crime Commission, and the Ministry for Police and Emergency Services were all consulted during the development of the bill. I thank each of those agencies for their constructive approach in this matter. The amendments have been drafted to take into account the integrity oversight arrangements already in place. They provide an efficient but comprehensive set of arrangements for inquiries into matters of conduct that simultaneously touch upon the Police Force, the Police Integrity Commission and the Crime Commission. The Government looks forward to the successful conclusion of the Ombudsman's inquiry and his report. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool) [4.10 p.m.]: I lead for the Opposition in debate on the Ombudsman Amendment Bill 2012, which the Opposition will not oppose. Certainly, it was introduced with considerable haste but because of the subject matter that it deals with and the fact that this is the last sitting week for the year, we do not object to the speed with which it is being dealt with. It deals with significant matters. Not only does the Opposition not oppose it; I also welcome it. For some time I have been concerned about the inadequacy in various jurisdictions dealing with inquiries into aspects arising out of Strike Force Emblems. The Police Integrity Commission inspector was asked about his jurisdiction earlier this year in response to questions I had placed on notice. At the relevant oversight committee he conceded that he did not have jurisdiction as the Police Integrity Commission inspector to carry out the inquiries that he had been asked to carry out. He was carrying them out pursuant to a request from the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, which meant he had no legal protection in respect of defamation, he had no right to release the report publicly and he had no right to table the document. There are ongoing issues about jurisdiction.

I placed a question on notice on 23 October to the Premier, asking when he would introduce legislation to extend jurisdiction to the Ombudsman so that the Ombudsman could carry out the inquiry that he is conducting. I am delighted that this legislation has come back in response to that question. As the Attorney General indicated in his second reading speech, the first attempt to get the jurisdiction sorted out in relation to the Ombudsman's inquiry is something I discovered in the *Government Gazette*, which was the proclamation to amend schedule 1 to the Ombudsman Act. At the time I thought that was not the right way to do it; it did not seem to be quite right. Some of the provisions in this legislation deal specifically with that problem in that they require the referral by the Police Integrity Commission inspector and the Crime Commission inspector to be specified in writing, which was not part of the proclamation, although I note in passing that the Crime Commission inspector has not yet been appointed.

As I apprehended from listening to the Attorney General and from reading the bill quickly, the bill deals specifically with some of the secrecy provisions that would otherwise prevent material coming to the attention of the Ombudsman. That is clearly appropriate. I note the provision to allow the Ombudsman to appoint a legal practitioner to assist the inquiry. The questions I asked on 23 October also dealt with resourcing the Ombudsman to conduct a proper inquiry. That is not directly relevant to this bill, but I place my concern on the record. It would concern me also that if what is potentially quite a complex inquiry is not being properly resourced and properly funded. The importance of this inquiry cannot be underestimated. For a considerable time an explanation was given as to the production of the 100 person warrant.

The explanation was that the people who were the subject of the warrant were going to a function and the person wearing a wire—codenamed, I think, M5—would be wandering around the function, anyone who was there might get caught and, therefore, it was appropriate for those names to be on the warrant. I was prepared to accept that as an explanation when put in those terms. It is now patently clear that was untrue; that is not what was happening. In fact, a number of people who were on the warrant were never on the list for that function, which means that someone has misled a Supreme Court judge, if nothing else in respect of getting the warrant to issue. In addition, at least some of the people on the warrant were approached time and again well outside the boundaries of the function by M5, in an attempt to get them to say things to M5. That is not the explanation that was given when this matter first came to light, and it suggests something was seriously wrong in the way that warrant was conducted.

It has been suggested that personal vendettas were being pursued, and they are matters that must be pursued by the Ombudsman and other appropriate investigative authorities. The reason it has now become such a cause célèbre is that someone, presumably someone who was in the Special Crime and Internal Affairs [SCIA] unit very early on, has decided to send documents out anonymously to anyone who will listen. That is apparently what has been happening, that is why Neil Mercer has been writing a series of articles and that is why a number of people who once upon a time might not have been quite as concerned about this issue are now outraged at what has happened. In fact, they are outraged that a number of people were told things that were clearly untrue by those who should have known better. For those reasons not only do I not oppose this bill but also I welcome it. I wish the Ombudsman and the Police Integrity Commission inspector well in investigating these matters.

Mr GREG SMITH (Epping—Attorney General, and Minister for Justice) [4.15 p.m.], in reply: I thank the member for Liverpool for his contribution to the debate. The Ombudsman Amendment Bill 2012 supports the Ombudsman's inquiry into matters arising from the NSW Strike Force Emblems report. I commend the bill to the House.

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 Greg Smith 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.

EMERGENCY LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2012

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 17 October 2012.

Mr TIM OWEN (Newcastle) [4.16 p.m.]: I am pleased to speak in support of the Emergency Legislation Amendment Bill 2012, which updates and strengthens the operation of emergency services legislation by ensuring operational feedback from emergency services personnel and police, and recommends that recent reviews are reflected in legislation. This will ensure the legislation provides effective support to emergency services agencies and police officers in the conduct of their respective roles. I take this opportunity to commend the Minister for Police and Emergency Services for his practical and rational increase of police power in responding to emergency situations and suspected arson. I also take a moment to congratulate all emergency services personnel on their outstanding work within our communities, and their commitment and bravery. As noted by my parliamentary colleagues, the Emergency Legislation Amendment Bill 2012 amends the Fire Brigades Act 1989, the Rural Fires Act 1997, the State Emergency and Rescue Management Act 1989, and the State Emergency Services Act 1989.

The bill seeks to amend the Rural Fires Act 1997 to provide police with the same powers as apply to Fire and Rescue NSW. Under the Rural Fires Act, an authorised officer who intends to issue a penalty notice to

a person or a police officer who has a reason to suspect that a person is committing an offence under the Act or regulation may direct the person to state his or her full name and residential address. It is common sense for a police officer to have the power to acquire the personal details of an individual who might be considered or suspected of committing an offence. Furthermore, provision has also been made for an accompanying offence of non-compliance. In such circumstances, an authorised officer may also request a person to provide evidence of the correctness of the name and address if the information provided is suspected to be false. This will ensure that penalty notices are issued correctly and can therefore be enforced.

The bill inserts a provision to allow police officers to investigate the cause and origin of fires lawfully. The bill provides a stand-alone power of entry for police officers under the Rural Fires Act to assess land for a 24-hour period following the extinguishment of a bushfire for the purpose of investigating whether an indictable offence has been committed. The Commissioner of Fire and Rescue NSW or his delegates may conduct cause and origin investigations on land where a fire has occurred for up to 24 hours following the extinguishment of a fire and where the commissioner has determined that the land is safe to enter. The Emergency Legislation Amendment Bill 2012 places police officers on the same legal footing as Rural Fire Service personnel, particularly with regard to their right to enter fire-affected property without a warrant for 24 hours to undertake inspections. That is a key tenet of the legislation. The bill provides that the Commissioner of Fire and Rescue NSW or the New South Wales Rural Fire Service may apply to an authorised officer for a search warrant for any land as necessary for the purposes of the investigation of the cause or origin of any fire that has occurred on that land or any adjacent land.

The bill makes a series of amendments to the State Emergency and Rescue Management Act, such as to update the titles, to clarify the roles of and linkages between emergency management committees and to ensure that volunteers who are employed in the private sector are covered by existing employment discrimination provisions. The bill will ensure that volunteers have the freedom to respond to emergencies when the call is made without fear that their employment conditions will be adversely affected. I congratulate the Minister on introducing this legislation and expanding the powers of police officers to respond to emergency situations, arson and bushfires. As I noted, this bill represents a practical approach to increasing the roles and powers of police officers in these types of investigations. Taking into account the common sense of this bill, I do not foresee any members opposite objecting to it. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie) [4.22 p.m.]: I support the Emergency Legislation Bill 2012, which seeks to make a number of improvements to the management of emergency situations. It includes, but is not limited to, amendments to the Fire Brigades Act 1989, the Rural Fire Act 1997 and the State Emergency and Rescue Management Act 1989. It makes other changes that have been well articulated by other members. A key mechanism in the bill to achieve these outcomes is providing access to fire scenes to appropriately authorised persons for the purposes of investigation and requiring the cooperation of members of the public. The bill defines the roles and the areas of responsibility of those involved in emergency management and formalises an updated approach to the management of emergencies.

I believe that members of the public fully support these changes. Indeed, they would be surprised that these powers are not already enshrined in legislation. The changes will set in place an organisational structure that will improve responses to fire emergencies and the investigation of fire scenes to ascertain the cause and whether an indictable offence has been committed. Given the cost of insurance premiums and levies charged by State authorities, fires and fire preparedness are a very significant impost on the New South Wales public. In addition to these costs, the actual losses, the risks and impact on life and property are even more significant. Over recent years my office has received many complaints about fire levies, but the sad fact is that either this or some other system of payment is necessary to provide the fire services that are essential to protect our community.

Any action that improves future responses and hopefully reduces fire emergencies should be welcomed. There is an inherent logic in extending the investigative role to the NSW Police Force—the body involved in forensic investigation—where criminality is involved or suspected. During 2010-11, the New South Wales Rural Fire Service had a budget of \$257 million and Fire and Rescue NSW had a budget of \$614 million. These are very significant budgets and that money could better serve the people of New South Wales if the incidence of fires and the costs associated with them were reduced. Of course, the cost of fires is not only financial. Indeed, as members have pointed out, the greatest cost associated with these incidents is deaths and injuries, which occur all too often.

I understand that bushfires historically account for the greatest number of deaths and injuries resulting from natural disasters in Australia. Along with this tragic loss of life, the community bears the associated loss of

many millions of dollars—more than 50 per cent of fires are started by arsonists. For these reasons it is essential that the organisation of fire services is cohesive, up to date and responsive to demand. I believe this bill will deliver such improvements and that it is a logical continuation of reforms implemented in recent years. I commend the Minister for introducing these amendments and for providing assistance to our front-line emergency services personnel. With the imminent Christmas break and the approaching fire season, I extend my best wishes to all emergency services personnel and hope that they and their families have a safe and happy summer. I am pleased to commend the bill to the House.

Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed—Parliamentary Secretary) [4.28 p.m.]: I am 100 per cent for the Tweed and for the local emergency services personnel. I join with the member for Lake Macquarie in wishing them a very safe bushfire season. We have all seen the forecasts and we know about the heavy undergrowth fuel load. This could be a horrific summer. I support the Emergency Legislation Amendment Bill 2012. As we head into bushfire season over the 2012-13 summer it is appropriate that we take stock and ensure that New South Wales emergency services legislation is as effective as possible and provides our firefighters, police officers, volunteers and other emergency services personnel with an effective framework in which to carry out their duties. The provisions outlined in the bill help to achieve the Government's aim of ensuring that New South Wales emergency services legislation and operational practice remain first-rate.

The bill seeks to amend the State Emergency and Rescue Management Act 1989 to update and streamline the legislative provisions governing the operation of all three levels of New South Wales emergency management committees—State, regional and local. The bill modifies and clarifies arrangements relating to the membership of emergency management committees. It clarifies that subcommittees of the State Emergency Management Committee, whose role it is to coordinate the provision of support across a range of functional areas, may carry out that role across the full range of emergency prevention, preparation, response and recovery tasks before and after an emergency and not only during an emergency. That is already the case, but it has not been appropriately reflected in the legislation until now.

Ensuring that these functional area subcommittees are supported by legislation to operate across a broad scope of activities is vital in ensuring that New South Wales communities receive the best possible protection and support should emergencies such as flood and bushfire occur. As the Deputy-Speaker knows, the great electorate of Lismore suffers from bushfires and floods. The member for Murray-Darling is very supportive of his emergency personnel, who must protect vast tracts of inland New South Wales. I am pleased that the bill provides for officers from Fire and Rescue NSW and the NSW Police Force to gain entry to sites without a warrant, excluding residential sites, for the purpose of investigating fires. The inclusion of these powers will, I am sure, be of great benefit to the highly trained staff of these agencies in carrying out fire investigations. It will assist the community by ensuring that fires investigations are carried out by the most appropriate staff and that they will take place swiftly following the extinguishment of fires so that evidence can be secured.

