

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Thursday 22 November 2012

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

The Speaker read the Prayer and acknowledgement of country.

PORTS ASSETS (AUTHORISED TRANSACTIONS) BILL 2012

SAINT JOHN'S COLLEGE AMENDMENT BILL 2012

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

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Notices of Motions

General Business Notices of Motions (General Notices) given.

DISTINGUISHED VISITOR

The SPEAKER: I welcome to the Chamber the Hon. Brian Langton, former Minister for Transport and former member for Kogarah.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Postponement of Business

General Business Notice of Motion (for Bills) No. 2 postponed by Mr Paul Lynch.

General Business Notice of Motion (for Bills) No. 3 postponed by Mr Paul Lynch.

GOVERNMENT INFORMATION (PUBLIC ACCESS) AMENDMENT (REMOVAL OF APPLICATION FEE) BILL 2012

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 22 November 2012.

Mr GREG SMITH (Epping—Attorney General, and Minister for Justice) [10.10 a.m.]: The Government opposes the Government Information (Public Access) Amendment (Removal of Application Fee) Bill. The bill proposes to amend the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 to abolish the current \$30 application fee imposed by the previous Labor Government for formal applications for government information under the Act.

The SPEAKER: The Leader of the Opposition will listen to the debate in silence. The Attorney General has the call.

Mr GREG SMITH: The second reading speech of the member for Blacktown on the bill states that removing the application fee will improve transparency and accountability. However, it is the Government's view that the bill is unlikely to achieve the goal stated in the bill's second reading speech. The abolition of the application fee will have a negative impact on agencies by increasing the number and scope of applications made. Application fees can be useful for agencies in managing applications for information. The impact on agencies as a result of removing the application fee will mean that applicants could also be disadvantaged by increasing the processing times, making it more difficult to access information in a timely manner. This means

the bill will have an effect counter to the purposes that the bill seeks to achieve—that is, the bill will have the effect of undermining the transparency and accountability goals of the Government Information (Public Access) Act.

The current \$30 fee in New South Wales is not disproportionate to the fees that apply in other Australian jurisdictions. For example, in Victoria the current fee is \$25.06; in Queensland, the application fee is \$40.50, which may not be waived. Application fees under the Commonwealth Freedom of Information Act 1982 were abolished in 2010, but the Commonwealth Office of the Australian Information Commissioner has recommended the reintroduction of a discretionary application fee of \$50 that agencies may impose on applicants who have not first tried to get the information informally. The Commonwealth Government has not yet responded to this recommendation. The Government Information (Public Access) Act allows New South Wales agencies to waive application fees and encourages the proactive public disclosure of government information by agencies.

The Act also encourages agencies to informally release government information without the need for a formal Government Information (Public Access) Act application. In his 2009 review of the Freedom of Information Act 1989, the New South Wales Ombudsman rejected the abolition of freedom of information application fees because a free service would ignore the significant public resources that are committed to administering the system and could potentially lead to abuse of the system. That is what the Opposition wants: abuse of the system. I acknowledge that the Coalition policy document from 2008 includes a commitment to abolish fees for applications under the then Freedom of Information Act. Let me set the record straight: That commitment was made in the context of a broader commitment to improve accountability and transparency through better access to information.

I note that the Leader of the Opposition has left the Chamber rather than listen to my speech to the second reading debate. The Government Information (Public Access) Act arguably promotes the wider goals better than the Freedom of Information Act did. As a result, the commitment that related specifically to the Freedom of Information Act is no longer relevant. The Information and Privacy Commission has indicated that it does not believe the bill will achieve its stated goal. It considers that any claim of accountability or transparency benefits achieved by the abolition of an application fee will be outweighed by the extra administrative burden placed on agencies by increased numbers of applications.

The Opposition has decided to use an important piece of legislation as a political ploy. The purpose of the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 is to increase transparency and accountability in Government activity. Clearly, the Opposition has resorted to political tactics by referring to previous Coalition policies and introducing these types of bills into the House in an attempt to bluff the public into thinking they relate to the same legislation when they do not. By doing so, the Opposition has failed to consider the substance and significant effect of such a bill. The Opposition's bill will have the effect of countering what the Government Information (Public Access) Act seeks to achieve, which is increased accountability, transparency and scrutiny of government in New South Wales. It is for these reasons that the Government opposes the honourable member's bill.

Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron) [10.17 a.m.]: I have not seen the learned Attorney General thump a lectern since he appeared in the criminal courts of New South Wales when he was trying to have innocent people locked up in the State's institutions. As a senior member of the Bar, I know that the Attorney General understands the importance of democracy. This bill does more than just apply Liberal-Nationals Government policy. It relates to a significant feature of democracy in this State. I invite the House to turn its attention to a quotation from Andrew Puddephatt's work entitled, "Freedom of Expression—The Essentials of Human Rights", published in 2005. On page 128 he says:

Freedom of information is an extension of freedom of speech, a fundamental human right recognized in international law, which is totally understood more generally as freedom of expression in any medium, be it orally, in writing, print, through the Internet or through art forms. This means that the protection of freedom of speech as a right includes not only the content, but also the means of expression.

This bill proposes to make it easier and cheaper for citizens in this democracy to access government and publicly owned material. All we heard from the learned Attorney General was a response that I recall having heard many years ago in that famous television series *Yes, Minister*. Sir Humphrey Appleby stated in an episode about open government:

Freedom of information. We always tell the press freely and frankly anything that they could easily find out some other way.

That is the only time the Attorney General believes freedom of information should apply. People are entitled to information without fee as long as the request is not unreasonable; they should not be required to pay for the first hour of government officials' time. Contrary to what the Attorney General said, this bill simply enacts an O'Farrell Government policy and its mandate. Because the Attorney General and other members opposite do not appear to know their own Government's policy I will enlighten them:

The NSW Liberal/Nationals Coalition believes that the community has the right to openness, accountability and transparency when it comes to Government decision making and information.

The NSW Liberal/Nationals Coalition commits to open government through the highest standards of public access to Government information, including the best practice in Freedom of Information (FOI) processes.

I will not read the entire policy statement, but it concludes:

Key reforms under a NSW Liberal/Nationals Government will be ...

—Abolish FOI application fees.

That is the Government's policy and it is part of its overwhelming mandate. I will read it again for the benefit of members opposite so that they understand the basis upon which the people of New South Wales supported them:

Key reforms under a NSW Liberal/Nationals Government will be ...

—Abolish FOI application fees.

It is clear and concise. There is no qualification like that proffered by the Attorney General in his channelling of Sir Humphrey Appleby. It is without question that freedom of information processes, the Government Information (Public Access) Act and any other requirement to provide information is a nuisance to governments. No government likes the media or the Opposition demanding access to information that may be used to embarrass it or which may be misquoted. However, the difficulty facing the Government in opposing this legislation is that it merely expressly states what members opposite promised the electorate. One of the things that bring politicians into disrepute is that they will say anything to be elected but then when they are elected they pretend that they did not say something or they ignore it. Members opposite interject, but—

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Castle Hill and the member for Charlestown will come to order.

Mr RON HOENIG: I will read their Government's policy statement again because members opposite seem to have forgotten what they promised. It states:

Key reforms under a NSW Liberal/Nationals Government will be ...

—Abolish FOI application fees.

The Government is simply being asked to support legislation that will implement what members opposite promised the people of New South Wales. It is their mandate. Much of the information that governments would prefer not to provide is misused in the popular press. We are reaching that stage of the year when the popular press, and probably even the broadsheets, start publishing articles about how much Ministers and members have spent. That is standard practice in December and January and no-one likes it. Unfortunately, poor public policy is developed in response. I predict that someone will criticise the Premier for the amount he spent travelling to India on a trade mission. That would be outrageous if it was of benefit to the people of New South Wales. I do not care what it cost because the benefits accrued to the State would be huge.

However, policy decisions are made for political reasons in an attempt to defend ridiculous propositions. My stomach turned when the entitlements of former premiers were removed simply because the popular press revealed their cost. Shortly after I was elected, probably the greatest Premier of this State, the Hon. Neville Wran, sent me a message from his nursing home. The message was delivered to me by his trustee, who told me that it would be the last thing he would ever write.

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

Mr RON HOENIG: It brought tears to my eyes to think that the last thing Neville Wran would write was a message of good wishes on my election. At about that time the Government removed his entitlements. Of

course, they would not have had to pay them for very much longer. That sort of poor public policy is often developed in response to material provided under the freedom of information legislation and that makes governments reluctant to provide it. We must all be bigger than that; we should be able to cop it on the chin. Ultimately, this is more important than the popular press criticising politicians or governments about material that should be freely available, particularly to the poor. This is about freedom of speech and enhancing democracy.

There is nothing wrong with the Liberal-Nationals policy on freedom of information, and that policy is covered by this bill. Freedom of information is an important part of democracy. Attempting to frustrate an opposition obtaining information to use to criticise a government and to hold it to account is a fundamental part of democracy. I ask members opposite to carefully consider supporting this bill, which simply enacts the right policy—in fact, the Liberal-Nationals policy—and which will enhance democracy in this State. I urge them not simply to make a political decision to knock it off because it was introduced by the Leader of the Opposition. They should be bigger than that.

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET (Castle Hill) [10.27 a.m.]: After careful consideration, I oppose the Government Information (Public Access) Amendment (Removal of application Fee) Bill 2012. I will address a couple of issues that the member for Heffron and the Leader of the Opposition raised in their contributions. They focused on two issues: accountability and transparency and the alleged hypocrisy in the Government's opposing of a bill that deals with a Liberal-Nationals freedom of information election policy. It is very rich for members opposite to lecture the Government about accountability and transparency.

Mr Ron Hoenig: It is all about your policy.

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET: I will get to that. If this issue was so important, why did the Labor Government do nothing about it for 16 long years? I will focus on the Opposition's intention in introducing this bill. There is no doubt that there is a good intention behind it. However, the road to hell is paved with good intentions. In its short term in office this Government has shown that it is generally focused on accountability and transparency. It would support the bill if it believed it would achieve its aim. But, as the Attorney General who led for the Government stated eloquently in opposing the bill, if the small \$30 fee is abolished experience in other jurisdictions has shown that the number of vexatious applications will increase. In turn, this will slow down the processing of genuine freedom of information applications.

As the Attorney General said, a similar fee is imposed in other jurisdictions, including Queensland and Victoria, to ensure the smooth running of the applications process. The fee is not an impediment to making publicly available information regarding Government decisions or any of the other information that the member for Heffron mentioned. Only genuine applications will be accepted. The Information and Privacy Commission has indicated that it does not believe the bill will achieve its stated goals. It considers any claimed accountability or transparency benefits that might be achieved by the abolition of an application fee would be outweighed by the extra administrative burden placed on agencies by the increased number of applications that would stem from abolishing—

Mr Ron Hoenig: And shredding documents.

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET: I am not talking about shredding documents. A lot of shredding of documents occurred in the final days of the former Government. For example, application fees under the Commonwealth Freedom of Information Act were abolished in 2010 and many Commonwealth agencies subsequently experienced an increase in applications. Consequently, the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner has recommended the reintroduction of a discretionary application fee. I refer also to the perceived hypocrisy of the member for Heffron and the Leader of the Opposition in claiming that this is somehow a broken promise.

Mr Ron Hoenig: It is.

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET: The member for Heffron says that it is a broken promise; it is not. As the Attorney General said in opposing the bill, the proposal by the then Opposition was made prior to the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009. In 2008, in referring to the Freedom of Information Act, the then Opposition issued a policy stating that it would abolish the fee. Subsequent to that policy, the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 came into force. The Government is of the view that it deals better with the issues of accountability and transparency that were then tied up in the Freedom of Information Act.

This Government will not be lectured by those opposite about broken promises. The member for Heffron said that electorates have been misled about the \$30 freedom of information application fee. So that is the reason Labor has only 19 members in this Chamber! I guarantee Opposition members that people in the Hills district, who are facing rising electricity prices and who cannot get to the city, are not sitting at home worrying about a little \$30 application fee. It is ridiculous. Is that the best the Opposition can do: try to catch out the Government on a broken promise made when a commitment was given in a different context about legislation that was subsequently passed? This Government will not be lectured by the Opposition about broken promises.

The former Government promised repeatedly to build the North West Rail Link in the Hills district and scrapped its plans three times. Then it said it did not have the money to build the link but announced two weeks later that it could build the Rozelle metro, which was also never built. They are broken promises. It is ridiculous that the Opposition's big move before the end of 2012—its big "gotcha" to the Government—is the abolition of the \$30 freedom of information application fee. We are in trouble! I am afraid to go to my schools—we are heading into the school presentation season—and I am worried about our electoral futures because the Opposition says the Government has turned its back and broken a promise that was made in a different context.

In responding to the Attorney General the member for Heffron failed to address the context in which we made the commitment in opposition. I look forward to hearing the next Opposition member who speaks to the bill—I expect it will be the member for Macquarie Fields—explain how the Government broke a promise that it made before the Government Information (Public Access) Act was in force. We made a commitment and then another Act came into force that we believe deals with the issues of accountability and transparency. It is the height of hypocrisy for Opposition members to lecture this Government about broken promises, particularly in respect of accountability and transparency.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD (Macquarie Fields) [10.37 a.m.]: I do not know whether to laugh or cry after listening to the contributions of those opposite in relation to the Government Information (Public Access) Amendment (Removal of Application Fee) Bill 2012. I do not know whether to laugh at their complete U-turn on their principles, which I will read into *Hansard*, or to cry because they were right. The Liberal Party document "Restoring Your Right to Know: Improving Freedom of Information in NSW", dated October 2008, gets it right. It states:

The NSW Liberal/Nationals coalition supports the NSW Ombudsman's comment that "*effective freedom of information legislation is central to our system of government. It helps to ensure that government decision making is open and transparent, and that decision makers can be held accountable for their decisions and acts.*"

Key reforms under a NSW Liberal/Nationals Government will be:

- pro-active disclosure of Government information as a guiding principle
- a "one-stop on-line shop" for information from all Government agencies
- enforced public disclosure of Government contracts and grants
- appointment of a fully independent Open Government Commissioner
- no cost for FOI applications and the establishment of mandatory deadlines.

Fundamentally, the NSW Liberal/National Coalition's approach is about creating a culture and systems in Government that presume that sharing information is the norm—rather than being selective in its release or holding onto it and waiting for FOI requests.

Ultimately, the people of NSW have the right to know how they are being governed.

That document is correct. As members well know, it should be the norm. Few members opposite have chosen to make a contribution to this debate but, surprisingly, the member for Castle Hill did. The Attorney General's contribution was extremely brief—in fact, it was probably one of the briefest speeches I have ever heard him make. This bill will be defeated on the numbers. Those opposite know that by voting against the bill they are opposing their own policy. They also know that this document, which makes no reference to the relevant Act, is a principle of good government in 2012. This is a great example of a government turning its back on the principles it espoused in opposition. Those opposite know that the 2008 Liberal-Nationals document outlines the correct way to govern in a modern system. In opposing this bill those opposite doth protest too much.

In a brilliant Spann Oration at Parliament House two nights ago Anna Bligh was asked a question about the modern leader. She replied—and I paraphrase what she said—that some things have not changed since

Napoleon. She said that leadership is all about knowing where you are going, how you are going to get there and bringing the people with you. All members will no doubt agree with that comment. However, the change since Napoleon is that never before have governments had so much information on which to base decisions. I note that the Treasurer is at the table. Governments must make difficult decisions and governments since Napoleon have never had so much information available to them. It does not do those opposite any justice to oppose the release of this information, nor is it fair to the people of New South Wales. It is about taxpayers' money. The decisions made by Government determine the futures of the people of this State.

The Government ignores the wisdom of the crowd at its peril. If those opposite are as good as they say they are then the truth shall set them free. If those opposite are the good and decent people they claim to be—and most of them are—they have nothing to fear from releasing the information they hold. If those opposite are governing in the public good they will have the support of the wisdom of the crowd. Health is a good example. The O'Farrell Government has put up the shutters on the health information that was freely available under the previous Labor Government. It is reminiscent of the bad old days when doctors did not tell patients what was wrong with them. That is not fair or acceptable in 2012. Modern health care is the most complex thing that the human race has ever undertaken. Health is one of many competing priorities and has the most funding in the budget.

Worldwide the science is clear: If people know how the health system is functioning their wisdom will help to direct health policy. The first thing that our 100,000 health workers would do, with insider knowledge of the system, is go to the most efficient health unit and use fewer health resources than the general population. Those health workers know what works and what does not work. It is about time the remaining seven million people in this State were privy to the secrets held by this Government. The Government claims to have created 2,900 extra nursing jobs. Basic information about the types of nurses they will be and where they will work—information available to the Government—could and should be shared with the people of New South Wales. What about the 2,009 extra beds that the Government created out of nothing in the NSW Health annual report? It would not be difficult to explain how that number was arrived at or what these beds, treatment spaces, chairs, cots and people's homes represent. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

What about the \$3 billion funding cut that is the source of much of the pain currently being felt in the health system? What about the 775 labour expense cap—which really means "cut"—and the \$2.2 billion so-called efficiency dividends that will translate to job losses? If the Government is serious about addressing the challenges of the modern health system it must explain its actions to the people of this State. The Government bases its decisions on the data it holds and the interests of the people of this State are best served by sharing that information. The previous Government made surgical waiting lists available. In opposition, the shadow Minister for Health, now the Minister, issued an enormous number of press releases about the surgical lists. Those lists are no longer available. The last we heard of them was in March 2012. Now, eight months later, we have no idea how many people are awaiting surgery in New South Wales, and the Government will not tell us.

The \$30 application fee is designed to restrict the amount of information emanating from government. The questions on notice that were asked of the Government about hospital performance on a day in August last year are a classic example of that. That data is sitting on the Minister's desk. It would take someone only 30 seconds to photocopy that data and release it to the public. The \$30 application fee is designed to stop that data ever seeing the light of day. It is about restricting healthcare information and keeping it from the people of this State. That makes it harder for health workers because it creates distrust in our health system—one of the world's better health systems. It is not fair to the future of the health system because its sustainability is an issue that all political parties must confront.

Education is another example. I spoke yesterday of the 138 most important constituents in my electorate—namely, the 138 children at Guise Public School—whose National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy results are below the average for children in this State. Their funding has been cut and they will lose their school principal. The Government knows that those cuts will severely hamper the future of those children. The Government has the information on which that decision was based yet it will not release it publically. Why? It is because public scrutiny would reveal to the Government that those 138 children are more important than many other Government priorities, such as a third State of Origin match. There are more appropriate ways of spending government money, and the future of these children, which has been hampered by funding cuts, should be one of the most important priorities. The people of New South Wales will make their decisions at the ballot box but they will be better able to do that if they have access to all available information.

Another example of the need for freedom of information is the extra \$1 billion in the budget found by the Auditor-General. When people outside government examine the State's books objectively any mistakes, disagreements and discrepancies that arise can be discussed sensibly in this place and in the wider community.

The best thing any government can do for the people of any State is to share the information it holds. Governments are supposed to govern in the public good and use available information to make decisions. The comments by those opposite about a change of Act amount to nothing more than meaningless rhetoric—and they know it. The principles they have espoused are clear and they will not be altered by a change of Act. A principle of good government is to take the people with you and governments do this when they give people the accurate data that drives government decisions. That is good government and good policy. The Government should hang its head in shame for abandoning one of its better policies and one that deserves the bipartisan support of all governments in this country.