While we all hope the summer season will be free of bushfires, floods and other emergencies it is pleasing to know that we have strong and effective legislation. This bill will make minor amendments to the State Emergency and Rescue Management Act, notably to rename the State Disaster Plan the State Emergency Management Plan. This will help to reflect its broadening role in ensuring a coordinated response to emergencies by all responsible agencies. The bill will update the definition of "employee" so as to ensure that volunteers working for emergency service organisations within the private sector are protected under the State Emergency and Rescue Management Act. This became necessary following the passing of the Commonwealth Fair Work Act.

This bill amends the Rural Fires Act in relation to fire offences. Emergency services and local authorities have identified a problem with issuing penalty notices as there was no requirement on the person issued with a notice to state his or her full name and address. This amendment will also help to ensure that penalty notices issued under the Rural Fires Act are correctly issued and can be properly enforced if not complied with. This amendment reflects the objects of the Fire Scene Investigation Protocol signed in 2001 by the NSW Police Force, Fire and Rescue NSW, and the Rural Fire Service. The protocol sets out the responsibilities and relationship between these three agencies, and states that they may work together or independently, as required, to investigate and determine the cause of a fire. That is a very important issue.

Previous speakers have praised our emergency service personnel. I acknowledge their commitment, dedication and integrity in protecting the wider community of New South Wales. There can be nothing more frustrating to those professionals and also to the large number of volunteers in these organisations than to be

hampered by red tape. The O'Farrell-Stoner Government has a strong commitment to support the volunteers in an open and transparent manner. We all know that natural disasters can cause a loss of life and property, and anguish and hardship right across this great State. I compliment the Minister and his staff on their hard work in preparing this legislation. Our emergency services personnel deserve and command the respect of all members. I commend this bill to the House.

Mr NATHAN REES (Toongabbie) [4.33 p.m.]: I lead for the Opposition and support the Emergency Legislation Amendment Bill 2012. I will make some observations based on my experience as a former Minister for Emergency Services. Previous speakers have spoken to some of the technical detail of this bill, and I do not propose to canvass that at length again, but it is worth reminding ourselves of the history of emergency services in New South Wales and Australia. I point out that the volunteers of our State Emergency Service, Rural Fire Service, Fire and Rescue NSW, health and other related services are internationally renowned for their efforts in response to emergencies.

Many members will know that the State Emergency Service was formed after the great floods of Maitland back in the 1950s when it was recognised that emergency expertise had to be organised, local and able to be respond at short notice. In 1972 Cyclone Tracy hit. That recovery was ably led by Major-General Stretton, who sadly passed away only recently. In the 1990s New South Wales experienced severe bushfires. In the past couple of decades the Ash Tuesday and Ash Wednesday fires occurred in Victoria, and most recently, in June 2007, New South Wales experienced a series of floods in the Hunter, and severe hail storms in April 1999 and December 2007. On each of those occasions New South Wales emergency services were able to respond promptly and with great effect.

It is fair to say that Australian emergency services are well regarded around the world, because for more than 100 years they have been dealing with the extremes of weather on this continent. That experience and capacity for planning has impacted on those responses, and our communities are inestimably better off for that. But since September 11 the need for different agencies to comply with the requests of combat agencies and to align themselves with a plan that has been worked out across agencies has been made more manifest. It is fair to say that on occasions in past decades agencies other than emergency services agencies have been overly protective of turf or have been slower to respond than people might like.

Since September 11 the clear need for all agencies to co-operate under a plan that is developed jointly, that has a clear hierarchy and that is regularly practised in drills, operations and so forth has become fundamental to the way we do things in Australia. This bill will support that activity and the responses of government agencies in and around times of emergency. The obvious provisions give effect to the inspection of where fires or emergencies originated, but also it clarifies that sub-committees of the State Emergency Management Committee, whose role is to coordinate support in various functional areas, such as health, telecommunications and transport services, may carry out that role to prevent, prepare for, respond to or recover from an emergency—that is, before and after as well as during an emergency. That is a clear clarification and a good move.

The bill also ensures that emergency operation controllers below State level cannot be directed by the Minister for Police and Emergency Services to assume a combat agency's responsibility for controlling a response to an emergency and that they can assume that responsibility only with the agreement of the combat agency and if the State Emergency Operations Controller is satisfied that it is necessary to do so. The bill also provides that the employment protection provisions of the State Emergency Response Act is extended to a volunteer member of an emergency services organisation who carries out regular paid work under a contract for services, rather than as an employee, thereby recognising those hundreds of thousands of Australians who work with an Australian business number and may not be classified as employees in the legal sense of the term, and that is a good move.

I do not recall a period, certainly in my time in this place, nor prior to that, when there was anything other than bipartisan support for the work of emergency services, the Rural Fire Service and Fire and Rescue NSW. I think that bipartisanship is something to be commended: certainly I think the community appreciates that bipartisanship. At the end of the day when emergency provisions are required we are very likely seeking to avert or clean up after a disaster, and lives can and will be lost on occasion. It is important that on those occasions we remind the people of New South Wales that, against the face of the worst that nature can offer, they see the best of us.

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) [4.38 p.m.]: I support the Emergency Legislation Amendment Bill 2012, which strengthens and updates the operation of emergency services legislation by

ensuring operational feedback from emergency services agencies and police, and reflects recommendations of recent reviews. This will ensure the legislation provides effective support to emergency services agencies and police officers in the conduct of their respective roles. The purpose of the bill is threefold: first, it amends the Fire Brigades Act 1989 to make provision for the commission of Fire and Rescue NSW to enter and inspect land to investigate the cause or origin of a fire for the purpose of assisting in the prevention of fires.

Secondly, it amends the Rural Fires Act 1997 to enable police officers to enter and inspect land for the purpose of determining whether the cause or origin of a fire should be the subject of a criminal investigation, and to enable an authorised officer to require any person to whom the officer intends to issue a penalty notice under that Act to state the person's full name and residential address. Thirdly, it amends the State Emergency and Rescue Management Act 1989 with respect to arrangements for emergency management committees to ensure employment protection provisions apply within the ordinary meaning of employment law, and to clarify the operational responsibilities of the three agencies tasked with extinguishing and investigating fires. It also makes other amendments.

The amendments to those Acts will provide a stand-alone power of entry for police under the Rural Fires Act to access land for a 24-hour period following the extinguishment of a bushfire for the purpose of investigating whether an indictable offence has been committed. The bill also provides that the Commissioner of Fire and Rescue New South Wales, or his delegates, may conduct cause or origin investigations on land where a fire has occurred for up to 24 hours following the extinction of a fire and the commissioner has determined the land is safe to enter. The bill also provides power for the Commissioner of Fire and Rescue NSW to apply to an authorised officer for a search warrant for any land if the commissioner reasonably believes that entry onto the land is necessary for the purposes of investigation of the cause or origin of any fire that has occurred on that land or any adjacent land.

The bill also provides under the Rural Fires Act that an authorised officer who intends to issue a penalty notice to a person or a police officer who has reason to suspect that a person is committing an offence under the Act or regulation may direct the person to state his or her full name and residential address. Provision has also been made for an accompanying offence for non-compliance. An authorised officer or police officer may also, in such circumstances, request a person to provide evidence of the correctness of their name and address if the information provided is suspected of being false. The bill also makes a series of amendments to the State Emergency and Rescue Management Act, such as, to update titles, to clarify the roles and linkages between emergency management committees and to ensure that volunteers who are employed in the private sector are covered by existing employment discrimination provisions.

Item [14] of schedule 3 to the bill provides that the Minister for Police and Emergency Services rather than the State Disasters Council is to nominate representatives from non-government agencies who are to serve on the State Emergency Management Committee. It also re-enacts the current requirement for any representative of a government agency to be nominated by the Minister responsible for that agency. Proposed section 22 (2) of the State Emergency and Rescue Management Act provides that each district emergency management committee, which will be renamed regional emergency management committee under this legislation, is to include a representative of the organisations providing services in each functional area in the relevant district. Item [18] to schedule 3 to the bill amends section 22 (2) to clarify that the Minister is to determine the particular organisations to be represented on the committee. Item [19] to schedule 3 to the bill proposes to amend section 22 of the State Emergency and Rescue Management Act by way of statute law.

Item [26] to schedule 3 to the bill makes a similar amendment in relation to local emergency management committees. Item [25] to schedule 3 to the bill proposes to amend section 28 of the State Emergency and Rescue Management Act to require the chairperson of a local emergency management committee to be the general manager of the council of the local government area in respect of which the committee is constituted rather than a senior representative of the council who is nominated by that council. Items [24] and [31] to schedule 3 to the bill propose the amendments referred to in the overview of the Act. Items [5] and [32] to [35] of schedule 3 to the bill propose to update references to various bodies, including Fire and Rescue NSW and the Ambulance Service of New South Wales. Items [1] and [13] to schedule 3 to the bill propose to update references to the person who currently holds the office as the Chief Executive of the Ministry for Police and Emergency Services. Item [40] to schedule 3 proposes to enable the Governor to make savings and other transitional regulations in relation to the Act.

This bill will bring those three emergency service areas into the twenty-first century by placing them under the one management control. Those services sought to have these amendments implemented and

following consultation with various groups these changes are now being proposed. In the electorate of Myall Lakes those three services are constantly prepared for any emergency. For example, the last two years have been the wettest on record and in my area we experienced flooding not seen since 1978. The damage bill for roads alone in the Greater Taree City Council area was \$19 million. During that flooding members of each of those emergency services put their lives at risk while protecting the lives of others and property. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) [4.45 p.m.]: I make a contribution to the debate on the Emergency Legislation Amendment Bill 2012. The object of the bill is to amend the Fire Brigades Act 1989, the Rural Fires Act 1997, the State Emergency and Rescue Management Act 1989 and the State Emergency Service Act 1989. The amendments include granting the Commissioner of Fire and Rescue NSW to enter and inspect land to investigate the cause or origin of a fire for the purpose of assisting in the prevention of fires, enabling police officers to enter and inspect land for the purposes of determining whether the cause or origin of a fire should be the subject of a criminal investigation, and enabling an authorised officer to require any person to whom the officer intends to issue a penalty notice under that Act to state the person's full name and residential address.

I believe in the promotion of fire safety and I will support any legislation that supports emergency personnel in the prevention of fires. Each year residential buildings and businesses across New South Wales fall victim to bushfires and arson attacks, for which we pay an enormous price. Fires place a financial burden on families, and people whose lives are decimated in a single stroke by fire are physically and emotionally affected. Sadly, that is the harsh reality for many families. This bill will provide the appropriate authorities with access to the scene of a fire to investigate the cause or origin of a fire for the purpose of assisting in the prevention of fires. The bill will also allow police officers to enter and inspect land for the purpose of determining whether the cause or origin of a fire should be the subject of a criminal investigation. Police will be able to conduct an investigation within 24 hours after the extinguishment of a fire. I note that if a fire occurs on properties used for residential purposes only police will require either a warrant or the consent of the owner or occupier of the land to gain lawful entry to the property.

I commend the NSW Police Force and Fire and Rescue NSW for their diligent efforts in ensuring that our communities remain safe from the threat of arson attacks and for the pre-emptive work done through back-burning bushland in rural and metropolitan New South Wales to prevent bushfires. I place on record my thanks to two very distinguished gentlemen who work hard for the Fairfield community: Bruce Fitzpatrick from Fairfield Fire Station and Superintendent Peter Lennon from Fairfield Local Area Command. Let us make no mistake: fire is a real threat to us all. The New South Wales Labor Opposition is committed to giving the proper authorities the power and resources they need to properly investigate incidences of arson to keep New South Wales as safe as possible. The Opposition does not oppose this bill.