Mr ANDREW CORNWELL (Charlestown) [10.49 a.m.]: I oppose the Government Information (Public Access) Amendment (Removal of Application Fee) Bill 2012. The bill aims to amend the Government Information (Public Access) Act to remove the current requirement to pay a \$30 fee when making an application or other request for government information under the Act and moves to provide that, if any processing charge is imposed for dealing with an access application, the first hour of dealing with the application is to be free of charge. The Government opposes the bill as it is unlikely to achieve the goals stated in the second reading speech. The abolition of application fees would have a negative impact on agencies by increasing the number and scope of applications made and would undermine the transparency and accountability goals of the Government Information (Public Access) Act.

The impact on agencies would mean that applicants could also be disadvantaged as processing times would increase, making it more difficult to access information. Application fees are also useful for agencies in managing applications for information—for example, by providing a mechanism to negotiate the scope of applications with the applicants. In 2008 the Labor Government released a policy document promising to abolish freedom of information application fees. While members opposite have criticised the Government's opposition to a bill that purports to carry out a Coalition policy commitment, the commitment was made in the context of a broader commitment to improve accountability and transparency through better access to information.

The introduction of the Government Information (Public Access) Act in 2009 arguably promotes these wider goals better than the Freedom of Information Act. As a result the commitment, which related specifically to the Freedom of Information Act, is no longer relevant. The Information and Privacy Commission has indicated that it does not believe the bill will achieve its stated goals, and it considers any claimed accountability or transparency benefits that might have been achieved by the abolition of an application fee would be outweighed by the extra administrative burden placed on agencies by an increased number of applications. I will highlight how one individual can impose an enormous burden on government. I draw the attention of members to a recent newspaper article relating to Henry Romanowski, who has complained about aircraft noise 19,600 times in 12 months.

Mr David Elliott: He lives in Kellyville.

Mr ANDREW CORNWELL: I acknowledge the interjection of the member for Baulkham Hills. That is an average of one complaint every 20 minutes the airport is open. The 64-year-old is responsible for almost two-thirds of all aircraft noise complaints made to Airservices Australia in Sydney over the past year. His nearest rival is a person who lives a few kilometres from the airport, at Eastlakes, who has lodged 4,312 complaints. Mr Romanowski's argument is:

It's not a nuisance. It's a form of complaint that you can do publicly that the government has set up.

While I do not question his passion or motives, the number of complaints indicates that one person can put so many sticks in the government cogs that the machine can stop working. If people make vexatious or nuisance freedom of information or Government Information (Public Access) Act applications they can cost government departments and other agencies thousands of dollars to process. Members opposite have used this debate to grandstand about government savings and budget cuts. In a tight fiscal environment we should think about the effect on, say, a university that is subject to the Government Information (Public Access) Act. Most universities have a full-time employee actively dealing with Government Information (Public Access) Act applications, with the \$30 fee, under the current arrangement.

Universities are afraid that removal of the \$30 fee could result in the number of applications multiplying tenfold or a hundredfold. That would result in decreased services for students and increased costs to universities, and it would affect people's ability to deliver better educational outcomes for our kids. Some applications request information from 20 years ago. People have a right to make Government Information (Public Access) Act applications but they are subject potentially to misuse. Members opposite also raised the issue of accountability. They asserted that the Government is trying to reduce accountability and scrutiny. I cast my mind back to December 2010. The \$30 fee for Government Information (Public Access) Act applications

pales in comparison to the prorogation of Parliament. Proroguing Parliament in 2010 to stop the proper examination of giving away State assets under the gentrader deal is a most breathtaking example of reduced scrutiny. So it is a little rich for members opposite to lecture us on that point.

The member for Heffron insinuated that the \$30 application fee was some sort of electoral turning point. I argue that the prorogation of Parliament had much more of an electoral impact than the imposition or maintenance of a \$30 application fee for a Government Information (Public Access) Act application ever would. Today, in the lead-up to Christmas, members opposite are trying to find some relevance on an issue but, frankly, it pales in comparison. To be lectured on this issue by members opposite is a bit rich. My only disappointment is that the member for Maroubra is not here, because one person who would benefit from removal of the fee is that doyen of middle managers, the member for Maroubra. Imagine the increase in middle management that would result from opening up, carte blanche, Government Information (Public Access) Act applications.

Organisations, businesses, government departments and other government agencies that are getting on with delivering services to the community would end up with a reduced number of people on the front line and a bloated middle management dealing with thousands of difficult, potentially vexatious and problematic Government Information (Public Access) Act applications that have no relevance to the actual service delivery of those organisations. I oppose the bill. We are approaching the silly season and Christmas, and the Opposition has a few putting-tinsel-on-the-top types of bills. The Government is right to maintain the fee; otherwise we would end up with thousands of Government Information (Public Access) Act applications that would result in reduced services for the community, for which people voted on 26 March last year.

Mr JAMIE PARKER (Balmain) [10.57 a.m.]: I speak on behalf of The Greens on the Government Information (Public Access) Amendment (Removal of Application Fee) Bill 2012. It is a private member's bill proposed by Labor. Members have been talking about the importance of public access to information. This bill suggests that the first application fee of \$30 that is charged for what is called a Government Information (Public Access) Act application should be abolished. We have heard a range of arguments as to why the Government considers that it is not a good idea. Of course, we recognise that public access to information is central to open, transparent and accountable government. We have also heard arguments as to why the \$30 application fee should not be permitted. I will address those arguments directly.

The member for Charlestown argued that there would be a deluge of applications, that the public would rise up and submit thousands of applications. Where is the evidence for that? I will provide the evidence, which demonstrates that the counterpoint is true. When I became Mayor of Leichhardt in 2008 the council abolished the \$30 application fee for information—what used to be called freedom of information requests—which was in line with the Coalition's position in 2008. Thousands of Government Information (Public Access) Act applications are dealt with by Municipal Leichhardt Council. Was there an explosion in applications? No. Was there a massive increase because the first \$30 was abolished? No.

What people tend to forget and what speakers have not adequately addressed is that the fee of \$30 includes the first hour of processing. If someone lodges a government information public access [GIPA] application and it involves 30 hours of processing, those people are charged a per hour processing fee of around \$30. If a submission involved 10 hours of work, the person who lodged it would be charged \$300. That would be the fee for making that government information public access application. There is no financial reason why people would then lodge frivolous or vexatious applications for government information, yet that seems to be one of the main arguments put forward by Government members as to why this worthwhile idea should not proceed.

We have clear evidence—and there may well be other councils that have implemented the same policy—which demonstrates that the abolition of the application fee does not lead to a tsunami of applications or a bloating of bureaucracy and does not lead to any additional costs because all the hours spent on an application by a member of the public seeking information from the Government are charged at the rate of \$30 per hour. The argument put by Government members, in my view, clearly has no basis and should not be supported. The obvious question is: Why do it? If it will not lead to more applications, why do it? There are very important reasons why the Coalition Government proposed this in 2008 and took it to the election in 2011. It is a very powerful and symbolic message that says: "We encourage and welcome applications. We want you to lodge applications. We want to be open and transparent, and we encourage people to seek detailed information from Government." It sends a very strong message to the community and I would have thought the Government would be delighted to do that.

If the Government had been on its toes and introduced this legislation itself, I suspect it would have passed, but because the Leader of the Opposition is proposing it I suggest the Government is a bit more sheepish about supporting it. The Government would not like to see the Opposition have a win on this matter. It is clear that this would send a very strong message. That is why the Coalition included it in its policy document in

2008 and it remained until 2011. We know it does not lead to a significant impact in terms of processing times or applications. We know that it sends a very powerful, positive, symbolic message and, by reducing the \$30 application fee, makes that small difference to local residents action groups, community members or people who may be sitting in the gallery and decide they would like to make a submission to government after not being able to get information in less formal ways.

We know there is open access to information and we know that information can be released proactively with no charge, but if you cannot get the facts from a government department, if you cannot get the details from government, there is a legislative mechanism to do that: the Government Information (Public Access) Act, formerly known as freedom of information. You can lodge a formal application and the agency or university or government department—whatever it is—is required by law to follow a range of steps in order to return that information to you as a citizen of the community. It seems clear to me that this idea, which was a policy position of the former Government, is good policy and it should be implemented. It sends a symbolic message and will not have a negative impact. These issues are important and need to be strongly supported, but I will take a few minutes to talk about the importance of not just the \$30 application fee, but of the Government supporting the Office of the Information Commissioner, in particular the case work and compliance team.

I have previously mentioned issues regarding Barangaroo. Members will know that it is my view that the Treasury of New South Wales received massively less revenue—close to a billion dollars—as a result of the Barangaroo transaction and one of the processes for us trying to access more detailed information about that was the government information public access process. I have highlighted before, and I repeat, that at that time the Office of the Information Commissioner casework and compliance team sent emails saying that they had a full caseload of reviews and complaints and the request would not be allocated until a review officer became available. They were experiencing delays in allocating new cases and would update me, as the person requested it, if it had not been allocated within the next six to eight weeks. So we know that sometimes government information public access requests are not even allocated to a staff member for six to eight weeks. That is not satisfactory.

If the Government cannot see its way through to supporting the \$30 reduction, it would be worthwhile for the Government to outline how it will be able to deal with what is a significant caseload, in particular for the Office of the Information Commissioner, because the question is obviously what level of resourcing that organisation has and whether the opportunities for people to gather information from government are sufficient when it comes to resourcing the department in that area. I conclude by highlighting that the abolition of this \$30 fee does not mean that all government information public access applications are now free and everyone can make frivolous claims, which was at the heart of some of the contributions we heard today. There are still legitimate charges to cover the costs of searching for the information required by the person or organisation making the application. From my perspective and that of The Greens, we have implemented this policy in areas of local government where The Greens have a majority or have been able to put this through with the support of other parties.

In the Leichhardt municipality, where thousands of government information public access requests are received, the \$30 fee was abolished, and that was received incredibly well by the local community. It sent a powerful message that we are about encouraging people to make contributions and it reduced by just a little the cost for people to receive the information that they are looking for. We heard one member speak about a gentleman who made lots of complaints to a telephone line. That is not relevant here. This is about seeking specific information and allowing the public to have faith and confidence in their Government, so that transparency and openness—the promises they were given—are what they receive. I support the bill introduced by the Leader of the Opposition. It is a useful bill. It will make a significant difference in terms of symbolism, as I have outlined, in reducing costs without having a negative impact on agencies or departments. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON (Blacktown—Leader of the Opposition) [11.06 a.m.], in reply: I thank all members for their contributions, some quite useful and some quite insightful. In particular, I refer to the contribution made by the member for Epping, the State's Attorney General. I am not sure if he is applying for a job at the *Gruen Transfer*, where you try to spin your way out of all sorts of difficult situations. On a very serious note, I am slightly concerned that the Attorney General talked about this no longer applying as a promise by the Government because its commitment was only made in relation to the Government Information (Public Access) Act. I have a copy of a page from the website of the Liberals and Nationals parties that was updated on 17 February 2011. Amongst other things, it says that in government the New South Wales Liberals and Nationals will pursue an era of open government.

The document lists a series of bullet points, but the one that is quite telling refers to no cost for applications and the establishment of mandatory deadlines. This is from February 2011, just five weeks prior to the election. I am worried that the Attorney General really has no appreciation of what he has done, or

alternately is simply looking for a way to justify a significant broken promise on the part of the O'Farrell Government. I am sure it must be embarrassing for new members of Parliament, particularly the member for Charlestown, to have campaigned on an issue like this, told their constituencies that they were going to introduce fee-free applications for government information, and then be forced to read a speech onto the *Hansard* defending the indefensible. What I have heard so far from those on the other side is excuses, but I have seen no accountability when it comes to the promises they made.

Clearly, we had a Premier who was elected to this job in March last year promising open, honest and accountable government. One of the most critical ways you can do that is through the government information public access process. But what we see after they arrive in government is yet another broken promise because it is inconvenient. Instead of a Premier that is focused on making sure he keeps his promises, we have a Premier who, for the first six months, pranced around as though he was some sort of celebrity who had won a television popularity show as opposed to getting on with the job. I think it was called "New South Wales Has No Talent". We have a Premier who, instead of keeping his promise to the people of New South Wales because he has nothing to hide, gets into office and breaks promise after promise after promise.

Whether it is investing in more public sector workers, not selling off electricity assets or Port Botany, we have a Premier who not only does not want to keep his promises but does not want to be held to account because he does not want the information released. This bill simply seeks to ensure that this Government keeps its promise to the people of New South Wales, but not only do Government members break their promises outside the Chamber and introduce legislation that breaks those promises, they will now vote against a bill that would have seen them required to keep those promises. I commend the bill to the House.

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

The House divided.

Ayes, 22

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

Noes, 63

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

Pair

Ms Noreen Hay

Mrs Roza Sage

Question resolved in the negative.**Motion negatived.****Bill not read a second time.****COMMUNITY RECOGNITION NOTICES****Question—That the following motions given by the members as indicated pursuant to notice be formally agreed to—proposed.****TRIATHLETE EMMETT KARSTROM****Mr ANDREW GEE**—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Mudgee triathlete, Emmett Karstrom, on representing Australia at the 2012 International Triathlon Union Championships held in Auckland, New Zealand.
- (2) Notes that Emmett was selected to represent Australia in the men's 18 to 19 years age group.
- (3) Notes that Emmett was joined at the championships by his brother Charlie who was representing the United States in the men's 25 to 29 years age group.

MUDGE WOMBATS RUGBY CLUB LIFE MEMBER BRETT SWORDS**Mr ANDREW GEE**—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Brett Swords on being awarded life membership of the Mudgee Wombats Rugby Union Club.
- (2) Notes that Brett announced his retirement from playing with the Wombats club at the conclusion of the Wombats' 2012 premiership season.
- (3) Acknowledges that Brett has been integral in the Wombats' successes during his 27-year playing career, in which he spent all but eight playing with the Wombats.
- (4) Notes that for the past 11 years Brett has combined playing duties with the club's administration, including two years as president, and plans to continue on the club's committee.

MATT SANDELL AUSTRALIAN SCHOOLBOYS RUGBY TEAM SELECTION**Mr ANDREW GEE**—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Mudgee rugby union rising talent Matt Sandell on his selection for the Australian Schoolboys touring team.
- (2) Notes that Matt was a front row forward in the team that toured New Zealand and Fiji, winning against both host nations, and returned with the Trans-Tasman Shield for matches between Australia and New Zealand.
- (3) Wishes Matt Sandell every success in his quest to win Australian Schoolboys colours again in 2013.

COUNTRY WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION LONG SERVICE BADGE RECIPIENT RUBY GOSSAGE**Mr ANDREW GEE**—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Gulgong Country Women's Association [CWA] member, Ruby Gossage, on being awarded a CWA Long Service Badge.
- (2) Notes that Ruby joined the Gulgong CWA in 1973 and has held many positions with the branch, including her current role of vice president.
- (3) Thanks Ruby for her dedication to the CWA and wishes her well in the future.

TRIBUTE TO MICHAEL CREIGHTON**Mr ANDREW GEE**—That this House:

- (1) Acknowledges the passing of Cooyal resident Michael Creighton.

- (2) Notes that Michael Creighton was a pioneer of the olive industry in the Mudgee district and will be remembered for introducing Tablescape at the 1996 Mudgee Wine Festival—an event that recognised the region's history of art, food and culture.
- (3) Offers condolences to Michael Creighton's partner and family.

SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL SOCIETY

Mr GLENN BROOKES—That this House:

- (1) Recognises that the feast day of Saint Vincent de Paul was held on 27 September 2012.
- (2) Commends the 40,000 dedicated members and volunteers of the Saint Vincent de Paul Society in Australia who assist people in need and work tirelessly to combat social injustice.
- (3) Acknowledges that Saint Vincent de Paul Society members and volunteers are the servants of the poor, who carry out their vocation with a smile and good humour.
- (4) Wishes the Saint Vincent de Paul Society every success in the future.

KINGSWOOD TAFE 100 MILE DINNER

Mr BART BASSETT—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the staff and students of Kingswood TAFE on the success of the 100 Mile Dinner held recently to showcase the talents and skills of its students studying for a career in hospitality.
- (2) Notes the 100 Mile Dinner sources its ingredients for the meals from within a 100 mile radius of the campus.

MOUNT DRUITT LEARNING GROUND CORROBOREE

Mr BART BASSETT—That this House:

- (1) Notes the importance of the 2012 Mount Drutt Learning Ground Corroborree organised by the Chain Reaction Foundation.
- (2) Thanks Chain Reaction Foundation's president Margaret Bell and Mount Drutt Learning Ground volunteers for their work to improve social connections and outcomes for people from all walks of life.
- (3) Congratulates those who received awards at the Corroborree and acknowledges their outstanding achievements.

NATIONAL CARERS WEEK

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK—That this House:

- (1) Notes that New South Wales Carers Week was held from 14 to 20 October 2012.
- (2) Praises the tireless efforts of the 850,000 carers in New South Wales.
- (3) Acknowledges the invaluable contribution that carers make to our society.
- (4) Congratulates Ms Elizabeth Trajkovska of Bankstown who was one of 60 carers who received awards during the 2012 Carers Week.

ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN ARCHDIOCESE OF AUSTRALIA, NEW ZEALAND AND THE PHILIPPINES

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK—That this House:

- (1) Notes that the Antiochian Orthodox Archdiocese held its annual dinner on 20 October 2012.
- (2) Acknowledges that the largest Antiochian Orthodox Parish in Australia is located in Punchbowl with a congregation of at least 5,000 parishioners, made up of approximately 1,000 families.
- (3) Commends the services that the Archdiocese provides to the Antiochian Orthodox community.
- (4) Congratulates the Antiochian Orthodox Archdiocese on 43 years of leadership in the Antiochian Orthodox community.

JAMES CAKOVSKI NEW SOUTH WALES UNDER 12 YEARS SOCCER TEAM SELECTION

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK—That this House:

- (1) Acknowledges that Yagoona Public School student James Cakovski has been selected into the New South Wales under 12 years' soccer team for the 2012 Schools Sports Australia, Soccer Championships.
- (2) Congratulates the New South Wales under 12 years' soccer team for winning the 2012 Schools Sports Australia, Soccer Championships, held at Darwin in September.

PINK RIBBON DAY

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK—That this House:

- (1) Notes that Pink Ribbon Day was held on 22 October 2012.
- (2) Acknowledges the contribution of the thousands of volunteers who raised money for research towards breast cancer and gynaecological cancers during the month of October.
- (3) Congratulates Bankstown's Green Older Women's Group for organising their Pink Ribbon Day event at the Bankstown Arts and Craft Centre.

KOKODA AND MILNE BAY CAMPAIGNS SEVENTIETH ANNIVERSARY

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK—That this House:

- (1) Notes the commemoration of the seventieth anniversary of the Kokoda and Milne Bay World War II campaigns on 20 October 2012.
- (2) Acknowledges the sacrifice of the members of the 7th Division of the AIF who served in Palestine, the Western Desert and Borneo campaigns during World War Two.
- (3) Praises the hard work of Mr Dick Payten, OAM, President of the 7th Division Association, for organising the commemoration of the seventieth anniversary of the Kokoda and Milne Bay World War II campaigns.

GREENACRE AREA COMMUNITY FESTIVAL

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK—That this House:

- (1) Notes that the inaugural Greenacre Area Community Festival was held on 21 October 2012.
- (2) Notes that the event aims to bring the community together by showcasing the community's diversity, connecting different community groups and increasing community participation in local events.
- (3) Commends the Greenacre Area Community Centre for its integral role in the organisation of the event.

STATE EMERGENCY SERVICE SYDNEY SOUTHERN REGION PRESENTATION NIGHT

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK—That this House:

- (1) Notes the 35th annual presentation night of the Sydney Southern Region of the State Emergency Service (SES) was held on 6 October 2012.
- (2) Praises the recipients of the 2,136 statement of attainment and awards issued to SES volunteers for the 2011 to 2012 period.
- (3) Acknowledges the time and sacrifice of all SES volunteers.
- (4) Congratulates David Niven and Michelle Niven for their 25 years of service to the SES.
- (5) Congratulates Philip Mahoney Coralie Mahoney and Andrew Platt for their 10 years of service to the SES.
- (6) Congratulates Jordan Ross for 5 years of service to SES.

ST CHARBEL'S MONASTERY

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK—That this House:

- (1) Notes that St Charbel's Monastery in Punchbowl held a fundraiser on 13 October 2012 to support the launch of St Charbel's Nursing Home.
- (2) Commends St Charbel's Monastery for its service to the Maronite community in Australia.

NSW CARERS AWARD RECIPIENT JOANNE GATES

Mr TONY ISSA—That this House:

- (1) Recognises the important role carers, the unsung heroes of the community, play in homes within the Granville electorate.
- (2) Congratulates Ms Joanne Gates of South Wentworthville on receiving a 2012 Carers Award in recognition of her outstanding dedication in caring for her son on a full-time basis.

AUSTRALIAN KFARSGHAB ASSOCIATION 125TH ANNIVERSARY

Mr TONY ISSA—That this House:

- (1) Recognises the 125th anniversary of people migrating from Kfarsghab, Lebanon to Australia.
- (2) Congratulates the Australian Kfarsghab Association (AKA) for holding a spectacular dinner reception in honour of its 125 years of service to the community.
- (3) Acknowledges the important role of the AKA in promoting harmony in the community under the theme of "Together—In one place".
- (4) Thanks the AKA for its commitment and contribution to the New South Wales and Australian economies.

MS JOSEPHINE YOTT 100TH BIRTHDAY

Mr GLENN BROOKES—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Condell Park centenarian, Ms Josephine Yott, on turning 100 on 21 October 2012.
- (2) Recognises and acknowledges the family and friends of Ms Josephine Yott for giving her an exceptional 100th birthday celebration.
- (3) Wishes Ms Josephine Yott good health and many more birthdays to come.

COURAGE MEDAL RECIPIENT SHANNON BATES

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Shannon Bates on winning the 2012 New South Wales and Australian Capital Territory Courage Medal in the Pride of Australia awards.
- (2) Acknowledges that Shannon's courage and perseverance helped him win the medal.
- (3) Thanks Shannon for his community work with people with intellectual disabilities.

MEDSCAN MERRYLANDS

Mr TONY ISSA—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Medscan Merrylands, and its director Dr John O'Rourke, on providing state of the art facilities to the Western Sydney community, including Australia's first Siemens definition flash computed tomography with stellar detectors, as well as the first magnetic resonance imaging scanning machine in Merrylands.
- (2) Commends Medscan Merrylands and its staff for their role in improving the health of people living within the Granville electorate.

TRIBUTE TO ANTOINE KAZZI

Mr TONY ISSA—That this House:

- (1) Recognises the hard work of Mr Antoine Kazzi as a representative of the Lebanese Consultative Committee in co-ordinating its mock Youth Parliament.
- (2) Acknowledge the significant contribution of Mr Kazzi in his role as a journalist, poet and writer.
- (3) Congratulate Mr Kazzi for his success as editor-in-chief of the *El-Telegraph* Newspaper.

SHIRE WOODWORKING CLUB INC.

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the Shire Woodworking Club on the exceptional standard of its members' woodworking skills.
- (2) Congratulates the club for delivering more than 800 toys to the Sydney Children's Hospital Randwick in 2012.
- (3) Thanks the club for their ongoing community work.

NSW POLICE FORCE LEADER OF THE YEAR SUPERINTENDENT WAYNE STARLING

Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Superintendent Wayne Starling on being named NSW Police Leader of the Year.
- (2) Acknowledges Superintendent Starling's commitment to NSW Police and his service to the South Coast and Illawarra.
- (3) Notes the high regard for Superintendent Starling in the Shoalhaven community.

TRAINEE OF THE YEAR BROOKE CUMMINS

Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK—That this House congratulates Miss Brooke Cummins on being named the Trainee of the Year at the New South Wales and Australian Capital Territory Group Training Awards held in Sydney on 26 October 2012.

SOUTH COAST SOLICITORS LONG SERVICE AWARDS

Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK—That this House:

- (1) Acknowledges 17 South Coast solicitors have been presented with the Law Society of New South Wales recognition of service certificates for their long service to the community, including Charles Shirley, Colin Escott, Grant Gleeson, Ross Dixon, Angus Broad, David Nagle, Alex Love, Gary Lees, Derek McMurchie, Tom Pottenger, Leonie Sinclair, Dianne L'Estrange, Justin Rickard, Alan Robinson, Phil Broad, David Button and Lindsay Brien.
- (2) Notes the role these solicitors play in the community and the valuable knowledge they pass on to future generations.

ILLAWARRA BUSINESS CHAMBER E-BUSINESS AWARD RECIPIENT DANE CORNISH

Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Mr Dane Cornish, founder of Activated Group, Australia's leading provider of sporting programs to the education industry, on winning the Outstanding E-Business category at the Illawarra Business Chamber Awards.
- (2) Congratulates Mr Cornish on winning the Young Business Leader of the Year at the Shoalhaven Business Awards in October 2012.

ILLAWARRA BUSINESS CHAMBER WORKPLACE LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT AWARD RECIPIENT THE FLAGSTAFF GROUP

Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates The Flagstaff Group and its staff on winning the 2012 Excellence in Workplace Learning and Development Award at the Illawarra Business Chamber Awards.
- (2) Congratulates The Flagstaff Group on its continued work in the Illawarra and South Coast communities for people with disabilities.

ILLAWARRA BUSINESS CHAMBER EXCELLENCE IN EXPORT AND MANUFACTURING AWARDS RECIPIENT RAMBOR

Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK—That this House congratulates South Nowra manufacturer Rambor and its staff on winning the 2012 Excellence in Export and Excellence in Manufacturing Awards at the Illawarra Business Chamber Awards.

NOWRA SHOWGIRL AMY EVISON

Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Miss Amy Evison on being named the 2013 Nowra Showgirl.
- (2) Congratulates all entrants in the 2013 Nowra Showgirl competition and notes the work of the Nowra Show Society in the organisation of the event.

TRIBUTE TO MRS RUTH RICHARDS, OAM

Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK—That this House:

- (1) Acknowledges the passing of Mrs Ruth Richards, OAM, in August 2012.
- (2) Acknowledges Mrs Richards' service to the South Coast community over five decades, including her involvement in the Milton CWA, Milton Tennis Club, Ulladulla Public School, Ulladulla High School, Ulladulla Swimming Club, Ulladulla Civic Centre, and Ulladulla and Districts Community Forum.
- (3) Extends its condolences to Mrs Richards' family.

CULBURRA RURAL FIRE BRIGADE SIXTIETH ANNIVERSARY

Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the Culburra Rural Fire Service Brigade on celebrating its sixtieth anniversary.
- (2) Acknowledges the continued efforts of the Culburra Rural Fire Service Brigade in the community.
- (3) Notes the service of volunteers Brian Perry, Geoffrey Conley and John Kerr and congratulates them on being awarded long service medals.
- (4) Extends its appreciation to all members and former members of the Culburra Rural Fire Service Brigade including Captain John Kerr as well as Deputy Captains Bob Burton and Mitchell Pakes.

BRAZILIAN JUJITSU MEDALLIST JAKE FARNSWORTH

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates 12-year-old Jake Farnsworth of Glenhaven on winning a silver medal at the 2012 Brazilian jujitsu national titles in Melbourne.
- (2) Commends Jake for his steely resolve in not allowing his Crohn's disease to get in the way of his ambition to compete to reclaim his title as Australia's best Brazilian jujitsu fighter in his age group.

KOKODA YOUTH LEADERSHIP CHALLENGE PARTICIPANT MITCHELL HAYES

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET—That this House:

- (1) Commends Mitchell Hayes for completing the 2012 Kokoda Youth Leadership Challenge.
- (2) Thanks the Castle Hill RSL for supporting Mitchell and other young people realise their potential as young leaders in the community.

HEART FOUNDATION

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET—That this House:

- (1) Thanks the 30,000 volunteer collectors and everyone in the Hills District who donated to the 2012 Heart Foundation Doorknock Appeal.
- (2) Commends the work of the Heart Foundation in fighting against heart disease by funding research, education and community programs to improve the health of all Australians.

WEST PENNANT HILLS CHERRYBROOK LIONS CLUB AND NEW SOUTH WALES LIONS PUBLIC HEALTH FOUNDATION

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET—That this House commends the West Pennant Hills Cherrybrook Lions Club and the New South Wales Lions Public Health Foundation for raising more than \$12,000 to help replace critical equipment in the Westmead Children's Cancer Research Unit.

BODYBUILDING CHAMPION LIAM EYRE

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates 19-year-old Liam Eyre, of Castle Hill, for winning the New South Wales Teenage Men's Natural Body Building Championship.
- (2) Wishes Liam all the best as he prepares for the 2013 Australian Championships.

CASTLE HILL ROCKETS UNDER 16 GIRLS SOCCER TEAM

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the Castle Hill Rockets under 16 years girls' team for competing in the semi finals of the Football New South Wales Champion of Champions tournament after winning its domestic league competition.
- (2) Wishes all the girls in the Rockets' team the very best of luck for 2013 and commend them on a fantastic season.

EMILY READ NEW SOUTH WALES UNDER 17 SOFTBALL TEAM SELECTION

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates 15-year-old Emily Read, from North Rocks, on her selection in the New South Wales under 17 years softball team for the second consecutive year.
- (2) Wishes her all the best as she prepares for the national tournament to be held in Blacktown in January 2013.

ROTARY HILLS POLICE OFFICER OF THE YEAR ROBYN CRAFT

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET—That this House congratulates Robyn Craft, a civilian intelligence analyst, on being recognised as the Castle Hill Rotary Club's Hills Police Officer of the Year.

ST GEORGE MIGRANT RESOURCE CENTRE

Mr JOHN FLOWERS—That this House:

- (1) Acknowledges that the St George Migrant Resource Centre held its Information Day in King Street Mall, Rockdale on 31 October 2012.
- (2) Recognises the valuable work carried out by the St George Migrant Resource Centre.

- (3) Notes the wide range of information and resources available to those who attended the event.
- (4) Commends the performers and musicians who made the event memorable.

JOHN AND FLORENCE CHAVE SIXTIETH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

Mr JOHN FLOWERS—That this House congratulates Mr John and Mrs Florence Chave of Kogarah on their sixtieth wedding anniversary to be celebrated on 22 November 2012.

NEVILLE AND EDNA NOONAN SIXTIETH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

Mr JOHN FLOWERS—That this House congratulates Mr Neville and Mrs Edna Noonan of Bexley on celebrating their sixtieth wedding anniversary on 11 October 2012.

PAUL AND JOAN FOLEY SIXTIETH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

Mr JOHN FLOWERS—That this House congratulates Mr Paul and Mrs Joan Foley of Ramsgate Beach on celebrating their sixtieth wedding anniversary on 10 October 2012.

BRIAN AND BEVERLEY MULLINS FIFTIETH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

Mr JOHN FLOWERS—That this House congratulates Mr Brian and Mrs Beverley Mullins of Kogarah Bay on celebrating their fiftieth wedding anniversary on 6 October 2012.

KEVIN AND MAUREEN LAMB FIFTIETH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

Mr JOHN FLOWERS—That this House congratulates Mr Kevin and Mrs Maureen Lamb of Kogarah Bay on celebrating their fiftieth wedding anniversary on 15 September 2012.

DEAN AND MARLENE ANAKI FIFTIETH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

Mr JOHN FLOWERS—That this House congratulates Mr Dean and Mrs Marlene Anaki of Brighton-Le-Sands on celebrating their fiftieth wedding anniversary on 29 September 2012.

ROBERT AND CLAUDETTE LINKE FIFTIETH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

Mr JOHN FLOWERS—That this House congratulates Mr Robert and Mrs Claudette Linke of Rockdale on celebrating their fiftieth wedding anniversary on 19 November 2012.

NSW MULTICULTURAL HEALTH WEEK

Mr JOHN FLOWERS—That this House:

- (1) Acknowledges that Multicultural Health Week was held from 3 to 10 September 2012.
- (2) Notes that this initiative provides an opportunity for families from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds to engage in discussion about their health.
- (3) Notes that the theme for Multicultural Health Week 2012 was "Healthy Kids".
- (4) Celebrates Rockdale as a home to thousands of families from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

UNITED HOSPITAL AUXILIARIES OF NEW SOUTH WALES

Mr CHRIS HOLSTEIN—That this House:

- (1) Recognises the tremendous work of the United Hospital Auxiliaries (UHA) of New South Wales for having raised nearly \$9.5 million for local health districts between 2011 and 2012.
- (2) Congratulates the 6,000 volunteers who worked in excess of 833,000 hours to raise these funds.
- (3) Thanks the Gosford UHA for raising \$15,522 and the Woy Woy UHA for raising \$13,877 which was donated to local hospitals.

CASINO DRAG-RACING CHAMPIONS

Mr CHRIS GULAPTIS—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Terry Forsyth, Grant Manning, Roger Sommerfield, John Richards and Andrew Richards on being Casino Drag Races 2012 Champions for Bikes.
- (2) Congratulates the team on the fastest time of 6.44 seconds for the 1/8 mile at the Casino Drag Races.
- (3) Wishes the champions every success for 2013.

CASINO RSM CLUB CHAIRMAN BILL MACMAHON

Mr CHRIS GULAPTIS—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Bill MacMahon on being a board member of the Casino RSM Club for 36 years.
- (2) Congratulates him on being Chairman of the Board of the Casino RSM Club for 25 years.
- (3) Wishes Bill MacMahon a long and happy retirement.

JOAN MUIR, OAM, COMMUNITY SERVICE

Mr CHRIS GULAPTIS—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Mrs Joan Muir, OAM, on having the community centre at the Clarence Village named after her.
- (2) Acknowledges the commitment provided by Mrs Muir during her more than 40 years of service on the committee and board of Clarence Village.
- (3) Wishes Mrs Muir many more years of service to the community.

JACARANDA FESTIVAL

Mr CHRIS GULAPTIS—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the Jacaranda Committee, including its executive members president Monique Morrissey, festival manager Janelle Ellem, and treasurer Marnie Henwood, as well as all of the Committee's hard working volunteers, on organising the successful 2012 Jacaranda Festival, being the seventy-eighth festival.
- (2) Congratulates Sara Filewood on being crowned Jacaranda Queen, Sharni Rouse on being crowned Holiday Princess, Jenna Atherton on being crowned Jacaranda Princess, Emma Essex on being crowned Junior Jacaranda Princess and Courtney McKew on being crowned Junior Jacaranda Queen at the festival.

RICHMOND COMMUNITY SERVICES INC.

Mr BART BASSETT—That this House:

- (1) Commend the work undertaken by Richmond Community Services who work in partnership with local residents and the community to identify needs and improve community services to the Hawkesbury.
- (2) Notes that the recent Richmond Community Services annual general meeting approved a five year strategic plan to deliver services.
- (3) Acknowledges the tireless work undertaken by Richmond Community Services volunteers and its management committee.
- (4) Thanks the professional staff lead by the manager Yatra Sherwood.

ST JOHN OF GOD HEALTH CARE

Mr BART BASSETT—That this House:

- (1) Thanks the staff and management of St John of God Health Care for providing professional care and treatments for people suffering from a range of mental illnesses.
- (2) Acknowledges the recent service held at St John of God Hospital in Richmond to remember the men and women of the NSW Police Force who have died or suffered injury or mental illness in the line of duty.
- (3) Notes that the 2012 Service was attended by the former Commissioner of Police Ken Moroney AO, APM, Father Walter Fogarty, Director of Missions Cathy Scott, St John of God CEO Allison Campbell and high school students from Richmond.

LAW SOCIETY OF NEW SOUTH WALES PRESIDENT'S MEDAL RECIPIENT STUART TIPPLE

Mr CHRIS HOLSTEIN—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Gosford lawyer, Stuart Tipple, on being awarded the 2012 New South Wales Law Society President's Medal in recognition of his significant personal and professional contributions to the betterment of law and justice by a New South Wales solicitor.
- (2) Recognises that his work has helped ensure best practice in the New South Wales criminal justice system by identifying deficiencies and bringing about changes to forensic testing and procedures.
- (3) Thanks Stuart Tipple for his pro bono services to legatee widows and the Salvation Army over the past 30 years.

UNIVERSITY OF NEWCASTLE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROJECT

Ms SONIA HORNER—That this House:

- (1) Acknowledges the dedication and efforts of Newcastle University to bridge the gap between its Callaghan campus and the community through a community engagement project launched in August 2012.
- (2) Notes that the project has been developed under the banner "our community, your university" and is thought to be the first of its type for a university in Australia or overseas.
- (3) Commends community partnerships manager, Sharon Douglas, for her continued commitment to Newcastle University and the Hunter community.

JOHN HUNTER HOSPITAL ORGAN DONATIONS

Ms SONIA HORNER—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates John Hunter Hospital on having the highest rate of organ donations in New South Wales for the past five years.
- (2) Commends all of the hardworking staff at John Hunter Hospital who have collaborated to improve communications concerning organ donations.
- (3) Thanks the Hunter community for its generosity and community spirit.

HEATON BIRMINGHAM GARDENS BOWLING CLUB FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY

Ms SONIA HORNER—That this House:

- (1) Notes that Heaton Birmingham Gardens Bowling Club celebrated its fiftieth anniversary on 27 October 2012.
- (2) Notes that the celebration included bowling and a competition to win a container of ashes from the original building, which was tragically destroyed by an arson attack in late 2000.
- (3) Recognises the hard work and dedication to the day by the club president, Alwyn Dennis.
- (4) Extends its best wishes to Alwyn and the club for future celebrations.

CANTEEN NATIONAL BANDANNA DAY

Ms SONIA HORNER—That this House:

- (1) Acknowledges the vital importance of CanTeen and the role it plays in the lives of family members and victims of cancer.
- (2) Recognises National Bandanna Day, held on 26 October 2012, as a major fundraiser for CanTeen, a non-profit organisation that does not receive government funding.
- (3) Commends Hamilton South brother and sister, Ben and Eliza Fleming, for encouraging their community to don a bandanna on National Bandanna Day.
- (4) Extends its best wishes to CanTeen for its future fundraising endeavours.