Mr RICHARD TORBAY (Northern Tablelands) [4.49 p.m.]: I support the Emergency Legislation Amendment Bill 2012, and I commend the Minister and the Government on its introduction. The bill amends the Fire Brigades Act 1989, the Rural Fires Act 1997 and the State Emergency and Rescue Management Act 1989. As previous speakers have said, the purpose of the bill is to update and strengthen the operation of emergency services legislation to ensure that effective support is provided to emergency services agencies and police officers in the conduct of their duties. The member for Dubbo would understand the processes well. I note that all Opposition and crossbench members have been supportive of the bill, which updates the powers of police officers and fire and rescue personnel. The bill provides a stand-alone power of entry for police officers to access land for a 24-hour period following the extinguishment of a bushfire to investigate whether indictable offences have been committed, and it provides the Commissioner of Fire and Rescue NSW or his delegates with the power to conduct a cause or origin investigation on land where a fire has occurred for up to 24 hours following the extinguishment of the fire and to ensure that it is safe to enter.

The bill also provides that an authorised officer or police officer who intends to issue a penalty notice to a person or has reason to suspect that a person is committing an offence may direct that person to state their full name and residential address. Provision has also been made for an accompanying offence of non-compliance. An authorised officer or police may also in such circumstances request a person to provide evidence of the correctness of the name and address if it is suspected that the information provided is false. The bill makes a series of amendments to update titles and clarify the roles and linkages between emergency management committees. It sets out to ensure that emergency service volunteers who are employed in the private sector are fully covered by existing anti-discrimination protections so that workers can undertake emergency services work without fear of victimisation from their employer.

Recently hundreds of firefighters, supported by numerous aircraft and bulldozers, battled to contain a major bushfire that occurred near the Macleay River 50 kilometres east of Armidale. The bushfire, which was declared a natural disaster by the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, burnt out more than 60,000 hectares of national parks, State forests and private land. I pay tribute, as have many other members, to the hardworking emergency services workers for their tireless efforts in protecting properties and keeping the community safe during times of bushfires, floods and other natural disasters. I acknowledge and thank the Minister and the commissioners for keeping me well informed and updated when disasters occur in my electorate.

Recently I attended the thirtieth anniversary of the State Emergency Services at Deepwater. Commissioner Murray Kear was also present for those celebrations. I commend them for their service to the community. Also, I was pleased to be part of the opening of new Rural Fire Service facilities at Bald Nob, Dundee and Glen Elgin. I am about to attend a similar ceremony in the Tenterfield area. Other ceremonies will be held in relation to facilities located where the boundaries of Lismore and the Northern Tablelands overlap. I look forward to speaking to the emergency services personnel who look after our two areas in the State. I also raise an important issue, which I have spoken about previously, that seems to be hindering volunteer participation in emergency services. I refer to the threat of litigation and compliance hurdles that are discouraging the community from becoming involved.

Members of the community simply want to help and they are feeling discouraged by some of the processes that are required because of the threat of litigation. The NSW Volunteering Strategy, an Australian study focussing on older people, suggested that the perceived barriers to volunteering included concerns about increasing regulations, such as security, risk and insurance requirements. I am encouraged by the State Government's development of an action plan through the NSW Volunteering Strategy 2012 to address these and many other barriers to volunteering by supporting and working with the volunteer sectors to retain volunteers and increase volunteer participation. This bill is a positive change and I commend it to the House.

Mr JOHN SIDOTI (Drummoyne) [4.54 p.m.]: I support the Emergency Legislation Amendment Bill 2012 because it is essential that the Government establish the correct procedures for the operation of all emergency services in the event of a natural disaster. The latest predictions are that we are in for a hot and dry summer and that means that the threat of bushfires will be real and ever-present. It is therefore timely that this legislation has been introduced in order to bring about a more effective way of dealing with natural disasters of this type. Broadly, the bill covers proposed changes to all emergency services. This is extremely important because those emergency services need to be able to respond to situations quickly and with the utmost effectiveness. All are critical to the protection and preservation of the lives and properties of the citizens of New South Wales against disasters such as structural fires, bushfires, storms, floods, transport accidents and other emergencies.

When the O'Farrell Government came to power in New South Wales it immediately set about conducting a thorough review of fire and emergency services in New South Wales. It included Fire and Rescue NSW, the NSW Rural Fire Service and the NSW State Emergency Service. The review involved direct consultation with emergency services personnel, and this legislation ensures that their views are incorporated into law. The legislation will further support the brave men and women who stand at the forefront to protect all the citizens of New South Wales. The bill seeks to amend the Acts I have mentioned.

One important inclusion is that it provides, under the Fire Brigades Act 1989, for police officers to access land for a 24-hour period following the extinguishment of a bushfire. This gives the police equal powers to those provided to members of the Rural Fire Service and Fire and Rescue NSW in the investigation of the cause and origin of fires. The Emergency Legislation Amendment Bill will amend the Fire Brigades Act 1989, the Rural Fires Act 1997, the State Emergency and Rescue Management Act 1989 and the State Emergency Services Act 1989. These amendments will both strengthen the operation of the legislation and ensure that fires and other natural disasters are dealt with in the most effective way possible. It gives police the power to investigate the cause of a fire. This will put them on the same level as the NSW Rural Fire Service and Fire and Rescue NSW in regard to the investigation of causes of fires.

Although it seems unbelievable, many fires in New South Wales are deliberately lit. If police are suspicious about the cause of a fire, this legislation will allow police to request a person's name and address in the context of issuing a penalty notice. It is important that police are given the power to investigate the cause or origin of fires. Once they can establish the cause of a fire they can determine whether an indictable offence has been committed. The first 24 hours after a bushfire has occurred are critical because evidence at the scene can

determine the cause of the fire and whether the fire was deliberately lit. It makes perfect sense to grant police these powers. It will also allow police officers to request a person's full name and address in relation to the issuing of penalty notices.

I turn now to the important provisions in the legislation which protect volunteers involved in emergency services. The bill ensures that volunteers will have the freedom to respond to emergency situations without fear that their employment conditions will be compromised. The Commonwealth Fair Work Act 2009 provides that employees are entitled to be absent from employment if they are engaged in community service such as volunteer firefighting. This bill amends the definition of "employee" to cover those people employed in the private sector so that they are able to undertake their volunteer duties. The legislation also proposes to make a number of changes to the State Emergency and Rescue Management Act 1989. Under this bill the State Disaster Plan, known as Displan, will be renamed the State Emergency Management Plan. The Displan details emergency preparedness, response and recovery arrangements to ensure a coordinated response to emergencies by all relevant agencies.

I agree that the change of name will better reflect the broadening role of emergency services as enshrined in this bill. Members will be aware that from 1 March last year the previous 18 emergency management districts were amalgamated into 11 and renamed regions. Since that time, and with the revised Public Sector Employment and Management (Departments) Order 2011, the functions carried out by the New South Wales emergency services now come under the role of the Ministry of Police and Emergency Services. The Chief Executive Officer of the Ministry for Police and Emergency Services is now the State Emergency Recovery Controller. Further provisions in the bill spell out the creation of the so-called functional areas. Those areas will now refer not only to areas in preparation for an emergency but also to the prevention of, response to and recovery from an emergency situation. The bill makes good sense. This is common-sense legislation and I congratulate the Minister on its introduction.

Mr NICK LALICH (Cabramatta) [4.59 p.m.]: I speak to the Emergency Legislation Amendment Bill 2012, the objects of which are:

- (a) to amend the *Fire Brigades Act 1989* to make provision (in line with similar powers under the *Rural Fires Act 1997*) for the Commissioner of Fire and Rescue NSW to enter and inspect land to investigate the cause or origin of a fire for the purpose of assisting in the prevention of fires,
- (b) to amend the *Rural Fires Act 1997* as follows:
 - (i) to enable police officers to enter and inspect land for the purposes of determining whether the cause or origin of a fire should be the subject of a criminal investigation,
 - (ii) to enable an authorised officer to require any person to whom the officer intends to issue a penalty notice under that Act to state the person's full name and residential address,
- (c) to amend the *State Emergency and Rescue Management Act 1989* ...

As we approach what appears will be a very hot summer it is important to have the right legislative framework in place to support the hardworking officers of Fire and Rescue NSW. Hazard reduction already has begun through controlled burn-offs. I am sure that all emergency services bodies, whether it is Fire and Rescue NSW or the NSW Police Force, are being vigilant to arson and firebugs. The amount of damage, financially and emotionally, that arson can cause is astounding. Firebugs are more than nuisances. Arson is a criminal act which, as defined by the Australian Institute of Criminology, entails four core elements. The first core element is the lighting of a fire. Fire is the fundamental element of arson; without the lighting of a fire there can be no arson. Some legal definitions also include the lighting of explosives. The second core element is an intention or wilfulness, which excludes fires started by natural causes or accidents. The third is malice, which excludes fires started intentionally with positive or legitimate intent. The fourth core element is property. Some type of property or object must be burned.

Any legislation that allows the proper authorities access to investigate the cause of fires for the purpose of assisting in the future prevention of fires should be supported. This legislation does so by providing the Commissioner of Fire and Rescue NSW access to properties under such circumstances. The bill also gives police the powers to properly investigate when they suspect that criminal investigation is necessary. With the proper legislative framework in place, hopefully, would-be arsonists and firebugs will get the message that lighting fires with criminal intent or for entertainment is not on, and that fires will be investigated thoroughly and the perpetrators will be caught.

My electorate of Cabramatta is served mainly by two brigades from Fire and Rescue NSW, one located at Cabramatta and the other at Bonnyrigg. I am pleased to report to the House that in the interests of public safety and for the residents of my local area the new Cabramatta Fire Station—a project announced and invested in by the former State Labor Government—is completed and in operation. That is just another example of Labor's commitment to the citizens of western and south-western Sydney. That follows the delivery last year of a new fire truck, commissioned and paid for by the Labor Government. The new fire truck is like a mobile fire station. The new Cabramatta Fire Station is located at the corner of St Johns Road and the Cumberland Highway, allowing greater ease of access for fire trucks and emergency vehicles to reach their targets. I commend my local firefighters at Bonnyrigg and Cabramatta for providing safety and rescue services for all in our community. I urge everyone to be vigilant about arson attacks and firebugs this summer, and I thank Fire and Rescue NSW for its commitment and service and for being first on the scene in very dangerous and precarious situations.

Mr JOHN FLOWERS (Rockdale) [5.03 p.m.]: I make a contribution to debate on the Emergency Legislation Amendment Bill 2012. Emergency services are an integral part of our society and those who are employed or volunteer in these services are highly regarded in our local communities. These people are respected and held in high regard for the work they do. Their work is not easy and we must ensure that they are well resourced. The Minister for Police and Emergency Services in the other place understands the important job performed by emergency services agencies and police officers. This legislation provides them with effective support in the conduct of their roles.

The Emergency Legislation Amendment Bill 2012 updates and strengthens the operation of emergency services legislation by ensuring that operational feedback from emergency services agencies and police as well as recommendations of recent reviews are reflected in the relevant Acts. This bill amends the Fire Brigades Act 1989, the Rural Fires Act 1997, the State Emergency and Rescue Management Act 1989 and the State Emergency Services Act 1989 to include further provisions in relation to the investigation of fires and State emergency management, and for other purposes. The bill provides police officers with access to land for a 24-hour period following the extinguishment of a fire for the purpose of investigating whether an indictable offence has been committed.

Further, the bill provides that the Commissioner of Fire and Rescue NSW, or his delegates, may conduct cause of origin investigations on land where a fire has occurred for up to 24 hours following the extinguishment of a fire and the commissioner has determined that the land is safe to enter. The Fire Brigades Act 1989 will be amended to provide that the Commissioner of Fire and Rescue NSW may apply for a search warrant for any land if the commissioner reasonably believes that entering the land is necessary for the purposes of the investigation of the cause of origin of the fire that has occurred on that land or any adjacent land. Further, the bill makes amendments to the Rural Fires Act 1997.