PROFESSOR PETER GIBSON ASTHMA RESEARCH

Ms SONIA HORNER—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Newcastle researcher, Professor Peter Gibson, on making the finals of the national GlaxoSmithKline Award for Research Excellence.
- (2) Acknowledges the vital importance of Professor Gibson's work, which has led to major advances in treatments and care for people suffering asthma.

TRIATHLETE AARON ROYLE

Ms SONIA HORNER—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates 22-year-old Maryland resident, Aaron Royle, on winning the acclaimed International Triathlon Unions' World Triathlon Championships under 23 years event in Auckland, New Zealand.
- (2) Wishes Aaron all the best in his preparations for the 2016 Rio Olympics.

SALVATION ARMY SALVONISTA CAMPAIGN

Ms SONIA HORNER—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the Salvation Army on its Salvonista campaign which visited universities including the University of Newcastle throughout October 2012.
- (2) Commends the second-hand clothing and wares chain for encouraging people to re-use and recycle clothes and other items.
- (3) Commends students from the University of Newcastle who took part in the campaign that also assists the environment and community.

MENTAL HEALTH SHORT FILM WORKSHOP

Ms SONIA HORNER—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates high school students from Toronto, Glendale and West Wallsend on tackling the topic of mental health by participating in workshops to produce short films about issues such as bullying, drugs, stress and body image.
- (2) Commends and thanks Hunter Care for organising such inspirational workshops.
- (3) Notes that the students' films were shown at the Digi-Tell festival at the Lake Macquarie Performing Arts Centre on 30 October 2012.

HUNTER INSTITUTE OF MENTAL HEALTH

Ms SONIA HORNER—That this House:

- (1) Acknowledges the vital role of the Hunter Institute of Mental Health.
- (2) Notes that the Hunter Institute of Mental Health is developing a program to reduce the psychological stress on the families of chronically ill children.
- (3) Commends the institute for securing \$750,000 from a charitable foundation to conduct a three year study in conjunction with the John Hunter Hospital's Kaleidoscope centre.

NSW POLICE RSL SUB BRANCH REMEMBRANCE DAY SERVICE

Mr GEOFF PROVEST—That this House:

- (1) Recognises the NSW Police RSL Sub-branch which represents all current and former members of the NSW Police Force who have served with the Australian Defence Forces.
- (2) Commends the NSW Police RSL Sub-branch for honouring, on National Remembrance Day 2012, those members who have served in wars, conflicts and peacekeeping efforts, particularly those who lost their lives in this service.
- (3) Commends the NSW Police RSL Sub-branch for its ongoing services of support to its members and their families.
- (4) Acknowledges in particular Mr Mervyn Morgan, Master of Ceremonies, and Reverend Canon David Hilliard, Senior State Police Chaplain, who attended the service.

STATE CRIME COMMAND AWARDS

Mr GEOFF PROVEST—That this House:

- (1) Commends those officers presented with State Crime Command Awards highlighting their continuing efforts and commitment to the NSW Police Force and its special operations, in particular Detective Senior Constable Damien Serratore.
- (2) Recognise in particular those officers awarded for their dedication to Strike Force operations enacted across New South Wales that have contributed to the destruction of prominent crime syndicates.
- (3) Recognises the Police Commissioner's attendance in support of the State Crime Command Awards.

MONA VALE HOSPITAL AUXILIARY

Mr ROB STOKES—That this House:

- (1) Notes the outstanding work undertaken by Mona Vale Hospital Auxiliary.
- (2) Congratulates Mona Vale Hospital Auxiliary on being awarded the United Hospitals Auxiliaries' 2012 Honour Bell for raising the most funds in the Sydney metropolitan area.

- (3) Notes the fantastic support for Mona Vale Hospital Auxiliary by residents and businesses throughout the Pittwater community.
- (4) Commends the Mona Vale Hospital Auxiliary volunteers, led by its president Mrs Eileen Gordon, on their invaluable and unwavering commitment towards the Pittwater community.

NATIONAL SES WEEK

Mr GEOFF PROVEST—That this House:

- (1) Recognises that 11 to 17 November 2012 is National State Emergency Service (SES) Week which pays tribute to all volunteers serving in the New South Wales SES.
- (2) Commends the efforts and achievements of New South Wales SES volunteers in continually providing support and protection for the community in times of emergency.

TWEED RIVER FESTIVAL

Mr GEOFF PROVEST—That this House:

- (1) Recognises that the 11th annual Tweed River Festival, held between 12 and 17 November 2012, boasted a diverse range of activities celebrating the beautiful waterways of the Tweed region.
- (2) Recognises the Tweed Local Council's efforts in bringing the community together annually to raise awareness about issues related to local waterways and further educating locals on their importance.

GOLFER SCOTT GARDINER

Mr GEOFF PROVEST—That this House:

- (1) Recognises the great achievement of Scott Gardiner, a member of the Coolangatta Tweed Heads Golf Club, who has become the first Australian Aboriginal to receive a US PGA tour card.
- (2) Commends Scott Gardiner, as well as fellow Australians Cameron Percy and Alistair Presnell, for graduating inside the top 25 of the secondary web.com tour, entitling them entry to the US PGA tour.

AQUINAS COLLEGE AND HOLY FAMILY PRIMARY SCHOOL FUNDRAISING ACTIVITIES

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Aquinas College and Holy Family Primary School on raising \$2,519.40 for CanTeen.
- (2) Notes that the Aquinas College students also sold bandanas at Holy Family Primary School and achieved a colourful display of bandanas in support of young people living with cancer on 26 October 2012.
- (3) Recognises that a group of Year 10 volunteers participated in pastoral classes for two weeks before Bandana Day to learn more about how to support one another in times of hardship.
- (4) Thanks Aquinas College principal, James Corcoran, and Holy Family Primary School principal, Karen Richards, and the students from both schools for their support of this important cause.

ANNIE SMITH 100TH BIRTHDAY

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS—That this House:

- (1) Acknowledges the 100th birthday of Bangor resident Annie Smith on 21 September 2012.
- (2) Notes that Mrs Smith has been a Sutherland Shire resident since marrying her husband Raymond Smith in 1932.
- (3) Congratulates Mrs Smith on celebrating her milestone in the company of family and friends including, four grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren at BCS Warena Centre in Bangor.

MATTHEW WU WORLD FOOTBALL GROUP SELECTION

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates St Joseph's Catholic Primary School Year 6 student, Matthew Wu, on being selected for the under 13 years World Football Group national squad that will tour England in 2012.
- (2) Wishes Matthew the best of luck during the tour.

DOROTHEA MACKELLAR POETRY AWARD RECIPIENTS ALEXANDER MALOOF AND RHYS HALKIDIS

Mr CHARLES CASUSCELLI—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Alexander Maloof and Rhys Halkidis from Trinity Grammar Preparatory School, Strathfield, on receiving the Dorothea Mackellar Poetry Award from the New South Wales Community Relations Commission.
- (2) Commends the students' parents and their school for the hard work and dedication involved in assisting these students as they nurture their literary talents.

WALKER STRATEGIES

Mr CHARLES CASUSCELLI—That this House:

- (1) Acknowledges Fred Walker of Walker Strategies in Burwood for raising \$3,800 for the Cancer Council New South Wales to support mothers caring for their children with cancer.
- (2) Commends all small businesses in the Strathfield electorate who dedicate their time and resources to raising money for such worthy causes.

MULTICULTURAL MEDIA AWARD RECIPIENT SUSAN LEE

Mr CHARLES CASUSCELLI—That this House:

- (1) Commends Susan Lee for receiving the Contribution to Social Inclusion and Multiculturalism award at the inaugural Multicultural Media Awards for her article "Korean NSW 10th most Spoken Language".
- (2) Recognises that Susan Lee has spent 24 years representing and providing a voice to the Korean community of Strathfield on a variety of local issues.

LOCAL WOMAN OF THE YEAR VICKY SYRIOS

Mr CHARLES CASUSCELLI—That this House:

- (1) Commends Vicky Syrios for being an excellent role model in achieving the Local Woman of the Year Award by the New South Wales Government.
- (2) Acknowledge her services to the community including being the president of the Organisation of Hellene and Hellene Cypriot Women of Australia which has raised \$150,000 for the Children's Cancer Institute.
- (3) Commends Vicky Syrios and her husband Chris Syrios, president of the Church of St Nektarios Committee, for representing the Greek community, as well as disadvantaged individuals in the community.

CLUB ASHFIELD PRESIDENTS

Mr CHARLES CASUSCELLI—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Ms Helen McCartney on becoming the first female president of Club Ashfield and for her services to the community.
- (2) Thanks Mr Tony Fiatarone for his past 23 years as president of Club Ashfield and for his selfless service to the community.

MARIE BASHIR PEACE AWARD RECIPIENT KAREN KRAKUE

Mr CHARLES CASUSCELLI—That this House:

- (1) Commends Karen Krakue, a year 11 student from Santa Sabina College, Strathfield, on receiving a Highly Commended Certificate at the Marie Bashir Peace Awards 2012 for her efforts to foster harmony and peace.
- (2) Acknowledges her various community services including night patrolling, hosting and fundraising for numerous charity events.
- (3) Acknowledges that Karen Krakue has raised awareness of various social issues including child abuse and violence against women.

VIETNAM VETERANS REMEMBRANCE DAY

Mr GUY ZANGARI—That this House:

- (1) Acknowledges the Dedication and Unveiling Ceremony of the Vietnam Veterans Remembrance Day which took place on 11 November 2012 at Cabravale Memorial Park, Cabramatta.
- (2) Notes the invaluable contribution of the Vietnamese Community to the economic and cultural development in Australia.

- (3) Honours the contribution of all brave Australians who have sacrificed or are still sacrificing their lives on behalf of the nation.
- (4) Congratulates the President Thang Nguyen and members of the Vietnamese Community in Australia along with the Vietnam Veterans Associations of Australia on hosting the successful event.

FAIRFIELD RELAY FOR LIFE

Mr GUY ZANGARI—That this House:

- (1) Acknowledges the contribution made by committee members, volunteers and the community at the Fairfield Relay For Life at Horsley Park Reserve on 3 November 2012.
- (2) Notes that the Fairfield Relay For Life raised funds for the Cancer Council New South Wales to provide practical support and information for cancer patients, and health promotion to reduce the risks of getting cancer and for cancer research.
- (3) Congratulates and supports the hard work and dedication of Mrs Allannah Falappi and Mr Lee Falappi.

GREEK NATIONAL DAY

Mr GUY ZANGARI—That this House:

- (1) Acknowledges that the seventy-second anniversary of Greek National Day was celebrated at the Greek Community Club in Lakemba on 28 October 2012.
- (2) Notes the Greek National Day is one of the most significant days for the Greek community around the world as it marks the day Greece stood up for freedom and democracy.
- (3) Commends the Greek community for its outstanding contribution to a multicultural society in New South Wales.
- (4) Congratulates the president and the board of directors of the Greek Orthodox Community of New South Wales on holding a successful celebration.

POWERHOUSE YOUTH THEATRE

Mr GUY ZANGARI—That this House:

- (1) Acknowledges the twenty-fifth anniversary celebration of the Powerhouse Youth Theatre, which took place on 8 November 2012 at the Fairfield School of Arts.
- (2) Notes the Powerhouse Youth Theatre, which began in 1987 as a project for unemployed young people, is the leading professional youth theatre company in Western Sydney.
- (3) Commends the Powerhouse Youth Theatre for its success in supporting young people to develop into strong and confident leaders and creators in Fairfield for 25 years.
- (4) Congratulates artistic director, Danielle Antaki, along with other members of the Powerhouse Youth Theatre on hosting the successful event.

NSW GRANDPARENTS DAY

Mr GUY ZANGARI—That this House:

- (1) Acknowledges the annual Grandparents Day celebration that took place on 28 October 2012 at Conca D'oro.
- (2) Commends all grandparents across New South Wales for their invaluable contributions to our society.
- (3) Congratulates Mr Joe Commisso, president and Grandparents Day ambassador for New South Wales, as well as committee members of the Nonni Club of New South Wales on hosting another successful event.

SOUTH SUDANESE MENTAL HEALTH CONFERENCE

Mr GUY ZANGARI—That this House:

- (1) Acknowledges that the first South Sudanese Mental Health Conference took place on 19 October 2012 at the Karitane Conference Centre, Carramar.
- (2) Notes the ongoing work delivered by the Community of South Sudan and Other Marginalised Areas Association who held this conference to raise awareness of mental health services and systems in New South Wales.
- (3) Commends the Mental Health Council of Australia and the Department of Health and Ageing for providing funding for this conference.
- (4) Congratulates chairman Donato Anyau and other members of the Community of South Sudan and Other Marginalised Areas Association on hosting this successful conference.

VERONA SCHOOL ART EXHIBITION

Mr GUY ZANGARI—That this House:

- (1) Acknowledges the Verona School Art Exhibition which took place on 6 November 2012 at Verona School in Fairfield East.
- (2) Notes the ongoing work and support that Verona School offers to assist students with special needs.
- (3) Congratulates the principal, Mr Robert Patrino, teachers, staff and students at Verona School on hosting the successful event.

DR JOSE RIZAL STATUE UNVEILING

Mr GUY ZANGARI—That this House:

- (1) Acknowledges that the ceremony unveiling the statue of Dr Jose Rizal took place on 26 October 2012 at Rizal Park in Rosemeadow.
- (2) Notes that Dr Jose Rizal was known as a Philippine National Hero who championed change through peaceful protest and remains an inspiration to the Philippine community.
- (3) Commends the Philippine community for its invaluable cultural contributions to New South Wales.
- (4) Congratulates the Rizal Park Movement of Campbelltown along with Campbelltown City Council on their tireless efforts in organising the unveiling ceremony.

ASSOCIATION MSS DI LORETO FESTIVAL

Mr GUY ZANGARI—That this House:

- (1) Acknowledges the 20th Annual Association MSS Di Loreto Festival which took place on 11 November 2012 at the Fairfield showground.
- (2) Notes the invaluable contribution the Italian community have made in New South Wales.
- (3) Congratulates Mr Antonio Mittiga and the members of the Association MSS Di Loreto on hosting another successful event.

TRIBUTE TO KENNETH KELL

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates 90-year-old Kenneth (Ken) Kell of Forster, who will make a trip to Papua New Guinea to mark the seventieth anniversary commemoration of the iconic World War II campaigns as a veteran of the Kokoda and the beachheads battles.
- (2) Notes that Ken enlisted in the Second AIF in November 1939 and was on the first Australian convoy to the Middle East, arriving in February 1940 as a member of the 2/1st Field Regiment, where his first experience of war was the Battle of Bardia against the Italians in Libya.
- (3) Notes that Ken returned to Australia in 1942 then went to Port Moresby and waited to be sent forward and took the opportunity to fly with the "biscuit bombers" that provided supplies to Australian forces in the Owen Stanley Range.
- (4) Notes that from December 1942 Ken served with his regiment during the Battle of the Beachheads where his strongest memory of the war is the relentless hard physical labour of being a gunner, carrying ammunition and other heavy loads which frequently reduced his battery members to exhaustion.
- (5) Notes that the guns of the 2/1st supported first American, then later Australian, infantry in their attacks on Buna, which fell in early January 1943, which he wrote about in his book *The Early Years*.
- (6) Notes that his final campaign was Aitape-Wewak in 1945.
- (7) Notes that on discharge he joined the NSW Fire Brigade and rejoined the army from 1950 to 1967 and in 1953 went to England with the Coronation Contingent.
- (8) Notes that he completed a horticulture course and worked as a gardener until his retirement.
- (9) Recalls the service and sacrifice of Australian, Papua New Guinean and allied service personnel in the Battle for the Beachheads which are commemorated at the Popondetta Memorial in Papua New Guinea.
- (10) Congratulates Ken Kell on his long and distinguished service to his country.

VALLEY INDUSTRIES BUSINESS AWARDS

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the management and staff of Valley Industries on winning three Manning Valley Business Chamber 2012 Business awards, including the "Manufacturing Award" and "Retail—Large Award".
- (2) Notes that Sid Ridgeway won the "Indigenous Employee of the Year Award".
- (3) Notes that Valley Industries is a highly respected Taree business that provides training and assistance to disabled and disadvantaged people.

MANNING VALLEY EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR WITH A DISABILITY ADAM POLLEY

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Adam Polley, an employee of McGraths Meats, on being named the Manning Valley Business Awards 2012 Employee of the Year with a Disability.
- (2) Notes that Adam, who has Down syndrome, has worked at McGraths Meats two days per week for the past fourteen months and is known for his great attitude, work ethic and an amazing attention to detail.
- (3) Congratulates Adam on completing the two-year "Transition to Work" program with Break-Thru Employment Solutions which trains people with a disability to live independently and gain job application skills and training.

HARRISON LOFTS, JORDAN KREMER AND HAYDEN FOXWELL MARATHON WALK

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates St Clare's High School Year 11 students Harrison Lofts, Jordan Kremer and Hayden Foxwell on completing the marathon walk from Newcastle to Taree in five days.
- (2) Notes that the students raised more than \$1,000 for the Commando Welfare Trust, an organisation that supports the families of serving and former serving members of the Special Operations Command who have been killed or injured on duty.
- (3) Notes that the three students hope to join the armed services upon completion of their Higher School Certificate.

BULAHDELAH HOSPITAL AUXILIARY

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the Bulahdelah Hospital Auxiliary on its fundraising efforts in raising \$7,998.89 for Bulahdelah Hospital.
- (2) Notes that the money was used to purchase twelve television sets for patients, tables, sandwich toasters and a spirometer.
- (3) Congratulates the Bulahdelah Hospital Auxiliary which has worked tirelessly to purchase this equipment for its local health service and the community.
- (4) Notes that the United Hospital Auxiliaries of New South Wales raised more than \$9.4 million for local health districts during the 2011-2012 financial year.

MANNING RURAL REFERRAL HOSPITAL AUXILIARY

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the Manning Rural Referral Hospital Auxiliary on raising \$47,969.98 in funds for the hospital.
- (2) Notes that the money was used to purchase eight blood pressure machines, a cardiac monitor, a respiratory humidifier, a wound measure monitor, a saturation monitor, two wheelchairs and forty walking belts of various sizes.
- (3) Congratulates the Manning Rural Referral Hospital Auxiliary which has worked tirelessly to purchase this equipment for the local health service and the community.

WINGHAM COMMUNITY HOSPITAL AUXILIARY

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates members of the Wingham Hospital Auxiliary on raising \$6,076.83 in funds for the hospital.
- (2) Notes that the money was used to purchase two special rehabilitation pads, four roller blinds, a cushion relay duogel, a DVD player, a mobile chair and activity tray and an air comfort chair.
- (3) Congratulates the Wingham Hospital Auxiliary, which has worked tirelessly to purchase this equipment for the local health service and the community.

EQUESTRIAN SUI WATTS

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Sui Watts of Mitchells Island on her selection to represent Australia in the novice and freestyle events at the 2012 Hope Cup to be held in Taiwan to mark the International Day of the Disabled Person.
- (2) Notes that Sui, who came to live in Australia from an orphanage in China and who has Down syndrome, will achieve her dream to ride with the Australian flag on her jacket.
- (3) Notes that Sui is one of just two riders who represented Australia in Taiwan and has a particular love of horses.
- (4) Notes that Sui has been supported by the Wingham Pony Club and by DVW Vet Wholesalers where she works.

HOCKEY PLAYER KATRINA WATTS

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Katrina Watts on winning the Australian Championship as a member of the New South Wales over 50 years team by defeating Victoria 2-1 in the final.
- (2) Notes that this was Katrina's first championship, in which her New South Wales team was undefeated.
- (3) Notes that Katrina is a long standing member of the Tigers Hockey Club, having played her first game for the club at the age of eleven, played A-grade from the age of fourteen and joined the masters two years ago.
- (4) Congratulates Katrina on being named the division 2 player of the year in 2011 and notes that she has no intention of retiring from the sport.

INGHAM INSTITUTE FOR APPLIED MEDICAL RESEARCH

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the Ingham Institute for Applied Medical Research on the official opening of its world-class facilities, a wonderful asset for South Western Sydney, on 23 October 2012.
- (2) Acknowledges the Board of Directors: Terry Goldacre, Dr Teresa Anderson, Tim Bryan, David Hazlett, John Hexton, Professor Annemarie Hennessy, John Ingham, Debbie Killian, Amanda Larkin, Jim Marsden, Tony Perich, Associate Professor Anthony Schembri, Professor Peter Smith and Arnold Vitocco on their vision and commitment.
- (3) Notes that the next two phases of the Ingham Institute focus on education and training facilities and establishing a world-leading facility for research into radiotherapy cancer treatment.
- (4) Wishes everyone associated with the Ingham Institute every success in researching and developing life changing advances in medical treatments.

NARELLAN RHYTHMS FESTIVAL

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the staff of Camden Council, especially Denise Pritchard and Josephine Roccisano, for organising the Narellan Rhythms Festival, a wonderful multicultural community event.
- (2) Acknowledges and thanks Camden State Emergency Service for its assistance in managing crowd control and traffic flow at the festival.
- (3) Acknowledges and thanks the performance groups and stallholders for making the festival such a success, including: Capoeira Tapazio Brazilian Martial Arts, Rushi Sangi Bollywood, Te Kete Kahurangi Haka and traditional Poi Dance, Tongan Dance Ensemble, Ukulele Duo, Camden Bowling Club and Community Choir, Rebecca's Dace Studio Line Dancers and the Leppington Primary School Chinese Lion Dance Troop.

AQUAFIT FITNESS AND LEISURE CENTRE

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Aquafit Fitness and Leisure Centre on receiving a gold award for quality at the Australian Health and Fitness Industry Quality Awards.
- (2) Notes that Aquafit won the gold award for their high achievements in customer service, programs, people, safety and business management.
- (3) Acknowledges the importance of centres like Aquafit in providing the community with both a place to exercise, and opportunity give back to the community through participation as a team in local fun runs and sporting events, and raising money for charities in the 24 hour fight against Cancer walk, City2Surf and City to Gong cycle ride.
- (4) Wishes Aquafit every success for its future endeavours.

CAMDEN WRITERS AND SCRIBBLERS FOUNDER GRACE SEWELL

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON—That this House:

- (1) Acknowledges that the Camden Writers and Scribblers group was founded by Grace Sewell.
- (2) Notes that Grace Sewell is considered the backbone and driving force of the group, which meets to work on short stories and poetry, encouraging and assisting group members to grow and develop skills.
- (3) Commends Camden Writers and Scribblers on their annual publication "Making a Splash" and notes that four members are being professionally published this year.
- (4) Acknowledges that Grace Sewell is a wonderful and well respected ambassador for the Camden Writers and Scribblers group and the wider community.

RIDE TO CONQUER CANCER

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Dina Chungue and Lisa Ledwidge on raising over \$6,000 for the Chris O'Brien Lifehouse cancer centre's Ride to Conquer Cancer.
- (2) Acknowledges and congratulates Sam Engelbrecht who, in support of her co-workers fundraising efforts, will cut most of her 1.5 metre long hair off.
- (3) Notes that the offer to cut Sam's hair was on the condition that Dina and Lisa raise more than \$1,000 for the charity, a figure far exceeded.
- (4) Notes that Sam Engelbrecht's hair will be donated to charity to be made into wigs for women undergoing chemotherapy.

HARRINGTON PARK PUBLIC SCHOOL GIRLS CRICKET TEAM

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the Harrington Park Girls Cricket team on winning the T20 Blast Schools Cup.
- (2) Acknowledges captain Courtney Chonelle, Tiarne McDonald, Jaide Gayle, Tylar Fardell, Jin Lin, Alisha Hayes, Sarah Creasey, Analyssa Rappattoni, Preet Bajwa and Ashleigh Maya.
- (3) Note that the team is coached by Mr James Gawthorne.
- (4) Notes that the team are wonderful ambassadors for their families, school and the community.

BODYWAR FUNDRAISING ACTIVITIES

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates BodyWar on contributing more than just healthy minds and bodies to the community by actively participating and raising over \$22,000 and 101 bags of clothing for charities.
- (2) Notes that BodyWar outdoor training was established by Tanya and John Innes in 2009.
- (3) Notes that BodyWar member and cancer survivor, Harry Newman, walked 126 kilometres to raise money in the 24 hour Fight Against Cancer Walk in 2011.
- (4) Wishes BodyWar every success for future fundraising challenges and clothing donation drives.
- (5) Acknowledges that BodyWar are making a difference to the lives of its members and the wider community.

ST GREGORY'S COLLEGE RUGBY SEVENS TEAM

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the boys from St Gregory's College on coming second at the National Schoolboys Rugby Sevens Championships, held on the Gold Coast.
- (2) Notes that the St Gregory's team was undefeated until the grand final, where it was beaten by only one try.
- (3) Commends the teachers, coaches and families who support the team.
- (4) Acknowledges that the members of the sevens rugby team are wonderful ambassadors for their school, their families and the community.

MACARTHUR PRIMARY SCHOOLS ATHLETES

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Macarthur primary school students who competed at the New South Wales Primary Schools Sports Association State Athletics championships.
- (2) Notes that Tiffany Bailey from Mawarra Public School won the 11-year-old 200 metres sprint, and came second in the 100 metres sprint.
- (3) Notes that Amalia Plummer from St Clare's Catholic Primary School won the eight-year-old 100 metre sprint.
- (4) Notes that Summer Waine from Camden Public School won the nine-year-old 100 metres sprint.
- (5) Acknowledges that each of these students is a wonderful ambassador for their school, family and community.
- (6) Congratulates all athletes who participated in the carnival.

HAWKESBURY RACE CLUB

Mr BART BASSETT—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the board and management of the Hawkesbury Race Club, established in 1871, on the successful holding of the Ladies Day Race and Gold Cup Meeting and Fashions on the Field held on 8 November 2012.
- (2) Acknowledges the work of the board and management to develop the club into a major racing and tourist facility.
- (3) Thanks the chief executive officer, Brian Fletcher, chairman of the board of directors, John Hiatt, OAM, as well as the directors and staff of the club.

WESTERN SYDNEY AWARDS FOR BUSINESS EXCELLENCE

Mr BART BASSETT—That this House:

- (1) Acknowledges that the 2012 Western Sydney Awards for Business Excellence, being the 22nd award ceremony, were held at the Water View Function Centre in Bicentennial Park to showcase small, medium and large businesses across Western Sydney.
- (2) Congratulates the recipients of all awards including Paul Maher, the owner of Loxley on Bellbird Hill in the Londonderry electorate, who received the award for Excellence in Hospitality.
- (3) Thanks the organisers, judges and sponsors of the award ceremony.

KOOTEX INTERNATIONAL DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT AWARD

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS—That this House:

- (1) Recognises Moorebank business Kootex International Clothing Importers for their outstanding commitment to disability employment.
- (2) Congratulates Manager Dali Lee on receiving the Small Employer Award at the CRS Australia New South Wales/Australian Capital Territory Awards in September 2012.
- (3) Notes that during 2012 Kootex International has employed six people with a disability or injury and provided 14 on-the-job training placements to assist more job seekers in securing future employment.
- (4) Recognises manager Dali Lee and Kootex International for creating roles in the workplace that do not disadvantage employees and gives them opportunities for a fair go.

MENAI HIGH SCHOOL COWS CREATE CAREERS AWARD

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Menai High School on winning the "Cows Create Careers—Camembert in the Classroom" competition.
- (2) Notes that the project was designed to encourage secondary school students to consider a career in the dairy industry.
- (3) Congratulates Menai High on their award winning school-made camembert cheese and accompanying multimedia advertisement promoting the importance of dairy in a diet.

EGGTOBER FOUNDATION

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS—That this House:

- (1) Notes that October is the month for advocacy of the Eggtobor Foundation.
- (2) Recognises the work of Eggtobor Foundation co-founder Catherine Potter to raise awareness of gynaecological cancers, including ovarian cancer.
- (3) Thanks Catherine Potter and her daughter Belinda for handing out badges to Members of the New South Wales Parliament to raise awareness on 25 October 2012.

LIVERPOOL HOSPITAL HEALTH AWARDS

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Liverpool Hospital on winning two prestigious health awards for improving patient safety at the recent New South Wales Health Awards.
- (2) Notes that the Waterlow Wednesday project received the Improvement in Patient Safety Award for preventing patients from receiving pressure injuries.
- (3) Notes that the A Stitch in Time project received the Building Health Workforce Award for boosting professional development in neurosurgical nursing.
- (4) Recognises that in 2012 the local health district was nominated for an unprecedented six New South Wales Health Awards.

ST JUDE'S ANGLICAN CHURCH PARISH FAIR

Mr BRUCE NOTLEY-SMITH—That this House:

- (1) Notes that St Jude's Anglican Church in Randwick held its annual Parish Fair on 10 November 2012.
- (2) Congratulates the church and the fair's organising committee, led by Catherine Job, on a successful fair.

MACCABI NSW HALL OF FAME INDUCTION CEREMONY

Mr BRUCE NOTLEY-SMITH—That this House:

- (1) Notes that the Maccabi NSW Jewish Sports Hall of Fame Induction was held on 11 November 2012.
- (2) Notes that Jack Ellison, Gavin Fingleson and Jon Pillemer were inducted into the hall of fame for their sporting achievements.
- (3) Notes that Bernie Gold, OAM, Larry Cornofsky and Frank Lowy AC were inducted into the hall of fame for their services to sports administration.
- (4) Commends the work of Maccabi NSW for promoting sport within the Jewish community.

MIRIAM LIEBERMAN

Mr BRUCE NOTLEY-SMITH—That this House:

- (1) Notes that Miriam Lieberman, a constituent of the Coogee electorate, will attend the Australian World Music Expo in Melbourne in November 2012.
- (2) Commends the work of Ms Lieberman in the community, especially in the arts.

AUSTRALIAN PARALYMPIC COMMITTEE JUNIOR ATHLETE OF THE YEAR

Ms ROBYN PARKER—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Maddison Elliott, of Gillieston Heights, on being named the joint winner of the 2012 Australian Paralympic Committee Junior Athlete of the Year Award.
- (2) Notes that Maddison shared the award with Rheed McCracken.
- (3) Notes that Maddison will be 2013 Australia Day Ambassador for Maitland.

KALLY LEWIS AUSTRALIAN WOMEN'S FOOTBALL SQUAD SELECTION

Ms ROBYN PARKER—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Kally Lewis, of Lochinvar, on her selection in the Australian Women's Football Squad for the Asian Football Confederation women's under 16 years championship qualifiers in Manila, Philippines held between 7 and 11 November 2012.
- (2) Notes that Kally played in two of Australia's three matches.
- (3) Notes that Australia won Group C of the Championship with victories over Thailand, Myanmar and Philippines.
- (4) Notes Kally is a student of Rutherford Technology High School.

MORPETH PUBLIC SCHOOL SESQUICENTENARY CELEBRATIONS

Ms ROBYN PARKER—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Morpeth Public School on its sesquicentenary, which has been marked with a celebration day, sesquicentenary formal assembly, restoration of the school bell and the burial of a time capsule.
- (2) Notes that the school has been providing education to the community since 1862.
- (3) Wishes Morpeth Public School a prosperous future in educating its pupils.

HUNTER LOCAL BUSINESS AWARDS MAITLAND ELECTORATE RECIPIENTS

Ms ROBYN PARKER—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the four Maitland businesses recognised in the 2012 Hunter Local Business Awards presented on 31 October 2012.
- (2) Congratulates Amelia Atkinson on being named Business Person of the Year and her business, Willows Gifts and Homewares of Maitland, received the Antique, Arts, Crafts and Gifts section award.
- (3) Notes that McKay Biochemist Natural Health Clinic, Greenhills was recognised with the Specialised Business Award.
- (4) Notes Tony Cant Real Estate, Maitland received the Real Estate Agency section award.
- (5) Notes that Alphabet Academy Hunter Valley, Aberglasslyn was recognised with the Child Care Services Award.

JESSIE CRAMP 100TH BIRTHDAY

Ms ROBYN PARKER—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Jessie Cramp, of Largs, on celebrating her 100th birthday on 5 November 2012.
- (2) Wishes Jessie Cramp continued health and happiness in the future.

JOHN AND DAPHNE PARTRIDGE SEVENTIETH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

Ms ROBYN PARKER—That this House:

- (1) Notes John and Daphne Partridge, of Telarah, celebrated their seventieth wedding anniversary on 31 October 2012.
- (2) Congratulates Mr and Mrs Partridge and wishes them health and happiness for the future.

THOMAS AND THELMA DRIVER SEVENTIETH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

Ms ROBYN PARKER—That this House:

- (1) Notes Thomas and Thelma Driver, of Telarah, celebrated their seventieth wedding anniversary on 11 November 2012.
- (2) Congratulates Mr and Mrs Driver and wishes them health and happiness for the future.

HUNTER VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR AWARDS MAITLAND ELECTORATE NOMINEES

Ms ROBYN PARKER—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the nine Maitland individuals and groups nominated for the 2012 Hunter Volunteer of the Year Awards.
- (2) Notes Greg Harris and Wendy Harrison of Woodberry, as well as Rosalie Wynn of East Maitland, were nominated for volunteering with the Baptist Community Services Food 4 Life.
- (3) Notes Dennis Soper of East Maitland was nominated for volunteering with Maitland Park Hunter River Social Bowls.
- (4) Notes Hayden Spearpoint of East Seaham was nominated for volunteering with Riding for the Disabled.
- (5) Notes Christopher Vollmer of Gillieston Heights was nominated for volunteering with the NSW Cancer Council—Relay for Life.
- (6) Notes Gail Gourley and the Maitland Neighbourhood Centre's 14 Daycare Volunteers were nominated in the Volunteer Team of the Year Award Category.
- (7) Notes Robert Wood and the Tenambit-Morpeth Probus Club Host Committee of four volunteers were nominated in the Volunteer Team of the Year Award Category.
- (8) Notes Kristine Burke and The Maitland Hospital Rehabilitation Unit's nine volunteers were nominated in the Volunteer Team of the Year Award Category.

ALL SAINTS COLLEGE, ST PETER'S CAMPUS MAITLAND

Ms ROBYN PARKER—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates All Saints College, St Peter's Campus Maitland, on winning the 2012 Science and Engineering Challenge national final held at Deakin University, Geelong on 30 October 2012.
- (2) Wishes the members of the All Saints College team all the best with their future education.

SOCCER PLAYER BLAKE POWELL

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates 21-year-old Blake Powell on his contract with Sydney FC.
- (2) Notes that the Menai Hawks Junior and former Sutherland Sharks player is now playing alongside football superstar Alessandro Del Piero.

MENAI HIGH SCHOOL F1 IN SCHOOLS CHALLENGE

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the team from Menai High School on its success in the National F1 Challenge held in Adelaide this year.
- (2) Notes that the F1 in Schools is a multi-disciplinary challenge for teams across the globe to produce and then race miniature gas powered balsa wood F1 cars.
- (3) Recognises that the team, Limitless, were winners of the Best Engineered Design category.

MARINE RESCUE BROKEN BAY

Mr ROB STOKES—That this House:

- (1) Notes this year marks the seventy-fifth anniversary of Marine Rescue Broken Bay.
- (2) Notes that Marine Rescue Broken Bay began as the Royal Volunteer Coastal Patrol and has a proud history, including working in conjunction with the Royal Australian Navy during WWII to defend bridges and important infrastructure in the Hawkesbury and Broken Bay region.
- (3) Commends Marine Rescue Broken Bay for its continuing work protecting maritime traffic in New South Wales' busiest recreational port.

HOLY CROSS COLLEGE RIVER TO RIVER CORRIDORS PROJECT

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the students of Holy Cross College, Ryde, for planting thousands of native plants along more than 900 square metres of the school's boundary with Cressy Road.
- (2) Notes these plantings were part of the River to River Corridors Project that has already planted some 12,000 native plants to create corridors for native animals.
- (3) Notes that the students of Holy Cross College can be rightfully proud of their work as this project beautifies their school, helps the community and protects the environment.

HUNTERS HILL CARER OF THE YEAR KOREAN COCKATOOS

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS—That this House:

- (1) Pays tribute to The Korean Cockatoos organisation which has been named Carer of the Year by Hunters Hill Council.
- (2) Notes that the organisation provides advocacy services for 35 local Korean families who have children with autism.
- (3) Commends the Korean Cockatoos for their invaluable contribution to the community.

RIVERSIDE PRESCHOOL, HENLEY

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the Henley Riverside Pre-school on its tenth anniversary.
- (2) Notes that this is a non-profit community based pre-school.
- (3) Pays special tribute to former Hunters Hill mayor Sue Hoopmann, who played a central role in establishing the pre-school.

HUNTERS HILL JACARANDA TREES

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS—That this House:

- (1) Acknowledges that it is jacaranda flowering season in Hunters Hill, Australia's oldest garden suburb.
- (2) Notes that the flowering of the Hunters Hill jacarandas is a highly anticipated local event.
- (3) Commends both the community and Hunters Hill Council for their hard work and commitment in maintaining the jacaranda trees as a much-loved aspect of the municipality's identity.

FIRE AND RESCUE NSW RECRUIT TOL BROINOWSKI

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS—That this House:

- (1) Recognises the decision of Mr Tol Broinowski to dedicate his career in service to the community, through his commitment to serve in Fire and Rescue NSW and protect the lives and property of others.
- (2) Pays tribute to Fire and Rescue NSW for selflessly protecting the community regardless of the risks posed to its personnel on a daily basis.
- (3) Congratulates Mr Broinowski for his successful completion of the recruit training program.
- (4) Wishes Mr Broinowski a long and fulfilling career with Fire and Rescue NSW.

MOWBRAY PUBLIC SCHOOL SIXTIETH ANNIVERSARY

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS—That this House:

- (1) Recognises that Mowbray Public School has served the community for more than 60 years, celebrating its anniversary in May 2012.
- (2) Commends Mrs Anna Blakeney on her service and leadership to the school and community over nearly two decades serving as its principal.
- (3) Notes the immensely positive impact that this school has had upon the local area of Lane Cove North in fostering a greater sense of achievement in the Lane Cove North community.
- (4) Wishes every success for the school, its teachers, students and their families, in their future endeavours.

SYDNEY MID WEST VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR DARRIN PARKIN

Mr CHARLES CASUSCELLI—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Darrin Parkin for receiving the New South Wales Volunteer of the Year for Sydney Mid West 2012 Award.
- (2) Commends the efforts of both Darrin and the Strathfield branch of the State Emergency Services for their continued service to the community in the face of adversity caused from two fires at its headquarters in 2012.