The bill proposes the insertion of section 130A, which will give an authorised police officer the power to request the full name and residential address of an individual in the context of issuing a penalty notice. A person must not, without reasonable excuse, fail to comply with a direction under this section. Further, the authorised officer or police officer may request a person, in the context of issuing a penalty notice, to provide evidence of the correctness of the name and address if the officer reasonably suspects the stated name or address is false. This is an important amendment as it will ensure that penalty notices issued by authorised officers or police officers can be effectively enforced.

I will briefly touch on a few of the minor amendments made to the State Emergency and Rescue Management Act 1989. The State Disaster Plan, known as Displan, is to be renamed the State Emergency Amendment Plan. In a similar way, the bill updates other agency names. For example, the NSW Fire Brigades will become Fire and Rescue NSW. The bill also amends the definition of "employee" in the State Emergency and Rescue Management Act 1989, ensuring that volunteers employed in the private sector are covered by existing anti-discrimination provisions. The Emergency Legislation Amendment Bill 2012 is important because it provides the necessary support to police officers and emergency services agencies. All members in this place appreciate the outstanding work that they do and this legislation is an indication that this Government is committed to doing all that is necessary to provide support. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) [5.10 p.m.]: I take this opportunity to join the member for Toongabbie, the member for Fairfield and the member for Cabramatta on this side of the House in speaking to the Emergency Legislation Amendment Bill 2012. I note at the outset that the Opposition will support the legislation. I understand that it arises largely out of consultation with the NSW Police Force and Fire and Rescue

NSW, and I ask that the Minister confirm as much. I take this opportunity to commend Fire and Rescue NSW, particularly those officers who serve the Bankstown community. Like any community, Bankstown experiences fires in homes. Recently there was a tragic fire in a residential apartment block at Bankstown that claimed the life of one woman and seriously injured another. Both women jumped from the fifth floor of the apartment building in an attempt to escape the heat and smoke. Bankstown firefighters responded swiftly to this incident, rescuing some 30 people. Seven were hospitalised as a result of the fire.

Today the *Bankstown Express* published a follow-up article about the fire entitled "Bankstown fire sparks safety upgrade". In the article the Fire Protection Association announced that it has commenced a review of fire safety in high-rise apartments. Scott Williams, the Chief Executive of the Fire Protection Association argued that as housing density increases more people will turn to high-rise living and so now is an opportune time to review minimum safety standards for high-rise apartments. Bankstown is an area with a high level of industrial commercial activity as well as restaurants and there have also been a number of fires in commercial premises in my community. Of course, when it comes to fires prevention is always better than cure, but Fire and Rescue NSW provides both to communities throughout New South Wales. Presently the Bankstown fire station is undergoing extensive renovations. While I welcome this important investment in my community, I note that it is a continuation of funding committed to by the former Labor Government.

The Emergency Legislation Amendment Bill 2012 was considered by the Legislation Review Committee in digest No. 15 in early September. The digest noted that the bill might raise concerns regarding trespassing on personal rights and liberties insofar as it grants an extension of police powers to enter premises without owner or occupier consent. However, given that this is only in circumstances of bushfire, the committee concluded that this provision was not unreasonable. The new powers of inspection are designed to assist in preventing fires by allowing entry onto land to investigate the origins of fires. These amendments are contained within the bill in schedule 1, items [1] and [2]. I note that there are several stipulations that limit the power of inspection by the Commissioner for Fire and Rescue NSW. For example, the commissioner or their appointee may only enter land under part 22C without an owner's consent for up to 24 hours after a fire has been put out. This provision is designed to allow inspection of the grounds of a residence but not the residence itself. As such, the provision does not allow the commissioner to enter an individual's home.

The practical effect of this amendment will be to allow police and firefighters to access a property within 24 hours of the fire being extinguished if they suspect the fire has been started on that land. Within this 24-hour window the officers will not need a warrant to access private property although they will not be able to enter a residence. The effect of this hopefully will be to increase the speed with which investigators can locate the source of the blaze, which, given the repeat nature of such offences coupled with their devastation, is vital. This counters the potential for offenders to deliberately light fires and use private land as a barrier to police investigation as they know that in ordinary circumstances police will require a warrant to access a potential crime scene.

The bill seeks to amend the definition of "employee" under the State Emergency and Rescue Management Act 1989 to ensure that volunteers working for emergency services employed within the private sector are covered by existing anti-discrimination protections provided in that Act. I take this opportunity to commend that particular aspect of the bill. I also acknowledge the Bankstown State Emergency Service and the great work it does to keep our community and other communities safe. In particular, I acknowledge its commander, David Niven, for his hard work and tireless leadership. As I stated previously, the Opposition will support the bill. My colleagues and I strongly support our firefighters, including our rural firefighters. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth) [5.16 p.m.]: I support the Emergency Legislation Amendment Bill 2012 and congratulate the Hon. Mike Gallacher in the upper House on introducing the bill. We know that our emergency services personnel—who include people in the NSW Police Force, Fire and Rescue NSW, rural fire brigades, NSW Rural Fire Service, the Ambulance Service of New South Wales, the State Emergency Service, volunteer rescue associations or any other agency that manages or controls an accredited rescue unit—need our support. It is common sense and good policy that we give them the tools and resources they need to protect our communities in the advent of an emergency, whether it be fire, a car accident or an emergency of some other nature. Without volunteers our emergency services would be depleted of a much-needed and much-valued workforce, particularly in regional New South Wales.

The Rural Fire Service in the Tamworth electorate—which encompasses three councils: Liverpool Plains Shire Council, Gunnedah Shire Council, Tamworth Regional Council—and rural fire brigades rely

heavily on volunteers. If we did not have these volunteers we simply would not have an emergency response front-line team. I note the Minister in the other place canvassed the detail of the bill extensively, as have members in this House. I applaud the work done in relation to employees under the Commonwealth legislation. I reiterate the words of the Hon. Mike Gallacher in relation to employees employed under the Commonwealth's Fair Work Act 2009 because again it is providing support for our volunteers:

For employees employed under Commonwealth legislation, the Fair Work Act 2009 provides an entitlement to be absent from employment for engaging in eligible community service activity including, under sections 108 and 109, an activity that involves dealing with an emergency or natural disaster. For abundant caution, to ensure that workers can undertake emergency service work without fearing victimisation from their employer the bill makes an amendment to the definition of "employee" in the State Emergency and Rescue Management Act 1989 to ensure volunteers working for emergency service organisations employed within the private sector are covered by existing anti-discrimination protections provided in that Act.

Just yesterday I was in the great town of Gunnedah in my electorate where I held a meeting with community members and we talked about that very point of the amendment, that is, employees need the protection that I have just spoken about. This is timely legislation that is relevant to the task at hand. It is good government and good policy from the Coalition. Summer is coming, and it will be an extremely dry period. There are 16,500 square kilometres in the electorate of Tamworth that are quickly becoming tinder dry. There is also fuel on the ground, which is causing a great concern for our Rural Fire Service and its volunteers. We ask those in regional areas to make sure they review their safety plans and fire prevention plans to prepare for what is on the horizon and to assist our Rural Fire Service volunteers, Fire and Rescue NSW and State Emergency Service in the event of an emergency. They will be given the tools and the resources they need.

A critical resource is allowing investigators to enter a property or a dwelling within 24 hours of a fire, which is a crucial period when investigating how the fire started. This bill makes sense in that it gives the commissioner the power to enter land within 24 hours after a fire has been extinguished and the land is safe to enter. This will enable the inspection of any land for the purposes of investigating the cause or origin of any fire that has occurred on that land or adjacent land. As the critical summer period approaches, it is timely that we thank our rural fire service volunteers. They are thin on the ground. Younger people need to be encouraged to volunteer with their rural fire brigade and see how they can help.

The volunteer workforce is ageing and must be supported—it has my full support. The NSW Rural Fire Service Awards are in their second year. This year there were medals, clasps, awards and commendations for many who had been with the Rural Fire Service for 40 years. That achievement is commendable, but we must encourage younger people to join. We can do that by giving our volunteers the support they require when they pull on their emergency suits and go out and protect our community. I look forward to supporting our volunteers. This bill goes a long way to doing that, and I commend it to the House.

Mr TONY ISSA (Granville) [5.22 p.m.]: I support the Emergency Legislation Amendment Bill 2012, which proposes to amend the Fire Brigades Act 1989, the Rural Fires Act 1997, the State Emergency and Rescue Management Act 1989 and the State Emergency Service Act 1989 to allow enhanced operations and systems to be put in place during emergency situations. Emergencies, disaster and catastrophes are distinguished from everyday emergencies, and therefore require distinct response strategies. During emergencies, organisations and local officials interact in different ways and undertake roles that differ from their usual work roles. As a result, more coordinated efforts are required in emergencies because community-built structures are often impacted entirely. New organisational norms then emerge regarding what is acceptable and not acceptable at the height of a crisis or an emergency. It is crucial that emergency situations receive different kinds of planning and management than do everyday problems, and it is with this in mind that the Government puts forward the Emergency Legislation Amendment Bill 2012.

The bill seeks to amend the Rural Fires Act 1997 to reflect the objects of the fire scene investigation protocol signed in 2001 by the NSW Police Force, Fire and Rescue NSW, and the NSW Rural Fire Service. Police officers will now have the same powers as the NSW Rural Fire Service or Fire and Rescue NSW personnel to enter land. This will allow them adequate access in order to fulfil their obligations under the Crimes Act and/or the Coroners Act and to investigate the cause or origin of a bushfire. The very nature of an emergency calls for a faster-than-normal response. Police officers will have no more power than NSW Rural Fire Service personnel to enter a fire-affected property without a warrant within 24 hours to undertake inspections and assist the fire service in its efforts to secure the safety of the public.

The bill addresses a matter of public interest: the safety and protection of the community from offenders and the possibility of future arson attacks. As a check and balance on this power, if police ascertain

within the 24-hour period that there is a need to investigate an indictable offence, an appropriate warrant must be sought. Through this integrated all-agency approach the most effective method of dealing with emergencies and covering all bases is achieved. Early access to fire-affected properties will strengthen crime prevention efforts and allow for the speedy detainment and prosecution of arsonists. This power is not unlimited. Where land is used for residential purposes only, the consent of the owner or occupier or an appropriate warrant is necessary for lawful entry. The amendment will allow police to operate in the same way as Rural Fire Service personnel so that they are able to fulfil their duties in the public interest.

The New South Wales Government's approach to legislative change is twofold. First, the Government undertakes legislative reviews and values the importance of consultation with the community and its stakeholders. Secondly, it is keen to respond to issues identified by local services and authorities. By responding to suggestions raised by emergency services and local authorities, the amendments provide that when issuing a penalty notice an authorised officer or police officer will have the capacity to request that a person state their full name and residential address. This will ensure that penalty notices are issued correctly and can be enforced properly.

Response to emergencies also demands coordinated action and support from other management districts. To promote efficiency and align the regional boundaries with those of the NSW Police Force, in March 2011 the former 18 emergency regions were merged into 11. With the regions now aligned with those of the NSW Police Force, the two agencies are better able to make optimum use of resources that will help minimise delays, wastages and other organisational problems. The services will now be able to achieve their objectives of risk reduction and emergency relief with ease. Unity of action in the face of destruction and emergency ensures orderly effort and establishes a team spirit. The goal of creating greater consistency within the system also led to the amendment of the definition of "functional area" in the State Emergency and Rescue Management Act.

The proposal aims to align legislation with what is happening in practice and in the field. In the past, the term "functional area" in legislation referred to health services, transport, telecommunications and welfare services that were involved in preparing for an emergency. The bill proposes to amend this definition to highlight that these functional areas are in practice part of not only preparations but also prevention, response and recovery efforts. To demonstrate the value of the role of volunteers, the definition of "employee" has been amended to ensure that emergency services volunteers working for private sector organisations are protected by antidiscrimination laws. Volunteers are the heartbeat of emergency services in New South Wales and a most important resource.

The Government believes volunteers should be afforded the same workplace protections as employees so that they are able to engage in and offer their critical and valuable services more effectively. The amendment supports measures introduced in the Fair Work Act 2009 that provide Commonwealth employees with the right to be absent from work to engage in volunteer work involving responding to emergencies or natural disasters. A study undertaken by Kawachi and Berkman in 2000 demonstrated that volunteering inspired high levels of trust in others and a sense of community and belonging and civic participation, which are all central to more desirable health outcomes and reduced crime rates. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr KEVIN CONOLLY (Riverstone) [5.31 p.m.]: I support the Emergency Legislation Amendment Bill 2012. Before I comment on the bill specifically, I will put on the record my appreciation of the contribution made by all those who work in our emergency services, whether as employees or volunteers, across a range of organisations in New South Wales—the NSW Police Force, Fire and Rescue NSW, the Ambulance Service of New South Wales, the Rural Fire Service, the State Emergency Service, the NSW Volunteer Rescue Association, Surf Life Saving New South Wales, Marine Rescue NSW and others. They contribute so much to this State and to our welfare and protection. These people deserve our practical support, and I believe this bill is a modest, practical step in ensuring that they receive it and that they can protect us from fire.

I am reminded of the anniversary of the Quakers Hill nursing home fire that was observed at a service at the local Anglican church on Sunday. The devastation, heartbreak, grief and challenge to all emergency services involved in that incident were vividly remembered during that service. That incident underlines the fact that our emergency services personnel are at times required to put their personal safety to one side to protect the community. The young police officers who were among the first to arrive at the scene and who began to evacuate the residents certainly put their own safety second. We are all in awe of people who do that and we greatly appreciate their actions. This bill is a modest but practical step that is designed to give practical support to those who undertake that task for our community.

The purpose of the Emergency Legislation Amendment Bill 2012 is to give police officers the same powers as NSW Rural Fire Service or Fire and Rescue NSW personnel to enter land for the purpose of investigating the cause or origin of a bushfire, which is achieved through amendment to the Rural Fire Act, and to provide authorised officers with the power to request a person's full name and address in the context of issuing a penalty notice for an offence against the Act or regulation, which is achieved through amendment to the Rural Fire Act. The bill also amends the definition of "employee" in the State Emergency and Rescue Management Act 1989 to ensure that volunteers working for emergency services groups are covered by existing legislation relating to antidiscrimination protections.

This bill not only amends existing legislation but also inserts a provision into the Rural Fires Act 1997 to ensure that investigations into cause or origin of fires can now be lawfully conducted by police officers as well as fire investigators. These investigations occur within 24 hours after the fire has been put out with the intention of preventing any future fires and determining whether an indictable offence has been committed. This legislation amends four pieces of legislation—namely, the Fire Brigades Act 1989, the Rural Fires Act 1997, the State Emergency and Rescue Management Act 1989, and the State Emergency Service Act 1989. The bill places police officers on the same legal footing as Rural Fire Service personnel with regard to their right to enter a fire-affected property without a warrant for 24 hours for the purpose of undertaking inspections and assisting the Rural Fire Service on safety-related matters. It is of course within that window of opportunity that the most valuable information is likely to be found to identify the cause of the fire. Providing that timely access to police will increase the likelihood of identifying the cause.

The bill also provides the power for police officers to require people to state their full name and residential address and includes offences for non-compliance. Further, a police officer will have the power to require people to provide evidence of their name and address if the officer reasonably suspects that the name and address provided are false. That is a modest measure that will increase the likelihood that police officers will be able to undertake the tasks expected of them to identify the cause of a fire and to investigate people who may be involved. The bill also contains a number of minor amendments, such as renaming emergency management districts and clarifying the membership for each level of emergency management committee. The bill makes sensible amendments by ensuring that police officers have the necessary powers to investigate fire-related incidents effectively and to assist the Rural Fire Service. It provides practical support for those who protect us and I believe it is further evidence that the O'Farrell Government continues to support our emergency services workers in the valuable work they do on behalf of our community. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON (Camden) [5.37 p.m.]: I support the Emergency Legislation Amendment Bill 2012. The bill amends the Fire Brigades Act 1989, the Rural Fires Act 1997, the State Emergency and Rescue Management Act 1989 and the State Emergency Service Act 1989. These amendments are a response to feedback received on the operation of these Acts and the recommendations of recent reviews. Fire has been feared throughout the ages. It has been necessary for the survival of the human race, but it has also been a great taker of human life. Whether it be a fire caused by nature—a mere strike of lightning—the neglect of a campfire, a spark from a welder or, in the worst case, a firebug deliberately lighting a fire, we cannot and will never escape the devastation caused by fire. Fire prevention and firefighting technology and fire awareness have come a long way in recent years. Thankfully, we have also made great strides in treating people with serious burns. However, no matter the era or the country in which one lives, fire has been and will continue to be a hazard to all.

This bill enables New South Wales police officers to enter fire-affected properties without a warrant for 24 hours after a fire has been extinguished for inspection purposes and to assist the Rural Fire Service on safety matters. Police officers will be allowed to enter a property within the first 24 hours after a fire has been extinguished for the purpose of establishing whether an investigation into an indictable offence such as arson is necessary and then to apply for a warrant. The first 24 hours after an incident are the most important for investigative purposes. If such an investigation is delayed during those first hours, crucial evidence and the potential for justice to be served on a possible criminal can be lost.

The Commissioner of Fire and Rescue NSW or the NSW Rural Fire Service will also be able to apply for a search warrant when the commissioner believes that entry to a property is needed to conduct a cause or origin investigation. Land used for residential purposes will still be subject to the consent of the owner or require the relevant warrant. This amendment will be concurrent with the fire scene investigation protocol, which all three agencies—NSW Police Force, NSW Rural Fire Service and NSW Fire Brigades, now known as Fire and Rescue NSW—signed and which sets out the operational responsibilities of these agencies in extinguishing and investigating fires. The amendment to the Rural Fires Act will require a person to state his or

her full name and residential address to an authorised officer whose intention is to issue a penalty notice to that person under the Act. Police can now direct a person to state his or her full name and residential address when that officer has reason to suspect that that person is committing an offence under the Act. Evidence to corroborate a person's nomination of a name and residential address can also be requested by the authorised officer and the police if there is suspicion that the information may be false.

The definition of "employee" will be amended so that volunteers who have employment in the private sector and who give of their time, skill and knowledge and create the awesome manpower our State and country are supported with in times of disaster and crisis are protected. A great awareness and respect exists in our workforces for employees who volunteer their time for community service. Hopefully, this amendment will only address a hypothetical, but it will provide employees who are entitled to be absent from work under sections 108 and 109 of the Fair Work Act 2009 to provide assistance during an emergency or natural disaster to be included as an employee under that Act and, therefore, covered by antidiscrimination protections provided in the Fair Work Act. An amendment to the State Emergency and Rescue Management Act 1989 will ensure that the Chief Executive Officer of the Ministry of Police and Emergency Services is able to take over a recovery operation when the recovery need is sufficiently large and/or complex.

Mr John Williams: Is that right?

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON: It is right. The definition of "functional area" as "a category of services involved in the preparations for an emergency" will be changed to reflect that "functional areas" are involved also in the prevention of, responses to or recovery from an emergency. Energy and utility services' functional area will also be recognised under this bill for the first time. Changes to the emergency management committees will be made to clarify the linkages between the committees in their roles of coordinating and facilitating emergency management activities, and to also clarify membership of the levels of the committees. Titles and agency name changes will also be brought up to date and amended in this bill. For example the NSW Fire Brigades will now be recognised by its new title of and Rescue NSW. The State Disaster Plan [DISPLAN] will be renamed the State Emergency Management Plan because the new name better describes its broadened role in managing the coordination of all agencies in an emergency. We are extremely proud of staff and volunteers of our police and emergency services. They are the people we turn to in an emergency and who do their best to ensure our safety and that of our property.

We must not forget the vigilance of these people in times when there is no emergency upon us and we all too easily forget about the threat of bushfire or the threat of any other disaster until it is close to or upon us. I commend the NSW Rural Fire Service for its initiatives such as Bush Fire Awareness Week held in September this year, its Bush Fire Survival Plan and its ongoing community engagement programs. I also commend Fire and Rescue NSW for its 2012 Fire Prevention Week campaign in April, which works tirelessly to remind our community that winter is the most dangerous time of year for fires in the home and how to prevent a fire in the first place. This bill will provide emergency service personnel, agencies and police with the support needed as indicated to carry out their duties efficiently and thoroughly for the betterment of the emergency services and for the people of New South Wales that they serve so well. I commend the bill to the House.

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie) [5.46 p.m.]: The purpose of the Emergency Legislation Amendment Bill 2012 is to amend three separate Acts to provide ongoing and effective support to emergency service agencies, including the police. When it comes to emergencies, such as bushfires, which unfortunately are synonymous with living in Australia and in New South Wales, we must provide our firefighters and police with the resources and support they need to ensure they can get on with their job of saving lives and securing assets and infrastructure. As we approach the bushfire season, and in fact my electorate of Port Macquarie has already seen many instances of bushfires, it is both common sense and timely that this legislation be given a clear passage through this House. The summer months also bring with them seasonal storms and we are already being warned that this bushfire season will likely see an above average bush fire activity.

This bill will update and strengthen current legislation related to emergency services and will reflect operational feedback from various agencies and recent reviews. As mentioned, the bill will amend the Fire Brigades Act 1989, the Rural Fires Act 1997, and the State Emergency and Rescue Management Act 1989. It should be noted that these amendments reflect the objects of the fire scene investigation protocol, which was signed in 2001 by the three emergency agencies aforementioned. The amendment to the Rural Fires Act will provide a stand-alone power of entry for police to access land for a 24-hour period following the extinguishment of a bushfire for the purpose of investigating whether an indictable offence has been committed. The Fire

Brigades Act 1989 will similarly be amended to make provision for the Commissioner of Fire and Rescue NSW, or his delegates, to enter land to conduct "cause or origin" investigations for the purpose of assisting in the prevention of fires.

During his investigations the commissioner will also be given the power under these amendments to apply for a search warrant when he believes entry is necessary for the purposes of determining the cause or origin of any fire that has occurred on that land or any adjacent land. New section 131A of schedule 2 [6] to the bill also provides a second amendment to the Rural Fires Act 1997, which allows an authorised officer to direct a person to state his or her full name and residential address if the authorised officer intends to issue a penalty notice or if a police officer who has reason to suspect that person is committing an offence under the Act or Regulation.

Other amendments in the bill, which relate to the State Emergency and Rescue Management Act 1989, clarify the responsibilities and roles of the three agencies involved in fire management, including the extinguishing and investigating of fires—NSW Police Force, Fire and Rescue NSW and the NSW Rural Fire Service. These amendments will also ensure that volunteers employed in the private sector are fully covered by existing employment discrimination provisions. There are also numerous other consequential minor amendments to update names and titles, and reflect the broadened roles referenced in the bill. For example, the State Disaster Plan, also known as DISPLAN, will be renamed the State Emergency Management Plan. This plan ensures the coordinated response of all three agencies. Further amendments will modify and clarify arrangements relating to the membership and function of emergency management committees.