TENPIN BOWLER JASON BELMONTE

Mr ANDREW GEE—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Orange ten pin bowler Jason Belmonte's win in the AMF Australian Masters title played at the AMF Centre in Rooty Hill in October 2012, and on reaching the final of Professional Bowlers Association world series of bowling final in Las Vegas in November 2012.
- (2) Notes that in the final Mr Belmonte won a three match thriller against USA rival Sean Rash.
- (3) Recognises that Jason Belmonte's feats in the ten pin bowling lanes helps promote Orange and wishes him well in future tournaments.

ORANGE KENNEL CLUB DOG SHOWS

Mr ANDREW GEE—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Orange Kennel Club president John Wills, secretary Helen Woods and the club's members on conducting successful shows on 10 and 11 November 2012.
- (2) Notes that entries for 2012 shows were against the trend and increased by 33 per cent over the same event in 2011.
- (3) Recognises the important economic benefit that dog show tourism brings Orange and other towns and cities in regional New South Wales.

JOYCE PURTLE HIDDEN TREASURES HONOUR ROLL RECOGNITION

Mr ANDREW GEE—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Joyce Purtle, of Cooyal, on being named on the New South Wales 2012 Primary Industries Hidden Treasure honour roll.
- (2) Notes that Joyce Purtle is recognised for her volunteer work for the Country Women's Association (CWA), New South Wales farmers, the Cooyal Hall Association, the Parents and Citizens Association and her role in the restoration of the Cooyal cemetery.
- (3) Recognises that Joyce Purtle has been a member of the CWA for more than 45 years.

CABONNE EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR KERRY CONNELLY

Mr ANDREW GEE—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Kerry Connolly, of Molong, on being named employee of the year at the Cabonne Council's 2012 Daroo Business Awards.
- (2) Notes that Kerry Connolly has helped many people find their homes in the Cabonne Council area through her work as a real estate consultant.
- (3) Wishes Kerry Connolly further success in her chosen profession.

TRIBUTE TO KEVIN JOHNSON

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the Minimbah Rural Fire Brigade on dedicating a garden in memory of the late Kevin Johnson, who was an active and dedicated member.
- (2) Notes that Mr Johnson's widow, Verena, unveiled a plaque at a ceremony at the Minimbah Fire station.
- (3) Notes that Mr Johnson's joined the Brigade in 1986 shortly after moving to the Minimbah area from Sydney.
- (4) Notes that Mr Johnson received the National Medal and a long service award in honour of his twenty years of service to the rural fire service.
- (5) Notes that Mr Johnson is remembered by his former colleagues for his dedication, camaraderie, sense of humour, bush poetry and generosity.

MANNING VALLEY UNDER 13 GIRLS INDOOR HOCKEY TEAM

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates the members and coaches of the Manning Valley girls under 13 years Indoor Hockey team that won the division two NSW State Championship in Tamworth.
- (2) Notes that Manning defeated Sydney by six goals to two in the final which was played before a large and supportive crowd that featured the only two undefeated sides in the championship.
- (3) Notes that the Manning team had only been able to train on turf leading up to the championships and, despite that disadvantage, scored 31 goals to 9 against during the competition.

MORGAN COLEMAN NEW SOUTH WALES UNDER 13 GIRLS INDOOR HOCKEY TEAM SELECTION

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD—That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Morgan Coleman on being her selection in the New South Wales under 13s girls Indoor Hockey side.
- (2) Notes that Morgan is a member of the Manning under 13s girls Indoor Hockey team that won the 2012 division two New South Wales championship in Tamworth.

Question put and resolved in the affirmative.

Community recognition notices agreed to.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms SONIA HORNERY (Wallsend) [11.21 a.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) notes Government plans to give school principals more control over staff and finances; and
- (2) questions how this plan will encourage qualified and experienced teachers to teach in difficult to staff schools in New South Wales.

Many concerns have been raised over the O'Farrell's Government's Local Schools, Local Decisions policy, which delegates management by forcing principals to take additional control of staff and finances. It is a means of shifting the blame away from the Government to schools if budgets and educational outcomes decline. It is a smokescreen for budget cuts by the O'Farrell Government. The Government claims the system will improve the quality of teaching and learning. In reality, it places additional strain on the State's education system, which will simultaneously be hampered by an additional \$1.7 billion in cuts. The Government wants 1,800 support staff positions abolished, but it is expecting principals to bear additional responsibilities outside their specific scope of work. It is clear the O'Farrell Government is attempting to shift the eventual blame they will face once our education system deteriorates. Once these changes are in force it is not a matter of whether it will crumble; it is a matter of when. Responsibilities will be pushed down from State to regional offices to schools that are already under pressure.

Principals will control 70 per cent of the budget rather than the current stipulated amount of 10 per cent. Budget constraints will coerce principals to employ less experienced casual teachers on lower pay scales rather than more experienced teachers who will be too costly for schools to maintain. In addition to losing more experienced teachers, essential specialist positions such as librarians, behaviour and reading support professionals may be cut to stay within a tight budget. The NSW Teachers Federation claims the changes to the O'Farrell Government's Local Schools, Local Decisions policy may lead to an increase and eventual abundance of short-term or casual arrangements. Long-serving and experienced permanent teachers may be replaced by cheaper graduates hired in one of those arrangements. The eventual dilemma will save money for the department but will result in students being predominantly taught by inexperienced teachers. The federation's secretary, Maurie Mulheron, said the policy will lead to:

... a totally deregulated staffing structure, with an increasing number of temporary positions, no incremental pay scale and no guaranteed executive structure.

Short-term and casual employment will lead to a significant challenge for principals and the education system, and principals are notably concerned. One principal said a similar policy was implemented in the United States which resulted in cuts to the curriculum and diminished flexibility in leadership and in management. Other principals expressed their concerns regarding how the additional responsibility for budgets and finances will alter their educational leadership role to that of a business manager. This is certainly apparent in the schools in my electorate, with one principal feeling the situation is a catch 22. He believes there will be more support, more flexibility in decision-making but without adequate support. He is certainly not alone with his views when we consider what the O'Farrell Government has been spinning regarding the current education system. One would have thought that principals had a limited role in decisions about their schools.

Currently, principals can hire a particular candidate based solely on who would be the best person for the job. According to Fred Dumbrell, the Teachers Federation representative for the Hunter, more than half the staff appointed to schools around the Hunter are appointed by a local committee that consists of the principal, a teacher representative, and a parent representative who interviews people. The only significant change is that principals will have to refer to the budget once the Local Schools, Local Decisions policy is enforced. This will lead to consequences. If push comes to shove and significant budget savings are required, positions may be axed because salaries typically account for 85 per cent of the budget in public schools. How will we encourage young, intelligent people to join the teaching profession when it is clear there will be no long-term job prospects under this policy? How do we ensure that experienced teachers do not flee the profession for fear of losing their jobs?

I vigorously oppose these changes because they will be detrimental to the future of this State's children. I am not alone in these views. The many protests and petitions endorsed by rightfully concerned members of the public justify this motion. A school security fence may be dilapidated, but there may be cubicle doors that require replacement in the bathrooms. Another school may need sport equipment, but the books in the library may not have been updated for years. A particular teacher may be outstanding in delivering educational results among her students, but the principal will be able to employ her only if the school foregoes one of the necessary casual teachers. These are the types of dilemmas that principals will be forced to consider. These are just a few of the issues and commitments that will be shifted away from the O'Farrell Government, but for which it should continue to be responsible.

Ms GABRIELLE UPTON (Vaucluse—Parliamentary Secretary) [11.28 a.m.]: I thank the member for Wallsend for her motion on this important issue, which gives me the welcome opportunity to speak about our Government's commitment to increase local decision-making in New South Wales in our government schools and specifically our Local Schools, Local Decisions policy, which I strongly support. Local Schools, Local Decisions is about making sure that the students in New South Wales are placed at the centre of all the decision-making, whether that reform is in the vocational training sector, higher education sector, or schools. This Government thinks that is important.

Teachers and principals, not politicians or bureaucrats—not me, not the member for Wallsend—best understand the learning and social needs of our students. Research has told us for many years that quality teaching is at the heart of exceptional school education. It opens up opportunities for our young people to obtain better jobs and higher incomes and to enjoy a better quality of life. Unlike members opposite, who want to regulate and bind education with red tape and processes, this Government trusts our teachers and principals to make decisions based on their understanding of what is best for our children.

Like other members, over the next five weeks or so I will be attending my local schools' prize-giving and speech day events, which are very enjoyable. I have six or seven public schools in my electorate and a number of private schools because it is a very densely populated area covering more than 15 square kilometres. I witness the personal commitment to and pride that the teachers have in their students. I see the joy on the faces of parents and teachers when they acknowledge the children's achievements over the year. I also see the teachers' professionalism and that makes me confident that they have the students' interests in their minds when they make decisions. However, their hands are tied, and the Local Schools, Local Decisions reforms are all about untying their hands.

The clear sentiment that I observe when I visit schools not only for prize-giving ceremonies but also throughout the year makes me confident that principals can make good decisions about their schools. It also makes the Government confident that the decisions they make are in the best interests of the students and that they deserve greater power to make those decisions. As a government, the Coalition is taking a considered approach to the Local Schools, Local Decisions reforms. It is continuing to work with key stakeholder groups to develop the statewide policy framework that will provide the details to make the reform happen.

I will take members through some of the key components of the Local Schools, Local Decisions reforms. Schools will make most decisions and a significantly smaller head office will develop a policy framework to guide them. Schools will manage more of the total school education budget than ever before. They will also manage a flexible budget that has a specified amount preserved for staffing—that is, it will not be able to be used for anything other than staffing. The remaining component will fund all other operational requirements and any discretionary needs, which may include employing additional staff if that is deemed necessary. A new resource allocation model will fund schools directly and funding will reflect unique characteristics as well as student numbers. Small changes in student enrolment will not mean large changes in resourcing, which is what we saw under the Labor Government.

The resource allocation model builds on the department's rich student and school data to allocate funding so that students and schools get a fairer and more equitable allocation of available resources. It is a fairer way of allocating the public school education budget to schools in any one year. Under the resource allocation model all classroom teachers will cost the same to all schools. It will ensure that each school receives the funding required to provide staff in accordance with the existing class size policy. Principals will not need to select staff based on cost. They will be able to choose teachers based on their quality and getting the right mix of staff to best meet the needs of their students. Salary progression will be based on attainment of national professional standards. Surely that is a sensible path to follow. We should be rewarding teachers for effort. Coalition politics is all about reward for effort. We should provide incentives to people to step up. We want to be aspirational and we want to reward teachers and principals who put in the extra effort to educate our young people.

Principals will have more authority to make local decisions for purchases up to \$5,000. A single comprehensive school plan and annual report will be connected to student learning outcomes and budgets. That is important because it is about connecting the budget to the outcomes and rewarding effort. There will be a connection between planning and delivery. Again, the Government believes it is important to marry those elements. The Local Schools, Local Decisions reforms will encourage qualified and experienced teachers to teach in difficult-to-staff schools. Those schools will be able to make decisions to suit their circumstances and to respond to their students' needs.

First and foremost, I believe that teachers and principals are professionals, and I see that in the schools in my electorate. Like any other professional in any other area of endeavour, they want a working environment in which decision-making responds to their needs. This is a good story. The resource allocation model represents a ground-breaking shift in the way resources are allocated to our public schools and ensures that principals have a much greater say in how to use their resources. It will encourage qualified and experienced teachers to stay in the profession and will support them in their calling to do one of the most important jobs in our community—educating our children. They are our future. Those of us who are parents value and respect our schoolteachers and these reforms give them the respect they deserve.

Ms CARMEL TEBBUTT (Marrickville) [11.35 a.m.]: I support the motion moved by the member for Wallsend, which deals with some important issues. The policy referred to in this motion is euphemistically

called "Local Schools, Local Decisions". The Government claims that it is all about putting principals and teachers back into the driver's seat. In reality we know that it is a strategy designed to squeeze school budgets and to cut school funding. If there were any doubt about that we need go no further than a statement made by the member for Clarence and quoted in the 13 November edition of the *Byron Shire News*. He said:

The cuts—

that is, the \$1.7 billion that the Government has cut from the education and training budget—

are in line with the Government's Local Schools, Local Decisions policy.

The member has clearly belled the cat. Local Schools, Local Decisions is all about implementing the Government's \$1.7 billion cuts to the education and training budget. The Parliamentary Secretary said that the policy is all about students and putting them at the centre of everything that the Government is doing. If that is the case, why in the five pages of promotional factsheets that were distributed when the Local Schools, Local Decisions policy was announced are student outcomes mentioned only once? The policy is supposedly all about student outcomes. Surely if it were true that term would warrant a mention more than once in five pages.

Local Schools, Local Decisions has raised many concerns. There is no guarantee about permanent teachers or about teaching and executive staff. Concerns have also been raised about increased class sizes and responsibilities, functions and accountabilities being pushed down to the local level without any accompanying resources. There will be a move to standards-based career progression, but no detail has been provided about what that will mean in practice. I take issue with the Parliamentary Secretary's comment that the Coalition is all about reward for effort and that that is what is driving the salary change elements of the Local Schools, Local Decisions reforms. The Labor Government ensured that New South Wales teachers were among the best paid in Australia.

Mr John Williams: They still are.

Ms CARMEL TEBBUTT: They will not be for long under this Government. The Labor Government recognised the importance of the work that teachers do. I would like someone on the government benches to explain how, if this is all about reward for effort, they will compare the performance of one of the fantastic teachers at a selective high school such as Fort Street High School, which is my electorate, with the performance of a teacher dealing with disabled students. The teachers at Fort Street High School teach the best and brightest and get great results. How will the Government compare their performance with the performance of teachers dealing with children with a disability who struggle every day to learn? The dedication, commitment and patience of those teachers ensure that their students progress in a way that otherwise would not happen. One cannot compare the efforts of those teachers with the efforts of teachers in selective schools in the way proposed in the Local Schools, Local Decisions reforms and reward them on that basis. That issue is a concern for teachers.

The Parliamentary Secretary referred to the Resource Allocation Model [RAM]. We know that that is all about making it easier to squeeze school resources. If that is not the case, why have the Country Areas Program, the Priority School Funding Program and the Priority Schools Program been scrapped? Those programs support the most marginalised and vulnerable students. This is not about one side trusting principals, teachers and schools; it is about a concern that cutting schools free from the supports they need means that disadvantaged schools will struggle even more.

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Menai) [11.39 a.m.]: I thank the member for Wallsend for moving this motion but I am disappointed at the fear campaign being brought into this debate. We all know and agree that education is the cornerstone of our society and we are committed to ensuring that our students are given a quality education. We are also committed to providing our wonderful teachers and our principals with the resources and training they need to deliver this outcome for our young people. The Government has introduced the Local Schools, Local Decisions education reforms to make these goals a reality for public schools across the State. The crucial part of these reforms is the new Resource Allocation Model [RAM], which will ensure a more equitable allocation of the resources available to be spent on our public schools.

By handing back the power to our local schools, we will empower principals and help them mould a system that can be customised to fit their school perfectly. Principals can decide on how many staff members they need. They can make decisions about purchasing resources to best suit their needs. This greater involvement at a local level will bring much-needed reliability for our schools. The Resource Allocation Model will provide certainty of funding for schools so that each school receives the level of staffing needed to adhere to the current class size policy.

Those across the Chamber have tried to insinuate that this will make it harder for schools to hire quality teaching staff. In fact, the Minister and I believe that it will give them greater say in the staff they hire. Rather than

focusing on the cost of employing a teacher, the decision will be made on merit, need and quality. This means our schools will be empowered to select qualified and experienced teachers for their schools. The Resource Allocation Model represents a groundbreaking shift in the way resources are allocated to our public schools and ensures that principals are able to have a much greater say in how to use their resources for the benefit of their students.

Currently, schools directly receive only 10 per cent of the public school education budget. Through Local Schools, Local Decisions schools will be able to receive 70 per cent of the budget. That is an impressive result for our public schools. We know that not all schools are the same; they have different levels of need that require different levels of support. The Resource Allocation Model draws on the department's rich student and school data to allocate funding so that the students and schools with greater need get more resources. It makes sense to do it this way. A number of criteria will determine the type of base allocation given to schools. First, the type of school being funded is considered—whether it is a primary, secondary, central or specific purposes school—and the staffing required under the department's class size policy.

Secondly, factors such as low socio-economic backgrounds, Aboriginal background, English language proficiency and low level disability are considered to ensure greater equity at those schools. Finally, additional loadings are given to schools with students who require a high or moderate level of adjustment for disability as well as students from overseas and refugees. This will mean that the school is able to adequately provide customised support to these students. These components are consistent with the principles outlined in the Gonski report and will go a long way towards ensuring equity for our neediest students.

The Government's education reforms are a step in the right direction to strengthen our public schools and give our principals the power to deliver the right outcomes for their school community. It is a great outcome for our students, it is a great outcome for our principals and it is a great outcome particularly for our hardworking teachers. All those I have spoken to are not listening to the Labor and union campaign. They are excited about being empowered to look after their own school and to have a say in how it is run for the betterment of their school community.

Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) [11.43 a.m.]: I speak in debate on the motion moved by the member for Wallsend and refer at the outset to the utter treachery of this Government's attack on our education system and the detrimental impact it will have on our children across New South Wales. The ramifications will be felt for decades to come. Since the Government's announcement of the funding cuts, I have visited almost every primary and secondary school in my electorate. It is timely that today we have the opportunity to debate school principals and their role in controlling staff and finances. It is the view of some that the proposals to give principals more autonomy to control staffing and finance at a local level are welcome. However, many are equally concerned that it will come at a cost.

There is a real fear that funding will be cut from local schools. There is a fear that local principals will be used as the scapegoats for having to make funding cuts to local schools on behalf of the Minister and the education bureaucrats. As we are all too aware, this plan may prove extremely difficult to be implemented in those schools already struggling to attract qualified and experienced teachers. The New South Wales Teachers Federation states that this proposal is being used as a pretext to cut \$250 million per year from the education budget. Given the record of this Government, I cannot help but agree. The federation is of the view that class sizes will grow as staff numbers and specialist positions are slashed. I cannot help but agree.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr John Barilaro): Order! The member for Shellharbour will be heard in silence.

Ms ANNA WATSON: We are aware of the O'Farrell Government's mentality of achieving so-called savings by making continuous and unrelenting cuts to education, not to mention cuts to other services such as health. This proposal allows principals to employ casuals who will work regular and systematic hours without the job security and conditions of employment that their counterparts enjoy. There is nothing casual about a worker who is working in this fashion. Principals will be forced to compete for staff on the wages paid rather than being able to employ experienced teachers. This proposal is not only destructive; it also is short-sighted and ignorant and is out of touch with modern education systems. To achieve a modern education system, New South Wales requires modern leaders with a vision who will implement strategic processes that create a teaching and learning culture that provides students with essential skill sets such as creativity, communication, collaboration, critical thinking, problem solving and global awareness.