I take this opportunity to thank the many professional personnel and volunteers involved in emergency services across our regions—in the air, on the ground and on the water. I acknowledge and commend the ongoing commitment of this fantastic group of people to keep our communities safe. They, of course, receive unwavering and specialist support from our medical professionals at all levels who are always there to assist in emergencies and provide care in times of need. I congratulate the Minister in the other place on his hard work in the development of this bill. I also thank him for his recent visit to the Port Macquarie electorate. The Camden Haven State Emergency Service unit, as well as police at Laurieton and Port Macquarie appreciated the opportunity to discuss issues relevant to their authorities with the Minister. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Hawkesbury—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.51 p.m.]: It is with much pleasure that I contribute to debate on the Emergency Legislation Amendment Bill 2012. In essence, the object of the bill is to provide the opportunity for NSW Police Force, Fire and Rescue NSW and the NSW Rural Fire Service to enter properties to fully investigate the cause or origin of fires and to enhance the investigation of arson, if it is suspected. Unfortunately, a small number of people in our society seek to cause havoc and destruction and, in some cases, fatalities through arson. Such actions are deplorable and disgraceful. I will support anything that can be done to help bring justice to those who light fires. I do not propose to say anything further about the bill but I do commend the Minister for introducing it.

I take this opportunity to remind the House of some of the dedicated emergency services personnel who work so hard in my electorate. The electorate of Hawkesbury covers 3,000 square kilometres and is surrounded by many national parks. It is where the city meets the country. More than 30 NSW Rural Fire Service brigades are represented in my electorate. When I was 13 years old I joined the Box Hill-Nelson Bush Fire Brigade at the insistence of my great friend Ron Gavin; we used to ride our pushbikes there. At that time the Box Hill-Nelson Bush Fire Brigade was ably supported and run by the Hesson family. About six months ago I had the pleasure of seeing Norm Hesson presented with an award for 60 years service at The Hills fire service awards. Norm was in the company of Peter Speat—a former captain of the Oakville brigade and another person I greatly respect—who recently also was presented with an award for 60 years service. The Oakville brigade is a neighbouring brigade to the Box Hill-Nelson brigade. These people and their families have made some phenomenal commitments to protect the people in my electorate over many years.

I will now briefly mention some of the people from the brigades in my area. My electorate covers the three local government areas of Hornsby, The Hills and the Hawkesbury and each of those local government areas is serviced by a large number of brigades. The Hornsby area, which is located in the north-eastern part of my electorate is home to the Arcadia and the Berowra brigades. We also have the Wilberforce, St Albans and Oakville brigades—Peter Speat is still a guiding light at that brigade. Mountain Lagoon brigade is another, where people like Timmy Bourke and Alan McCartney are members. They recently had a class 4 fire in that area and 12 brigades attended. After three days they got the fire under control and the wonderful rural bushland areas of the Hawkesbury were protected. Barry Cartwright from the Lower Portland brigade—a bloke who is

fond of a beer from time to time—and his family have looked after the Lower Portland for many years. Remarkably, they service both sides of the Hawkesbury River. To service the hill side of the river they have to use the Lower Portland ferry. That is a very good reason for maintaining that ferry.

I acknowledge Karen Hodges who is the local control officer at the Kurrajong brigade. Karen has ably supported us for many years. Moving to the northern area of my electorate we have the Glossodia, Freemans Reach and Colo Heights brigades. We also have the Blaxland Ridge brigade where my great mate Kurt Lance, a former captain of the brigade, and Brian Edmonds, a well-known voice on the local Hawkesbury radio, are members. I now move to areas such as Bilpin, where the Bilpin brigade is ably supported by a great bloke by the name of Billy Shields. Billy comes from one of those families that have been involved in that brigade for many years. I do not want to miss anyone from The Hills area. I start with the Wiseman's Ferry brigade. I recently told the House how that brigade had run a barbeque at the opening of the new BMX track at Wiseman's Ferry. These people go well beyond what they are required to do in protecting our communities from devastating fires, and it is testament to their community spirit.

The Rouse Hill brigade has been supported by people such as Don and Monica Langdon, whose sons are now professional firefighters. The Langdon family has been involved in the Rouse Hill brigade for many years. Next is Round Corner and the headquarters at the top of Annangrove Road, Middle Dural, South Maroota and Maroota, areas that bring to mind the Hitchcock family, the Kamaleri family and the Edwards family. There is also the Kenthurst brigade, the Hillside brigade and the Glenorie brigade where Ross and Dale Lithgow are members. Some 10 years ago Ross and Dale lost their home in a devastating fire that ravaged The Hills area but the community got behind them and their home was rebuilt. I clearly remember that Ross Lithgow was away defending homes outside of his area whilst his home burnt to the ground. Dale tried to defend their home. Prime Minister John Howard visited the area and I remember the vision of him on the television embracing Dale. She was devastated by the loss of her home, as anyone would be, but she was particularly saddened by the loss of the Christmas presents that were inside the home for her children and grandparents. Ross also lost a couple of his favourite cars in that tragic fire: an SS Commodore and a Ford Bronco.

I have already mentioned the Box Hill-Nelson and Annangrove brigades. People like Jim Visioni have been long-time supporters of the Annangrove brigade. I acknowledge the local fire control officer for the Baulkham Hills area, John Hojel, who has been an institution in the area for many years. He has seen more fires than he cares to remember, but he is a terrific fire control officer; he has a wonderful warmth about him. He encourages people to join brigades and then works with brigade captains to sort out their issues and funding problems and support them with the necessary resources. As I said, he gave an undertaking to provide his office facilities at Annangrove to the Headquarters brigade when required. Rural brigades need somewhere to meet. The Headquarters fire control officer at the top of Annangrove in Kenthurst is always open to the community. The Hojel children are professional firefighters, which is obviously in their blood, and they protect our communities during devastating fires.

On many occasions I represent the Minister for Police and Emergency Services at award presentations. With 34 brigades and all those firefighters in my electorate, there are many awards to present. Indeed, on Thursday I will be representing the Minister at Richmond Panthers to support and honour these great people. It was also a pleasure only a few weeks ago to represent the Minister at the World Firefighter Games, when 5,000 firefighters from around the world converged on Darling Harbour to utilise some of the wonderful Sydney Olympics venues to find the toughest and most courageous firefighter in the world. For the record, all firefighters are courageous and tough. They are wonderful people. We should never forget that they are volunteers. We are glad to have them. We appreciate their dedication and commitment. I commend the bill to the House.

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

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): Order! Government business having concluded, the House will not proceed with the matter of public importance.

RANDOM BREATH TESTING THIRTIETH ANNIVERSARY

Matter of Public Importance

Mr GREG APLIN (Albury) [6.02 p.m.]: Last week we recognised the work of George Paciullo, who, as the then chair of the Staysafe committee, drove the introduction of random breath testing [RBT] in 1982. It

has been a difficult time for the Paciullo family following the passing of George. However, with 30 years of saving lives through the use of random breath testing to tackle alcohol-related deaths on our roads, he has left behind a legacy of which his family can be very proud. As the current chair of the Staysafe committee, I recognise the long way we have come in 30 years of random breath testing. While celebrating the achievements of the late George Paciullo, we remember how much opposition there was to this proposal back in the early 1980s. This was the time when "wowserism" was one of the worst insults one could offer and when "one for the road" was still a common expression and practice. Others who opposed the trial claimed that it struck at the heart of our civil liberties to allow police to stop drivers without having grounds to suspect them of a crime. In 2002, on the twentieth anniversary of random breath testing, the *Sydney Morning Herald* stated that:

... few legislative packages have changed social norms as much as random breath testing.

Before it was introduced in 1982 there was widespread public concern about random breath testing. But the legislation went through Parliament and the world did not end. In fact, by March 1984, just 15 months later, 91.5 per cent of survey respondents were in favour of random breath testing. In 1982 many drivers had one for the road and the idea of police being able to conduct random breath tests on motorists was regarded as something quite remarkable. Now, attitudinal surveys show that most people view drink-drivers in negative terms. I think it is fair to say that most people now regard random breath testing as core business for police. Police conduct random breath tests as part of their day-to-day work, as well as during high-visibility operations targeting specific road safety issues.

For example, Operation Drink Drive is a biannual statewide operation specifically targeting drink-driving. But police may also conduct random breath testing as part of other traffic operations. In recent months, for example, a number of joint police and Roads and Maritime Service operations have focussed on the trucking industry, and these have included truck drivers being tested at the roadside for alcohol and drug impairment. Random breath testing is a major and highly visible component of holiday operations such as Operation Safe Arrival and Operation Safe Return, which occur during the Christmas summer holiday periods. And in regions where local intelligence shows a spike in alcohol-related crashes, the Traffic and Highway Patrol Command and the local area commander work together to set up a targeted operation for that region. A combination of education and enforcement has been shown to be effective in changing both attitudes and behaviour.

The NSW Police Force works closely with Transport for NSW and the Roads and Maritime Service to conduct random breath testing and other road safety operations. While police are doing the enforcing, Transport for NSW will be behind the scenes designing the posters and advertisements to publicise an operation, providing some additional funding or analysing the crash statistics to identify trends in alcohol-related crashes. Police and Transport for NSW also work together with other agencies to develop and improve breath testing equipment. The Police Traffic Technology Branch has played a key role in developing and rolling out new breath analysis equipment to speed up and improve the accuracy of the alcohol testing regime. In the early days of testing, a motorist had to blow into the bag and wait for a reading; now they just count to 10 and they can be on their way.

Over the 30 years since random breath testing was introduced, the rate of alcohol-related fatalities has dropped significantly. Since 1982 fatal crashes involving alcohol have dropped from around 27 per cent of all fatalities to the current rate of 19 per cent. Police now conduct more than four million random breath tests a year, compared with some 900,000 tests conducted in 1983. In 1981, the year before random breath testing was introduced, the New South Wales road toll was 1,291 deaths. In 1983, the year after random breath testing was introduced, it was down to 966. In 2011 it was 364. But whilst we celebrate today the number of lives saved by random breath testing, we still cannot rest on our laurels. In 2011 police charged around 23,600 drivers with prescribed concentration of alcohol offences. So whilst our fatality rates have reduced and our community attitudes have changed, there is still a group of motorists for whom the message is not getting through.

Drink-driving is still a factor in nearly 20 per cent of all fatal crashes in New South Wales. In 2011 70 people were killed and 1,182 were injured in crashes where the driver was over the legal blood alcohol limit. It is significant too that last year about 97 per cent of drink-drivers involved in fatal crashes were men. In 2011 the estimated cost of all crashes to the community was around \$5 billion, with drink-driving crashes alone costing around \$550 million. As we head into the festive season I remind everyone that the NSW Police Force will not be taking a break. In fact, police will be stepping up their presence on the roads and increasing their focus on drink-driving.

Mr RYAN PARK (Keira) [6.07 p.m.]: I support this matter of public importance. The introduction of random breath testing is a legacy that will stand the test of time. No matter what side we are on, members come

into this place with one common aim, that is, to make a difference to the communities they represent, whether it is at the local level or whether one is fortunate enough to be able to do so at a whole-of-State level as a Minister. The legacy of random breath testing has done more than stand the test of time. What George Paciullo did has helped save lives. He made drink-driving no longer a social norm and practice that was considered acceptable. He made people realise how dangerous it is to get behind the wheel of a motor vehicle while under the influence of alcohol. In doing so, he helped a generation to recalibrate their thinking around safe driving and the importance of being safe on our roads.

I am sure all members hope that they will be remembered for their policy work, the reforms they encouraged and the changes of which they were able to be part. George Paciullo will certainly be remembered for more than that. He will be remembered as a man who saved thousands of lives because of his tenacity, commitment and foresight in seeing through, as the member for Albury rightly said, an extremely difficult reform. This initiative was implemented at a time when it was socially acceptable to drink and drive. It was probably socially acceptable to drink large amounts of alcohol and drive. That is no longer the case. I grew up in a generation where these laws became a part of what was considered responsible practice and I thank George Paciullo for making my generation, and the next generation, more aware of the importance of road safety and of not getting behind the wheel of a motor vehicle when under the influence of alcohol.

I take this opportunity to thank George Paciullo for his efforts in driving this legislation and I also thank the men and women of the New South Wales Police Force who every day and evening are out on our roads ensuring that motorists are doing the right thing. Every year I am concerned to see large numbers of people not heeding this very basic message. It is now socially unacceptable to drink and drive or to drive under the influence of drugs, but we must continue to heed the warnings of the New South Wales police. These are the men and women who, together with our emergency services, unfortunately have the grim task of attending serious accidents which could have been avoided had people decided not to drink and drive.

As we approach a very busy time in the festive calendar and, traditionally, a very busy time on our roads, I join with the member for Albury, who moved this motion, and all members of the House in encouraging our families, friends, constituents and the broader community to ensure that when they get behind the wheel of a car they are not adversely under the influence of alcohol. The member for Albury is right: too many people continue to take the risk. There are too many people who continue to not heed the warnings of the New South Wales police and emergency services. Out of respect for a man who fought battles within his own party, within the broader parliamentary membership and, most importantly, within the community to get this legislation passed, we owe it to George Paciullo and his legacy to ensure that this festive season when we get behind the wheel we behave in a way that would make him proud.

Mr BRYAN DOYLE (Campbelltown) [6.12 p.m.]: Are you under .05 or are you under arrest? I am sure every member would remember that tagline for road safety. Today marks 30 years since the introduction of random breath testing in New South Wales. It is appropriate that this anniversary coincides with the launch of the New South Wales Police Force's summer campaign Operation Paciullo. The operation is named in honour of the Hon. George Paciullo who, as chair of the Staysafe committee, was the driving force behind the introduction of random breath testing. Sadly, Mr Paciullo passed away last month, but his legacy to the New South Wales community will be long lasting.

It has been estimated that around 7,000 lives have been saved in New South Wales in the 30 years since the introduction of random breath testing. It has changed community attitudes and reduced the road toll and, in fact, it has resulted in a cultural change in our society. As a young driver in the late 1970s and early 1980s I was instructed by my father, who was a magistrate, not to drive on certain occasions because on the eve of or in the lead-up to significant holidays like Christmas and Easter it was fundamentally dangerous to be on New South Wales roads. My father's advice was to avoid driving because our roads were a killing field.

Random breath testing changed all of that. As a young policeman, I remember the original breath testing kits containing tubes full of various chemicals. Both ends had to be broken off and put into a mouthpiece so that the driver could be tested and each tube then had to be acquitted on a special form back at the police station. A great deal of documentation and record-keeping went with the procedure. The police force has contributed to keeping our community safe in the areas of road safety and road crime. All those who join the police force do so to serve their community and to protect life and property, and random breath testing is a way that the police force has contributed to the safety of our community over the years. I hope that the New South Wales Police Force and Transport for NSW will continue to work together in relation to road safety and make sure that this initiative remains effective for at least another 30 years.

Mr GREG APLIN (Albury) [6.15 p.m.], in reply: I thank the members who participated in this matter of public importance and pay tribute to the member for Campbelltown for his previous involvement in this program. For 30 years the community has been safer as a result of random breath testing. A great thing about random breath testing is that when it started it was about creating a fear among drink-drivers that they would be caught—a factor that is still true today. But also, and perhaps more importantly, it signalled a change in public attitudes to drinking and driving. From being almost socially acceptable and sometimes even seen as a bit of a laugh, drink-driving is now generally regarded as contemptible behaviour that potentially puts all our lives at risk. In fact, this change, which was guided by some very clever advertising campaigns alongside the random breath testing campaign, remains the outstanding example of how government action can sometimes shape public opinion and attitudes for the better. Antidiscrimination and anti-smoking laws may be other examples.

Random breath testing was never going to succeed on fear alone. Throughout its 30 years it has been supported by campaigns and programs run by the roads authorities of the day as well as by police and other agencies. Many clubs introduced courtesy buses to transport patrons home and young people adopted a new and acceptable term: the designated driver. Public awareness advertising campaigns have confronted drivers on highways, viewers in their living rooms, commuters on their daily travel and students in their classrooms. Even on our television screens we now have reality-based programs such as *RBT*, highlighting how every day Australians driving home from the pub or a party are being stopped by police and tested.

This Government has a number of strategies aimed at reducing the burden drink-driving places on the community, whether it is creating the Traffic and Highway Patrol Command, the recent "Plan B" advertising campaign or the new high-visibility highway patrol vehicles. While these approaches work for most drivers, there are still many who continue to drink and drive and who end up being caught by police. More than 85 million breath tests have been conducted since the first random breath testing in Parramatta Road, Granville, on 17 December 1982. Today we recognise the thirtieth anniversary of random breath testing and the launch of the New South Wales Police Force's summer campaign Operation Paciullo, named in honour of the late Hon. George Paciullo. The operation will see police conduct over one million random breath testings this summer. I recognise the initiative and determination of those who implemented the program and the dedication of those applying it, and I urge the motoring public to heed the warnings and act responsibly for the safety of all.

Discussion concluded.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

SHELLHARBOUR HOSPITAL

Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) [6.19 p.m.]: On Wednesday 30 October 2012 the Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Area Health District publicly released its Health Care Services Plan for the next decade, titled "Working Together Building Healthy Futures". Although the health debate is always vexed, I was pleased to see that this plan foreshadows a significant role for Shellharbour Hospital, which is based in my electorate. Under the former Labor government, Shellharbour Hospital received funding boosts. The hospital itself was commissioned during the premiership of Labor's Neville Wran in 1986. In the past two years alone Shellharbour Hospital has seen a \$10 million upgrade to its facilities. The New South Wales Government has also allocated a further \$10 million for future enhancements. Under the new Health Care Services Plan released on 30 October, Shellharbour Hospital will:

... be a major metropolitan hospital for the Southern Illawarra, providing a comprehensive range of secondary acute services to the Southern Illawarra communities.

According to the plan, Shellharbour Hospital will be expanded to cater for local demand in general medicine, surgical services and acute geriatrics and become the acute centre for the community with inpatient services relocated from Port Kembla and Kiama hospitals. This is all very good news for Shellharbour Hospital and the growing population centres in my electorate. Of course, as we all know, plans look very good on paper and in glossy reports. What is now required is a commitment by the New South Wales Government to walk the walk and allocate substantial funding to implement the plan and, in particular, provide the funding to expand services at Shellharbour Hospital.

I am disappointed that this plan does not appear to recommend the reopening of a maternity unit at Shellharbour Hospital, an issue that is widely and deeply felt in my electorate. The maternity unit has been

the subject of long debate and controversy between the local community, clinicians and health administrators. It is time to revisit this issue in light of the new plan. I will be raising this issue again with the chairman of the Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Area Health District, Professor Denis King, when we meet in coming weeks to discuss this plan and the expansion of services at Shellharbour Hospital. In the coming months a series of additional plans will be released which will deal with the fine detail of how that overall plan will be implemented. I will be closely monitoring the asset strategic plan, which will detail the priorities and time frames for the development of capital infrastructure, the clinical division plans and the workforce strategy.

All of these key documents will reveal whether this plan can be successfully implemented and whether the proposed expansion of Shellharbour Hospital can indeed be realised. But a key commitment will be the allocation of funds by the Government and the Minister for Health in next year's budget. The former Labor Government invested substantially in the health services and infrastructure of the Illawarra region. The media release of the Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Area Health District on 30 October contains a key paragraph that outlines that substantial investment in four dot points.

First, \$86 million at Wollongong Hospital for the Illawarra Elective Surgical Services Centre; secondly, \$14 million in joint funding with the Commonwealth Labor Government to enhance the Illawarra Cancer Care Centre; thirdly, \$34.8 million in joint funding with the Commonwealth Labor Government to build the Shoalhaven Regional Cancer Centre; and fourthly, the \$10 million investment in Shellharbour Hospital I mentioned earlier. I put the House on notice that whilst I vehemently oppose the privatisation of the Port Kembla Port Corporation—I think it is a disgrace; it is not a lease, it is a sale—if the leasing arrangements proceed I will be campaigning for a fair share of the \$100 million the Government has promised will be available to the Illawarra. That fair share of funding should be allocated to Shellharbour Hospital's expansion. That is something I am truly committed to.

AUSTRALIAN CHIN UP TEAM AND BREELIN FREDERICK

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie) [6.24 p.m.]: This evening I speak about a group of young people from my electorate who are enjoying themselves at their schoolies event. Before members jump to conclusions thinking that I will be talking about the type of behaviour we have been seeing on the news of late that is going on in Surfers Paradise or Bali, I say, "Don't panic." I want to talk tonight about a group of mostly young people who as I speak are spending their schoolies break working hard helping orphans in Malaysia.

Seventeen-year-old Breelin Frederick lives at Kew and has been attending St Columba Anglican School. Breelin decided she wanted to do something different for schoolies, so she designed a program supported by Mid Coast Care's Hope Shop at Port Macquarie to take 13 young people to Malaysia for two to three weeks to work with a group of orphans and refugees, and with EPIC Homes who build homes for underprivileged indigenous Malaysians known as the Orang Asli. Breelin completed a business plan so that it could become a recurring alternative to the tradition of schoolies and will give young people the opportunity to transition from childhood to adulthood in a way that will expose them to reality and give them a broader perspective on life and the things that are really important. The program is called the Australian Chin Up Team, because of the work they are doing at the Chin Refugee Centre in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. In an email to me, Breelin writes:

I will be taking with me a team of 10, students from St Columba, Regional High school, St Pauls and McKillop, my parents and a family friend ...

This year I hope will be the prototype for the program that will run again in 2013. I hope to run this program for 5-10 years and then during that time teach a successor how to run and also pass on the program.

She goes on to say:

My personal goal for the program is to create or foster leaders who lead by serving.

Breelin certainly is a remarkable young woman. At a time when so many of her peers are kicking up their heels, she is doing exactly the opposite. The Australian Chin Up Team aims to expand the horizons of the volunteers and challenge their comfort zones. In the future, along with year 12 students who have completed their Higher School Certificate, the program will be open to university students and adults with a positive and hardworking change-the-world attitude. It also aims to create a memorable cultural experience that allows the team to represent Australian culture to the global community.

During their time in Malaysia, the team are helping out at the orphanage, which is home to almost 100 orphans or abused children. They are also teaching English, Australian and sport to Burmese Chin refugees, taking food and medical supplies to the Chin AIDS clinic and rehabilitation centre for AIDS sufferers, as well as taking part in a program alongside other volunteers building a home in three days for underprivileged indigenous Malaysians using ecologically sustainable materials. Speaking to John Parer from the Hope Shop who has helped with the organisation of this trip, I was told the team is going well. They donated \$10,000 to a new local orphanage, where they have also been planting trees, and they have taken 180 Chin refugee children to a waterfall and donated musical instruments to local churches. The trip is being documented by video, photography and journal records.

Personally, I cannot wait for the team to get back to Port Macquarie next Thursday to hear how it all went. At a time when so many young people get a bad rap or negative publicity, whether it is playing up at schoolies or whatever, here is a group of young people reaching out and helping others in a different part of the world. They deserve a great deal of praise and respect for what they are achieving. What a fantastic way to spend their schoolies experience. I congratulate Breelin Fredrick on organising this event. We could all learn a thing or two from this wonderful young lady.

LIVERPOOL CITY COUNCIL FIRE SAFETY STANDARDS

Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool) [6.28 p.m.]: I wish to advise the House of the unsatisfactory dealings between the owners of flats in my electorate and Liverpool City Council concerning fire safety standards. The premises concerned are located at 26 Charles Street, Liverpool. There seem to be conflicting standards demanded by council and higher standards retrospectively applied, even though the standards of the building concerned were perfectly appropriate when it was constructed and have remained so. I have been dealing in particular with a resident owner in the block, Katherine Fullerton. Ms Fullerton has explained to me that every year the strata body of the building produces a fire safety statement.