The actions of this Government's education cuts do not reflect modern teaching and learning outcomes. These types of cuts and changes to the education system of New South Wales have not been seen in over 20 years. The last time teachers and parents saw such changes to education and schools was under the Greiner Government. At a time when the nation is debating an increase in financial resources to local schools based on the Gonski reforms, why is the New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Government taking funding out of our local schools? The cuts to education and

local schools are a shocking development. This decision reflects poorly on the Liberal-Nationals Government. Now is the time to increase investment in our local schools and our schoolchildren. There is no place for cuts in our education system. I commend the motion moved by the member for Wallsend and I thank her for moving it.

Mr ANDREW GEE (Orange) [11.47 a.m.]: The motion moved by the member for Wallsend is very disappointing, as were the contributions of those opposite. It is particularly disappointing when one considers the sad and sorry record of those opposite on education reform in New South Wales. For 16 years the members of the Opposition squibbed it; they were beholden to special interests and unions. The former Government did not carry out any education reform in New South Wales. Those opposite have a very sad and sorry record. The crowning glory of the reign of that regime was its mismanagement and bungling of the Building the Education Revolution program.

Ms Sonia Horner: Point of order: My point of order is Standing Order 129, relevance. The member for Orange should read the motion and speak to it.

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

Mr ANDREW GEE: My comments are relevant to the motion. They are directed at highlighting the differences in the approach of those opposite with that of the Government. The centralised control seen in the Building the Education Revolution, which those opposite mismanaged, is clearly demonstrated in a school in my electorate, Nashdale Public School. The central controllers in Sydney wanted the school to have an extra classroom or two and a new library but the local people said, "No. We are taking control of the project." For the same money the school got all these facilities plus a new administration block. Those on this side of the House trust the local people on the ground to make decisions in the best interests of the students. That is what has been missing—

Dr Andrew McDonald: You cut funding to Guise Public School.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr John Barilaro): Order! The member for Macquarie Fields will come to order.

Mr ANDREW GEE: The truth hurts. The way in which the former Government wasted millions of dollars in New South Wales is a stain on its record. The O'Farrell Government trusts those on the ground to make the best decisions for the students of this State. The Government is giving principals the freedom to make more local decisions for purchases up to \$5,000. Principals will have the authority to purchase items from alternative suppliers even if a State contract is in place. Principals and teachers will be able to choose whether local suppliers or government contractors offer the best value for taxpayers' money when purchasing resources to meet the needs of their students. The Government trusts the principals and the teachers to make the right decisions in their classrooms every day, so we should be able to trust them with the management of their schools.

Those on the other side of the House failed to understand that; central control is in their DNA. Those opposite love the control of Sussex Street, the commissars and the apparatchiks. Conversely, the Government loves decentralisation of decision-making. This is also great news for small businesses which up until now have been denied the opportunity to supply their local schools because of centralised control and red tape. The Minister for Education has made it very clear that anyone with a permanent job in the Department of Education and Communities will not be affected by these changes. It is all about principals being able to determine the mix of their permanent and temporary staff. Those opposite have failed education in New South Wales. They had 16 years to do something and they squibbed it. [*Time expired.*]

Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend) [11.51 a.m.], in reply: I thank the members for the electorates of Vacluse, Marrickville, Menai, Shellharbour and Orange for their contributions to debate. The member for Vacluse said that it is not necessarily up to politicians to make statements about what should best happen in education, it is about what teachers have to say. I agree with her. I know a bit about public education. I have taught at primary schools. For 18 years I taught in public schools in some of the most working-class areas of New South Wales. For five years I marked ancient history papers for the Higher School Certificate examination and for one year I taught modern history at TAFE. I am proud to have been a member of a Labor Government and to have taught in those public schools in working-class areas.

I agree with the member for Vacluse that quality teaching is at the heart of learning. Big budgets and cost cutting is not about the quality of learning. I too acknowledge the personal commitment and professionalism of every teacher in New South Wales. I take my hat off to them because I appreciate how hard they work. I also agree with the member for Vacluse that principals make the best decisions they can within the parameters they have. But what will happen when budgetary constraints take priority over sound educational decisions? It will be all about the budget, not about an educational outcome. It will be about the cheapest, casual teacher who can teach a relief class when a teacher is on maternity leave rather than a permanent, high-quality teacher.

The member for Marrickville said that Local Schools, Local Decisions is about squeezing public schools. I agree with her. The comment of the member for Clarence that Local Schools, Local Decisions is linked to the \$1.7 billion in budgetary cuts to Education funding is testament to that. What then is the Local Schools, Local Decisions policy all about? It is not about educational outcomes; it is about cuts to education. The member for Shellharbour spoke about the heart of public education. I disagree with the comments of the member for Menai that this is a smear campaign. I have been a teacher. Many of those opposite have no real experience in teaching in public schools in working-class areas as I have.

Mrs Leslie Williams: That is not true.

Ms SONIA HORNER: Did you?

Mrs Leslie Williams: Yes, I did.

Ms SONIA HORNER: In a working-class public school?

Mrs Leslie Williams: Yes, I did.

Ms SONIA HORNER: I doubt it. For how long—18 years?

Mrs Leslie Williams: You should read my profile.

Ms SONIA HORNER: I will. I would like to see whether you taught at schools like Walgett and South Kempsey, like I did. I do know a little about teaching in those types of schools.

Ms Melanie Gibbons: You should apologise.

Ms SONIA HORNER: I will not apologise.

[Interruption]

Mr Acting-Speaker, I ask that you take control of the House and direct Government members not to call out during speeches. I am yet again disappointed at the contribution of the member for Orange. As usual, he did not even make an attempt to address the motion. It is a recurring theme that the member for Orange wants to talk about the past. I was not talking about the Building the Education Revolution. I was talking about what is happening right now with Local Schools, Local Decisions. Labor did not implement that policy.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr John Barilaro): Order! The member for Orange will come to order.

Ms SONIA HORNER: I am not beholden to any special interests. When we were in government and two small schools in my electorate looked as if they would lose a teacher I approached the Minister for Education and Training. Those teachers were kept because—

Ms Katrina Hodgkinson: Point of order: I do not wish to curtail this important debate; however, the member for Wallsend has made an accusation against the member for Port Macquarie. The member for Port Macquarie is not happy about that. I ask that the member for Wallsend withdraw her accusation that the member for Port Macquarie had not taught in a public school at a certain level.

Mr Richard Amery: To the point of order: If the member for Port Macquarie is offended by any comments made in the House she should ask the chair to have the member withdraw the comment if it is offensive.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr John Barilaro): Order! I ask the member for Wallsend to withdraw her comment.

Ms SONIA HORNER: It would have been nice if the member had not called out from her seat, which is becoming a common practice of those opposite. I withdraw the comment. I will be interested to see what working-class public school the member for Port Macquarie taught at and for how many years she taught.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr John Barilaro): Order! I call the member for Port Macquarie to order.

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

Motion agreed to.

BLAXCELL STREET PUBLIC SCHOOL

Mr TONY ISSA (Granville) [11.57 a.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) acknowledges the visit on 23 November 2011 by the Minister for Education to Blaxcell Street Public School;
- (2) congratulates the Government for honouring its election commitment to provide extra funding of \$200,000 to Blaxcell Street Public School for facility upgrades;
- (3) notes that these funds will be spent on repairing and resurfacing the playground and other hard surface areas; and
- (4) congratulates Principal Sandra Bradley for her stewardship over the past six years at Blaxcell Street Public School and of the 880 pupils.

I am pleased to bring to the attention of the House concerns that have been raised with me by my community in the electorate of Granville. Schools in my electorate had been taken for granted for many years, particularly Blaxcell Street Public School which needed major repairs. During my campaign in the lead-up to the election in 2011 I visited the school where the parents and teachers brought to my attention the deteriorating condition of the school infrastructure. They told me of the many promises that had been made by the previous Government but had never been honoured. The then shadow Minister for Education accompanied me on a visit to the school to inspect the condition of the school infrastructure. I was pleased that the then shadow Minister promised that Blaxcell Street Public School would receive a maximum of \$200,000 for upgrading the playground to make the school safer for the kids.

Earlier members opposite talked about the Government's education cuts of \$1.7 billion but they failed to mention the Federal Government's cuts to education. About three weeks ago I was invited to visit two schools not in my electorate but in the adjoining electorate of Auburn. I am not sure why I was invited to visit the schools; the member for Auburn probably failed to listen. I visited the schools and spoke to the principals on the same day that the local Federal member was collecting signatures on a petition, using education for political gain in the area, and on the same night that the Federal Government announced that it was cutting the Education budget by double the amount that the New South Wales Government announced it was cutting in education. I am surprised the members opposite have not mentioned the Federal Government's funding cuts.

Today I expected members opposite to apologise to the community—especially to the 28 schools in my electorate that I have visited—for what has occurred in the Granville electorate. I have spoken to principals and parents, and I shook hands with students in the playground. They appreciate that the local member is talking at their level and understands their needs. Surprisingly, members opposite did not talk about the need to upgrade the school and make it safer for the students. I do not understand how kids will perform well if we do not provide a safer environment in which they can learn. The Government does not take anything for granted. We honour our commitments and our promises to the community. In addition, I was surprised to discover that Blaxcell Street Public School was the only school in my electorate that did not have flashing lights in its school zone, so I raised concerns on behalf of the community. I spoke to the Minister for Roads and Ports and the Minister for Transport to ensure that we provide a safer environment for the school and the community.

The Government assured me that flashing lights would be installed, and they were installed ahead of the Government's timetable. I am pleased that the Government honoured its commitment. We hope to make the school safer for the community. Today I thank the school's parents and citizens committee, and the principal and staff for their hard work and commitment to lobbying me and the Government to provide funds to repair the school, especially the playground. I am pleased to be part of a government that delivers. We do not take anything for granted. Everyone reckoned that the Granville electorate would always be a safe Labor seat; no-one would take it from Labor. The Labor Government took Granville for granted but the community did not accept that. Today I am pleased to raise concerns on behalf of many thousands of people in my community. I thank the Government for delivering what the people in my electorate deserve. I commend the motion to the House.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD (Macquarie Fields) [12.04 p.m.]: This motion should be held up for everybody in the State to read because it is typical of this Government. This is a self-congratulatory motion based on a speech that was about nothing but spin and the blame game. It ignored the real agenda in public education in 2012 in New South Wales, which are the real cuts to education funding introduced by the Government, albeit in an extremely ham-fisted way. Members who do not believe that the Government's cuts have caused major difficulties in public education are either not listening or not paying attention to what they

are being told by parents and staff on the ground. The Teachers Federation has organised enormous demonstrations. The petitions outside every school are gratefully accepted by the parents I have met. There is a large amount of voter anger about what is happening in education in this State at the moment. Every child only ever gets one chance to be educated, and more than two-thirds of those children depend on the public system for their education.

Mr Craig Baumann: Point of order—

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

Mr Craig Baumann: It is relevance. We are debating a motion relating to Blaxcell Street Public School. I have not heard the member for Macquarie Fields refer to the school once; he is simply giving a general spray.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr John Barilaro): Order! I uphold the point of order. I remind the member for Macquarie Fields that this motion relates to funding for Blaxcell Street Public School.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD: I am moving on to that.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr John Barilaro): Order! I have not finished my ruling. The motion acknowledges the \$200,000 election commitment and the funding that goes with it, and congratulates the principal. I ask the member to return to the leave of the motion.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD: That point of order is a clear example of what the Government is trying to do in the education debate: silence dissent in a mixture of self-congratulatory motions and blame games about an important and necessary renovation at Blaxcell Street Public School. But \$200,000 is not the same as \$1.7 billion. The jobs that will be cut from schools, including Blaxcell Street Public School, are vital and involve important functions such as curriculum support. The Government's policies have Orwellian names such as the so-called Every School, Every Child policy, which is all about cutting funding to children with special needs. A large number of children at Blaxcell Street Public School have special needs because the modern morbidity of childhood is educational. These children are struggling with literacy and numeracy. The results at Blaxcell Street Public School will be available on the internet.

The idea of releasing the data publicly is to drive investment in helping every child to achieve the minimum level of education. That cannot possibly be done with \$1.7 billion worth of cuts. Members and parents of children in primary school know that. Sadly that relates not only to the children at Blaxcell Street Public School. The large number of children in this State who have special needs will not be properly catered for. It is not rocket science. All it requires is adequate support for teachers and teaching aides' funding to enable these children to catch up in the first six years of primary school. It can be done with reading recovery programs and special help, but they are precisely the jobs and positions that are being cut by this Government. Not only the children at Blaxcell Street Public School but also children throughout the State will have their futures blighted permanently by the Government's cuts to education.

For example, the 138 children at Guise Public School have been abandoned by the Government and face an uncertain future. A large number of children at Blaxcell Street Public School have significant problems with literacy and numeracy. The increase in teacher-student ratios is caused by the reduction in class sizes. However, members opposite have conveniently ignored that issue. Reducing class sizes has resulted in a major improvement in teaching standards for young children. The Government has sought to wind back reducing class sizes but has been unable to do so and will continue to try to do so. Reducing class sizes has made a major difference to the children at Blaxcell Street Public School. Those programs, which provide support for those who need it most, will be cut at Blaxcell Street Public School, as at every other school in the State.

The tragedy of that is that if it is not done early and done intensively the damage to literacy and numeracy will be permanent. The worldwide literature is quite clear: Unless we invest early in literacy and numeracy, and to do that requires adequate numbers of special needs teachers and curriculum support, and adequate professional development for teachers—all of which has been cut by this Government at Blaxcell Street school and other schools—the damage to these children will be permanent. They will not care if \$200,000 has been spent on their school on important but basic maintenance, which is all this self-congratulatory motion is about. Their future will be affected by this Government's cuts and they will never read this motion because it will be consigned to the dustbin of history.

The Building the Education Revolution made an enormous difference to every school in this State. Anybody who has ever built a house knows how difficult it is, and yes, there were problems. In my electorate, like every other, one or two schools experienced problems but every other school was revolutionised. Those opposite voted against it based on ideology and sought to demean the achievements of the Building the Education Revolution. This self-congratulatory motion is just like that. [*Time expired.*]

Mr CRAIG BAUMANN (Port Stephens—Parliamentary Secretary) [12.11 p.m.]: I am pleased to contribute to debate on this motion following the "Bah, humbug!" from the member for Macquarie Fields. His speech was most interesting. He should be aware that in 2010 Blaxcell Street Public School received the Director General's School Achievement Award in literacy. I was looking through the school's newsletter online and saw that there was a maths fun day on 7 May. The newsletter reads:

Kindergarten participated in Maths Fun Day. They learnt all about the ways we use maths in our everyday lives. Each class got to visit all six teachers and join in fun maths activities.

I should explain that I went to Blaxcell Street Public School between the years of fifty-eight and sixty-two—that is 1958, not 1858.

Ms Katrina Hodgkinson: You tell us that.

Mr CRAIG BAUMANN: Yes. Thank you, Minister. At that time I think there were only two kindergarten classes; there are now six. The newsletter talks about the wonderful day they had learning maths. It states:

In Miss Sattouf's room the children learnt how we can use maths to make craft. They learnt about folding paper into halves and quarters to make an origami cat. Each class got to go shopping with Miss Wilson and explore the features of all the different coins we use to pay for our shopping. In Miss Miller's class students used measurement skills to make icing for delicious iced biscuits. In Mrs Lozi's class the children learnt about all the ways we use maths in the kitchen. Mrs Stormer showed the students how our bodies can be used to make shapes and how we can use technology to learn more about maths. The students had fun with Miss White exploring the different ways we use maths outside.

I note that my primary and kindergarten teacher is not mentioned. I imagine she has moved up in the school or she got married. The newsletter continues:

Miss Hyde always says: "Maths does Rule."

Maths education at these ages is very important. I know the member for Macquarie Fields agrees with me on that. I attended the school quite a few years ago—in fact I left 50 years ago—and no doubt it has changed quite a bit. There are now 880 pupils. I believe that fifth-class students came here on 23 May and the member for Granville showed them around. The school presumably is named after Garnham Blaxcell. Members will recall that he, together with Alexander Riley and D'Arcy Wentworth, was given a contract to build the Rum Hospital by Lachlan Macquarie in return for the right to import 45,000 gallons of spirits. Blaxcell built this wonderful edifice we are standing in now and 45,000 gallons of spirits seems reasonably cheap for a building as important as this.

I am a little disappointed by the attitude of the member for Macquarie Fields. Blaxcell Street school was a fantastic school when I was there and I am sure it is a great school now. As we are getting closer to school speech days, I hope the member for Granville will pass on my best regards to the headmaster, staff and students at Blaxcell Street Public School. I would love to get there myself, if given the opportunity, and see whether it has changed in 50 years—I am sure it has. It is at times like this that we should remember the great public school network we have. We are all here to improve it for the children attending those schools. Let us hope for cool weather on speech days, because not many school halls are air-conditioned.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) [12.15 p.m.]: I too make a brief contribution to the debate. The member for Macquarie Fields in no way disparaged Blaxcell Street Public School. Instead the member for Macquarie Fields highlighted the fact that this Government, and its members in the House today, are happy to make \$1.7 billion in cuts to education. They are not standing up for the parents, teachers, principals and schools in their electorates. The member for Granville, who moved this motion, acknowledged the school and congratulated its principal. I also take the opportunity to congratulate the principal and the school on their efforts in educating 880 students. Whilst I am sure the school appreciates any additional funding it receives, the member for Granville fails to understand that like most other schools across western Sydney this school does not welcome the Government's draconian and arrogant cuts totalling \$1.7 billion. These cuts have provided no certainty regarding the future of literacy, numeracy, special needs and other programs that each school supports or ensures that students can access.

I think members opposite fail to understand the frustration on this side of the House, as well as that of the many parents and teachers who daily are emailing or calling. Certainly thousands of families gathered at Darling Harbour on Sunday to protest these cuts. There is a great deal of genuine fear in the community, particularly in communities such as Bankstown and Granville in western Sydney. I am sure the member for Granville appreciates that these communities have areas of significant social disadvantage and large numbers of people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. The communities have very specific needs. It is vital that in implementing these cuts the Government gives assurances to our schools and communities that they will have the funding to retain important programs in the future.

The member for Granville conveniently failed to mention a few recent funding cuts. I am sure that Blaxcell Street Public School, while it appreciates receiving some funding, does not appreciate having cleaning hours cut from its program. Eight hours of cleaning per week have been cut from Blaxcell Street Public School, which has 880 students. Holroyd High School has lost 10 hours; Granville South High School, 10 hours; Sherwood Grange Public School, seven hours; Merrylands High School, 10 hours; and Holroyd School, 10 hours. Whilst the member for Granville might congratulate his Government on committing some funding to the school, he should condemn his Government for cutting other funding to local schools at the same time.

Mr STUART AYRES (Penrith) [12.19 p.m.]: I support the motion moved by my colleague the member for Granville about Blaxcell Street Public School. The first point to acknowledge is that members like the member for Granville who are out there advocating for their schools should use the Parliament to talk to their community and recognise work that has taken place. That is exactly what the member for Granville has done. He has worked closely with the Minister for Education to secure around \$200,000 worth of funding upgrades for his school. This is in complete contrast to the rhetoric coming from the other side of the Chamber. The fact is that this Government is spending more money on public education in this State than the former Labor Government ever did. It is as simple as that. More money has been put into public education by this Government than by any previous government. Those are the figures—no matter what the other side might say. Another aspect of this debate, if we are talking about cuts to school funding, is that no teacher at the schools in the Granville electorate will lose his or her position because of the changes.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr John Barilaro): Order! Opposition members will come to order. The member for Penrith will be heard in silence.