This is in accordance with the Environmental Planning and Assessment Regulation 2000. It certifies that the various listed fire safety measures continue to satisfy the standard and codes applicable at the time of construction. It is worth pointing out that the building concerned is about 25 to 30 years old. It was constructed at a time and in a way that is similar to many other flat buildings in and around the Liverpool central business district, especially around Speed, Nagle and Charles streets. The issues that apply to this building would generally apply to many other buildings close to the Liverpool central business district. Despite having produced a fire safety statement on a regular basis for this block of units, Liverpool council now requires other things to be done and it has pursued this by way of audits and proposed orders.

Ms Fullerton has several concerns in this regard. The first is that 26 Charles Street is similar to many other nearby buildings. As far as she can determine, no other building has had these additional obligations or requirements placed upon it. On the face of it, the nearby buildings appear to be in an identical situation but only this building has been targeted. Like should be treated with like; but this building does not seem to have been treated similarly so far. The other issue raised by Ms Fullerton is that she has been told that someone complained about the fire dangers of the premises to Fire and Rescue NSW. She could not find out the details of the complaint and disagrees vehemently with any claim that there is a safety risk attached to the premises in which she and others live. If there was, she would not be living there. She says that the building continues in the same state as when it was approved and it continues to be certified as such annually.

The difficulties commenced in 2011 when the council approached the strata and requested an inspection in accordance with the contemporary building code. Following the inspection on 14 December 2011 "in response to complaints received by council", the council issued an order under sections 121B and 121D of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act. This order required the strata owners to carry out a Building Code of Australia audit with respect to fire safety, to submit it to council and to prepare a fire and safety schedule. Although this was done, no-one told the owners what was considered unsafe. Ms Fullerton said:

I am still a bit confused as to why our building was requested to be audited by council as we were not given any reason why our building was unsafe and I still ask if a fire safety statement was issued to the council on an annual basis then why wouldn't this suffice as saying that our building has met the requirements. I feel that the council should have disclosed to us what issue was a problem that the NSW fire department thought that our building was unsafe.

After the audit was completed, the 2012 annual fire safety statement was issued in relation to the building. At the time of the annual fire statement, the strata spent \$20,000 to ensure compliance. The council inspected the premises in December 2011 and the strata manager retained consultants to protect their interest. The owners

thought the matter was resolved. However, eight months later the council was again in contact requiring another inspection. The strata management complained they were "perplexed by this", which seems something of an understatement. This has now resulted in a proposed order being served upon the owners by letter. Ms Fullerton is most concerned about this order. The possible cost involved is such that it is not affordable for these owners. Further, Ms Fullerton does not regard the building as being unsafe. A hiatus of eight months action from council tends to support her concerns. Ms Fullerton said:

I am still puzzled as to why we issue the council with a fire safety statement on an annual basis but our building is not fire safe. To me this is two sets of rules. So why then is it not mandatory for every building to have these particular requirements?

The council needs to review this issue and come to a more sensible view. There may be a perfectly reasonable explanation for its behaviour, but that does not seem to have been made clear as yet to Ms Fullerton and the other residents.

DAVIDSON RURAL FIRE BRIGADE

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson) [6.33 p.m.]: It is bushfire season, which means that throughout New South Wales more than 70,000 volunteer firefighters from 2,100 brigades in 143 rural fire districts are operational ready to fight fires in more than 95 per cent of the State. That is property protection for 1,200 residential communities. I welcomed last Friday's announcement in the media by Minister Gallacher that the NSW Rural Fire Service and other agencies are receiving a \$2.75 million funding boost at the start of a season that is predicted to have above average bushfire activity.

I have two brigades in my electorate of Davidson: Belrose brigade with 91 members and Davidson Rural Fire Brigade with 83 members. That is 174 volunteers committing to a minimum of three hours service to their community every week. Naturally, and fortunately, not all their time is spent fighting fires. Much of it is maintenance work and training, completing mundane jobs like washing fire trucks or checking the hoses and equipment. The Davidson station has an added responsibility. It is situated in Borgnis Street, a street famous for its Christmas lights, and the station has a responsibility to keep up with its neighbours. Around this time every year the residents observe the fires contributing to a wondrous Christmas scene that never fails to delight the thousands who trawl Borgnis Street every year as they donate to charity along the way.

This year the Davidson brigade has gone a step further by launching Operation Proactive, which is a massive community engagement program that will see its volunteers doorknocking on 2,700 homes to educate their residents on the bushfire survival plan: Prepare. Act. Survive. This initiative was triggered by the devastating Victorian fires of 2009. The fires are targeting houses that directly back onto bushland and the next row of houses, which is a fraction of their catchment area of 12,000 homes. The project is estimated to take two years to complete, assuming five minutes is spent educating each household. Every weekend five Davidson fires each spend three hours going from house to house to explain to residents how to save their homes and, indeed, themselves from fire. Residents are also invited to attend practical workshops to be further educated through one-on-one consultations on how best to protect their individual homes. The residents are asked to provide their contact details and any information about water sources such as tank or pool water on their properties that could be used in an emergency.

If residents are not at home, literature containing all the necessary information is left. The Davidson fires plan to visit 750 homes before Christmas and will continue in late February until the end of the season in March. Such initiatives set the Davidson brigade apart from others. Captain Trent Dowling has been captain of Davidson Rural Fire Brigade for two years, having been a member of the unit for the past 18 years since he was 16. Although he was not qualified to fight the infamous fire storm that tore through eastern New South Wales between December 1993 and January 1994, which isolated Sydney, burnt out 800,000 hectares and destroyed 206 homes, he helped friends who had lost their homes in Lindfield and joined the Rural Fire Service soon after. Trent Dowling has been involved in every major fire campaign or natural disaster since 1994. When not on the front line fighting fires, he can be found organising the logistics behind the scenes. Those who volunteer at Davidson include accountants, labourers, scientists, retirees, bus drivers, homemakers, information technology [IT] specialists and the Federal Opposition leader, Tony Abbott.

There are catering and communications units and volunteers complete specialist training in aviation, breathing apparatus, four-wheel driving, first aid and safe working on roofs. These vastly different people with vastly different skills all pull together to work in a team. These volunteers do not just fight bushfires, they also complete hazard reduction, attend car fires or accidents, help with storm damage and search and rescue, and

spend countless hours visiting schools, attending fetes and fundraising. In addition to all of this, these marvellous Davidson volunteers are now spending their weekends doorknocking to ensure that their local residents are kept safe in summer. Operation Proactive is an initiative that other brigades are sure to follow. I am proud that Davidson is leading the way.

Mr CRAIG BAUMANN (Port Stephens—Parliamentary Secretary) [6.38 p.m.]: I congratulate the member for Davidson on advising the House about the essential work that both his local Rural Fire Service volunteers and other volunteers throughout New South Wales carry out. He reminds us that the Rural Fire Service works in what many think is an inner-city electorate. We tend to forget that the Davidson electorate has vast areas of natural bushland. In my electorate there are also a number of brigades who do a fantastic job. This House hopes and prays that they all have a relatively quiet Christmas period and that nobody is seriously injured.

ALBION PARK BYPASS

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) [6.39 p.m.]: Today I advise the House of the dire need for the Albion Park bypass. Congestion and frustration go hand in hand in Albion Park. As the community has grown, so too has the need for a permanent traffic solution that will relieve a renowned bottleneck on this stretch of the Princes Highway. As the gateway to the northern Illawarra, the traffic problems experienced so frequently in Albion Park are experienced not only by local residents but by all those who commute. As someone who travels frequently through Albion Park, I attest to and support residents' calls for supporting this much-needed infrastructure project. If members need evidence to justify residents' frustrations, feedback from 15,500 drivers released by the NRMA indicated that the congested roadway was the second most hated in New South Wales, beaten only by a dangerous stretch of the Pacific Highway near Urunga. Jenny Edwell, a local resident of Albion Park Rail, expressed her concerns about what the lack of a bypass has done to property prices in the Albion Park and Albion Park Rail area. As Mrs Edwell advised me, it is not only the traffic and congestion; it is the lack of certainty that has exacerbated the problems of those attempting to sell their properties.

Shellharbour City Council has identified this project as a priority and I have been contacted by councillors Kellie Marsh and Helen Stewart about the need to progress this matter. Bypasses often attract controversy, with business and residents being at opposite ends of the debate. That has not occurred in this instance—in fact, not by a long shot. Jim McCallum, the president of the Albion Park Chamber of Commerce and operator of the Ravensthorpe Function Centre, has been unequivocal that the chamber supports the Albion Park bypass, subject to an appropriate route being selected. In what can be considered only as a blatant act of political opportunism, members of the New South Wales Labor Party have, after 16 years in office, raised their concerns about this issue. Congestion on the Princes Highway through Albion Park did not emerge with the change of government—it is an issue that the Labor Government conveniently ignored. I do, however, acknowledge the efforts of Bob Harrison, who did seek to progress this issue during his time as the member for Kiama.

As they did with the Labor Government's fence through the central business district of Albion Park on Tongarra Road and its push for the Calderwood development on a flood plain, members opposite treated the people of Albion Park with complete and utter contempt. The Labor Government took the people of Albion Park for granted simply because it thought it could. I advise the House that as the new local member I simply will not stand for it. I will not allow the people of my community to be overlooked, and I will speak up on their behalf. In contrast with the Labor Government's record, I am very pleased that the new Minister for Roads and Ports, the Hon. Duncan Gay, MLC, has listened to my calls for action. The State budget contains an allocation of \$100,000 to start the necessary planning work for route selection. That money was obtained in my first 16 months in government. I ask members to contrast this with the Labor Party's inaction during its 16 years in government. Once this initial work is completed, I will seek further funds from the Government to prepare the planning, route selection and design.

Tragedy on the Princes Highway is something my electorate knows all too well. One of the reasons I stood for Parliament was to see real action on the Princes Highway. As members are well aware, work is underway on the largest-ever investment in the history of the Princes Highway, at Gerringong—a section of the highway where far too many crosses adorn the roadside. In fact, the New South Wales Government has committed to spending \$500 million on the Princes Highway in its first term in office. These funds will see the Gerringong section completed and commencement of work on the Foxground and Berry bypass. It is worth noting that the people of Berry have been waiting for their bypass since 1955. Should the time line for this road be met, the Berry bypass should be completed by 2018—some 63 years after it was first mooted.

Given the size of my electorate, work on the highway further south, whilst welcomed by my electorate, will not resolve the problems in Albion Park. I make this point in the context of funding and funding arrangements elsewhere in this State. While the Federal Labor Government insists on a 50:50 funding arrangement with the New South Wales Government for the Pacific Highway, it continues to refuse New South Wales Government requests for the same arrangements for the Princes Highway. Why is it good enough for the Pacific Highway but not good enough for the Princes Highway? I call on the Federal Coalition and the Federal Labor Government to make commitments to the Princes Highway and to meet the New South Wales Government halfway in relation to its already stated \$500 million commitment to the Princes Highway.

I understand that funds are tight and I understand also that the New South Wales Government has made record contributions towards our Princes Highway in its first term of office. However, that will not deter me from ensuring that governments at all levels are acutely aware of the need to progress this matter. While most reasonable people do not expect this problem to be fixed tomorrow—nor would a politician be believed if he said it would—our community does expect to see the Government make an effort to do something about congestion at Albion Park. I ask all sides of the political divide to work together and put politics to one side to get results. I place the House on notice that I will ensure that this issue never goes away. While I am prepared to be patient, I am not prepared to be ignored.

Private members' statements concluded.

MISCELLANEOUS ACTS AMENDMENT (DIRECTORS' LIABILITY) BILL 2012

Message received from the Legislative Council returning the bill without amendment.

**The House adjourned, pursuant to standing and sessional orders, at 6.44 p.m. until
Wednesday 21 November 2012 at 10.00 a.m.**