Mr STUART AYRES: The member for Granville has stood up for his school and spoken today about the improvements he has been able to secure for the school. All we are getting from the other side is blatant rhetoric and tripe. They whip people in their local communities into a frenzy about these matters. The member for Bankstown just spoke about the fact that people in Granville, and I suspect in her electorate, have a degree of social disadvantage. If she had bothered to read the Government's Local Schools, Local Decisions document she would know that the funding mechanisms are all about targeting those people—creating a base load of funding for every student and then adding funding to that base load for students in places like Granville who might have linguistic issues or social disadvantage or disability issues. It is designed to support those people. That is exactly what Local Schools, Local Decisions does.

If the member for Bankstown is serious about this issue she should consider the effects of the Gonski proposals. If she supports those proposals she should be talking to her Federal colleagues in Canberra and saying, "Show us where the real money is." If she does not do that, and she supports the Gonski reforms, the member for Bankstown will simply be asking for funding to be moved from another portfolio into Education. What does she want us to do—close beds in hospital wards so we can fund greater investment in education? These are the sorts of decisions that are made in government. We have built a funding model that we are taking to the community and the member for Bankstown is out there undermining it at every opportunity. All she is doing is whipping the community into a frenzy. She does not even bother to take people through the details. She does not bother to acknowledge that the funding mechanisms we have put in place are about targeting disadvantaged students.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr John Barilaro): Order! The member for Bankstown will cease interjecting.

Mr STUART AYRES: If the member for Bankstown looks at the information she will see that the funding arrangements set out by the Minister mirror many of the Gonski reforms so that we can start targeting education funding to the people who need it most. People like the member for Granville, the member for Smithfield and me, and even the member for Mount Druitt, have visited schools that have been neglected by

government after government. Members in this place have been talking for years about the disadvantage that exists in areas such as western Sydney, the cultural and linguistic issues across schools, and the significant prevalence of disability issues. We now have a Minister who is saying that we are going to change the way we fund education in this State to ensure that every student gets a base load of funding and on top of that will get funding that best suits their needs. The way one does that is to ensure that principals are part of the process so they get to make decisions about what impacts their schools and can work with local members so they get the funds.

Mr RICHARD AMERY (Mount Druitt) [12.23 p.m.]: I am always pleased to talk about a public school in western Sydney such as Blaxcell Street Public School, which has a long and proud history. I have looked at the four points in the motion of the member for Granville and can indicate to the House that the Opposition certainly would not oppose those four positive comments. The first acknowledges a visit to the school by the Minister for Education in November 2011. The second congratulates the Government on honouring its election commitment to provide extra funding of \$200,000. The third notes that these funds will be spent on repairing and resurfacing the playground; and, finally, the motion congratulates the principal, Sandra Bradley. We do not disagree with any of those points. I notice there is a similar motion on the notice paper from the member for Smithfield congratulating the Government on money being spent on Westfield Sports High School football ground.

All the research we do on these matters shows that many of these projects were tendered for and contracted out by the former Government, so if that is the case we will take the credit for them when members opposite refer to them. In this case we should be looking at the paper trail of the project concerned to see when it was approved by the education department. We know that the Minister visited the school in November 2011, which of course was only a short time after the election of this Government. It would be interesting to see where the money came from to provide the funding for which the member for Granville is congratulating the Government. Perhaps a question on notice might uncover the paper trail. It is certainly the case with Westfield Sports High School. I can indicate to the House, in case we do not debate that motion, that the paper trail leads to the former Government.

We do not agree with the comments by the member for Penrith that members on this side are engaging in rhetoric. It is quite appropriate for the member for Macquarie Fields and the member for Bankstown to highlight the fact that this school, like public schools in my electorate, may be subject to funding cuts. The Minister has already announced a \$1.7 cut in the Education budget. Government members have to give a guarantee that those cutbacks will not affect a school such as Blaxcell Street Public School or any others, particularly those in the electorates of Macquarie Fields, Bankstown and Mount Druitt. The Government has confirmed that \$1.7 billion has gone. The second point raised by the member for Bankstown was the cutback in cleaning hours. I note the Minister for Ageing is making some attempt to interject. The Government is not disputing the fact that it is reducing cleaning hours in schools.

Mr Andrew Constance: You sacked 400 employees in 2010.

Mr RICHARD AMERY: If it is incorrect the Minister should say so. There is a four-point motion before the House acknowledging good work that is happening at Blaxcell Street Public School and we congratulate the member for Granville on highlighting that school. If he is proud of the school, which he obviously is, we certainly acknowledge it. However, Government members cannot argue in this place that the \$1.7 billion cut to education and the cutback to cleaning hours are not real. That would be defying the statements by the Minister for Education in many forums, including in this House.

Mr TONY ISSA (Granville) [12.28 p.m.], in reply: I thank members representing the electorates of Macquarie Fields, Port Stephens, Bankstown, Penrith and Mount Druitt for their contributions to the debate. Certainly I am very proud of Blaxcell Street Public School and I am very proud of what I have been doing for my area. I was pleased to hear the member for Port Stephens say that he was a student at the school. I say to the members representing Bankstown, Macquarie Fields and Mount Druitt that this school is still in the same condition as it was under Labor 15 years ago. For the past 15 or 16 years Labor did not contribute 1¢ to updating the school. When I visited the school the conditions were brought to my attention by the parents, the students, the principal and everyone else. I asked why and I was told that this school had always been taken for granted.

I lobbied the Government on behalf of my community so that something would change. I am sure if the member for Port Stephens had visited this school last year he would have seen the same potholes that were in the playground 50 years ago. It is still the same; nothing has been done. Nothing has changed. The reason

I raised the issue is that given those rundown conditions no student would be able to attend the school without the risk of injury. That is why the Minister promised money out of the \$40 million that this Government—not the previous Government—committed for school maintenance. After the election of the O'Farrell Government the Minister for Education came forward and said, "I am going to give your school \$200,000 to maintain the playground and make it safer for the kids so they will be able to attend the school without being injured."

That is what we are talking about. We are talking about maintenance to provide a safe environment for students. The Opposition is talking about cutting funds. I do not know where they are coming from. We are talking about two different issues. We are talking about providing a secure and safe environment for students; they are talking about cutting funding. The Opposition did not talk about Federal cuts. I have not been told how much the Federal Government cut from the education budget this year. Opposition members have a short memory and I am surprised to hear them talk about a different issue altogether. Ask my community how many meetings David Borger attended at schools when he was the member for Granville. It was probably hundreds because he was a regular attendee at the meetings, saying, "I will do this. I will deliver the service for you. I am the right person."

What happened? Nothing happened; nothing. That is why the people of Granville voted for a new member for their area. They wanted somebody who could deliver. They wanted somebody who was prepared to listen; somebody who was prepared to be part of the community at the ground level. They wanted somebody to perform. Nothing happened in the last seven to eight years in Granville under the leadership of those opposite. The same party held the electorate for 50 years, but nothing has been done about it. When this Government came to power, we decided to do something different. We have spoken about the community's needs; you talk about cutting funding. Every time you bring the debate back to the same old subject. Wake up to yourself and do something positive for the community.

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

Motion agreed to.

HUNTER LEUKAEMIA FOUNDATION

Dr ANDREW McDONALD (Macquarie Fields) [12.33 p.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) acknowledges the great work of the Hunter Leukaemia Foundation;
- (2) notes that during induction treatment, patients with leukaemia may have to stay within 30 minutes of the Newcastle Mater Hospital and that some patients may have to seek accommodation within 30 minutes of the Newcastle Mater Hospital if they live outside that distance;
- (3) notes that many patients live further than 30 minutes away, but less than the 100 kilometre away, the distance required to claim the IPTAAS allowance; and
- (4) calls on the Minister to allow payment of the IPTAAS allowance for these patients on their doctor's instructions.

The Isolated Patients Travel and Accommodation Assistance Scheme [IPTAAS] was raised with me when I was in the Hunter last year. The residents of the Hunter and the Central Coast are an anomaly under the scheme.

Mr Stephen Bromhead: Fix it.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD: I note the member Opposite said to fix it. If he agrees with this motion, I expect that he will support it. The Isolated Patients Travel and Accommodation Assistance Scheme is a subsidy program that provides financial assistance to help with travel and accommodation costs for people and their escorts who may need to travel long distances to access the specialist treatment that is not available locally. The future of cancer treatment is in centralised areas of expertise and for some cancers, such as ovarian cancer, there is increasing specialisation rather than treatment in all cancers. I spoke about the work of the Cancer Institute last week and I again urge all members of this House to log on to the Cancer Institute website. It is a great resource for directing patients to where they will get quality cancer care.

To be eligible for the Isolated Patients Travel and Accommodation Assistance Scheme, you need to be a resident of New South Wales who is eligible for Medicare benefits; be required to travel at least

100 kilometres each way or an accumulative distance of at least 200 kilometres a week from your usual place of residence to access the nearest available medical specialist; be referred by a medical practitioner to the nearest treating specialist for specialist treatment; and claim the maximum available benefits from your private health fund first and not be eligible for any assistance under any other Government assistance scheme. This works well for many patients with cancer, but those in the Hunter and the Central Coast are unique because both the Hunter and Central Coast have a population that is widely spread so that many patients live less than 100 kilometres from their treating hospital, but are further than 30 minutes away.

This is a problem if you are undergoing cancer treatment at the Calvary Mater Newcastle Hospital, which is where a large number of Central Coast patients do get treated; it is one of the best cancer treatment facilities in the world and one that patients will travel to for good care. This motion aims to close the loophole. Cancer treatment usually has two phases. It has an induction phase where a high dosage of chemotherapy is given to reduce the body's immunity. During this time, patients have very low white cell counts and are at great risk of a sudden onset of infection, which can kill within hours if it is not properly treated. For that reason, Calvary Mater Newcastle Hospital has the sensible provision that if patients are in this intensive phase of treatment they need to be within 30 minutes of the hospital. That does not mean they need to be in the hospital. Many patients prefer to be at home rather than in a hospital setting, but they need to be able to get to hospital within 30 minutes, because a delay of more than 30 minutes is life-threatening.

Although infection can be caused by other people, the greatest risk is from the body's own bacteria, which can overwhelm a compromised immune system. There is no shortcut; the eligibility criterion must be changed. The Calvary Mater Newcastle Hospital is unique because it is a central service well away from many other people. Patients are unable to access the Isolated Patients Travel and Accommodation Assistance Scheme because they reside less than 100 kilometres away. Patients from Cessnock are 50 kilometres from the Calvary Mater but they are almost an hour away. Patients undergoing chemotherapy treatment are not allowed to drive. Therefore, a partner will have to drive for the patient, which means loss of a second income during that time. A single limit of 79 kilometres away does not qualify. There is a solution. The Isolated Patients Travel and Accommodation Assistance Scheme allowance could and should be provided for patients who, on a doctor's order, are required to be within 30 minutes of the hospital during the period of intense treatment. I call on the Government to close the loophole.

The Isolated Patients Travel and Accommodation Assistance Scheme allowance is currently \$43 for a single room and \$60 for a double room. This will significantly improve the ability of patients to be able to cope with their treatment. It will not be expensive because intensive treatment is short term rather than long term. The Leukaemia Foundation has approached me about this issue. This is a reasonable suggestion that all members of this House should support. It will not break the bank; it will substantially improve the quality of life for patients with cancer in the Central Coast and the Hunter. The time that patients are on intensive treatment is short—usually measured in weeks—fever neutropenia is a short-term risk for most patients with cancer. I call on this Government to add to the welcome reforms in the Isolated Patients Travel and Accommodation Assistance Scheme. I acknowledge that the increase in the funding for the Isolated Patients Travel and Accommodation Assistance Scheme is a good policy. The scrapping of the contribution is good and the introduction of the cumulative distance of 200 kilometres is a good change to the Isolated Patients Travel and Accommodation Assistance Scheme. I call on the government to introduce another achievable and sensible change.

Mr GARRY EDWARDS (Swansea) [12.40 p.m.]: I thank the member for Macquarie Fields for moving this important motion. He is well aware that I have had firsthand experience in this area. It gives me considerable pleasure to acknowledge the great work of the Hunter Leukaemia Foundation. This debate also gives me an opportunity to share with members this Government's commitment to ensuring that the people of New South Wales have access to timely and quality health care regardless of where they live. Every hour someone is diagnosed with leukaemia, lymphoma or myeloma, and every two hours someone loses their life to one of these diseases. More than 11,500 Australians are expected to be diagnosed with blood cancer or a related blood disorder this year. In the 1970s, life for people with leukaemia and their families was very different. Patients were isolated from their families for fear of infection, and parents were not allowed to comfort and care for their children. Families were left to combat the psychological challenges of treatment on their own and health professionals did their best to deliver quality care with limited resources.

In 1975 Brisbane haematologist Dr Trevor Olsen enlisted the support of Holland Park Lions Club in Brisbane to take on the challenge of improving support for patients, their families and nursing staff, and the Leukaemia Foundation was formed. Established in Queensland in 1975, the Leukaemia Foundation is the only national organisation dedicated to the care and treatment of patients and their families living with leukaemia,

lymphoma, myeloma and related disorders. The Hunter Leukaemia Foundation was established in Newcastle more than six years ago. Families from rural and regional Australia often need to relocate quickly to major cities to be closer to treatment centres, and usually for extended periods. Relocation is particularly traumatic because it often occurs after diagnosis, resulting in patients and families adjusting to their new circumstances without the benefit of established local support networks.

Combined with costly medical bills and loss of income, many families find themselves in financially crippling circumstances whilst coping with the shock and emotional turmoil associated with the diagnosis. This is where the Leukaemia Foundation and Hunter Leukaemia Foundation step in, providing personalised support and care for patients and families throughout their journey from diagnosis and treatment to recovery. This support is provided by an extensive team of trained cancer nurses and allied health professionals, and reaches every town and community across Australia. On average, treatment of haematological cancers lasts for about eight months, but it can continue for years. Hunter Leukaemia Foundation offers services including counselling and support, disease-specific information materials, education programs and support groups, access to home-away-from-home accommodation close to major treatment centres and transport to and from treatment centres. The work of the foundation in this area is to be commended.

In the past 12 months the Hunter Leukaemia Foundation has assisted more than 115 new patients and transported more than 440 to and from their appointments in the Hunter region. Due to clinical needs and patient safety a number of haematology patients are required to remain within 30 minutes travelling time of the hospital. Often with little warning and in acute cases, patients require treatment within 24 hours of diagnosis and lives are turned upside down. The Leukaemia Foundation provides accommodation for patients at Leukaemia House—which is located on Villa Road—in addition to the accommodation provided at the hospital in McAuley House. The Jim Simpson Patient and Family Accommodation Complex is conveniently located across the road from the Calvary Mater Hospital and is close to John Hunter Hospital. This home away from home can accommodate up to three families at one time. With a tastefully decorated interior, and lovely yard and barbeque area, this complex aims to ease the burden of travelling for treatment. The accommodation complex has wheelchair access and access to onsite support services staff and resources.

Just over 13 months ago the Minister for Health, and Minister for Medical Research announced that the New South Wales Government would provide a \$28-million boost to the Isolated Patients Travel and Accommodation Assistance Scheme over four years. The scheme caters for those who live great distances from the care that they require. It assists those patients who may have otherwise declined treatment because of the distance involved in accessing it. As part of the announcement, the Minister articulated that patients who need to travel long distances will receive a massive 30 per cent boost in the accommodation subsidy and a 25 per cent boost in the petrol subsidy. The Minister's announcement was widely applauded because it was the first time that the accommodation subsidy had been increased in 11 years.

Before the 2011 election, the New South Wales Liberals and Nationals stated that if we were elected we would significantly boost the Isolated Patients Travel and Accommodation Assistance Scheme, and I am proud that we have successfully done so. Since 1 January this year greater funding for the scheme has enabled more patients to travel for medical treatment, and we have been able to offset their expenses at a much fairer rate. The rate for travel and accommodation assistance for people needing to travel at least 100 kilometres one way from home for specialist medical treatment has been increased. People who are required to travel a cumulative weekly distance of at least 200 kilometres to access specialist medical treatment are eligible for the scheme. Accommodation subsidies increased by 30 per cent to \$43 per single person and \$60 per double, which is an increase from \$33 per single and \$46 per double. That makes it easier for patients to stay with family and friends when receiving specialist medical treatment. There is also a subsidy of \$140 per week, which is an increase from \$30 per week.

Those patients who reside within 30 minutes of care and who are experiencing financial hardship or other care issues are able to discuss this with their local health district provider. Reimbursement for car travel is now 19¢ per kilometre, which is an increase from 15¢. Previously, only patients travelling to access renal dialysis services were eligible to claim under that reimbursement. This has been a major benefit to people with chronic disease who must travel regularly for specialist medical treatment. Patients who meet the distance criteria can claim assistance to cover the cost of travel from their accommodation to the treatment facility. This change particularly benefits people such as leukaemia patients who must travel frequently to access treatment services. The New South Wales Government is delivering a boost of \$28 million over four years and once again honouring its election promises. I am proud to say that this Government is very committed to giving the people of New South Wales access to timely and quality health care regardless of where they live.

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Menai) [12.46 p.m.]: I thank the member for Macquarie Fields for moving this motion and for affording me the opportunity to highlight the work of the Hunter Leukaemia Foundation, which is doing wonderful things for the region. The Leukaemia Foundation is a national organisation that is dedicated to the care of patients and their families living with leukaemia, lymphoma, myeloma and related blood disorders and the cure of patients. These conditions do not discriminate and often strike our youngest and most vulnerable without warning. Despite the extensive research into leukaemia and related diseases, we still have a long way to go. Every hour someone is diagnosed with leukaemia, lymphoma or myeloma, and every two hours someone loses their life to these awful diseases. That is why organisations like the Hunter Leukaemia Foundation are so crucial.

It is also great to see a regionally based office supporting the large number of Australians who do not reside in a capital city and providing a high-level of care and support to them closer to home. The Leukaemia Foundation was established in Newcastle more than six years ago. The foundation is hard at work in the region and in the past 12 months it has assisted more than 115 new patients and transported more than 440 to and from their appointments in the Hunter region. These numbers are phenomenal, and are testament to the hardworking staff and the impressive resources available at the foundation. I agree with the member for Macquarie Fields that their work should be commended.

I will address the other issue raised by the member for Macquarie Fields regarding eligibility to access the Isolated Patients Travel and Accommodation Assistance Scheme. It has been identified that a number of haematology patients are required to remain within 30 minutes travelling time of the hospital. This is generally due to their specific clinical needs and to ensure their wellbeing during treatment. In these cases the Leukaemia Foundation offers accommodation at Leukaemia House or alternatively at the hospital's accommodation facility McAuley House. The nearby accommodation provides peace of mind for patients receiving treatment and ensures that they can be monitored regularly. For those having to travel much further to access medical treatment at places like the Hunter Leukaemia Foundation, the scheme provides financial assistance towards the cost of travel.

For many of our more isolated residents, accessing vital medical treatment can be costly, making it difficult to travel regularly to specialists and treatment appointments. In some instances they must do so without the support of their family and friends due to the distance involved. The last thing we want to see is patients declining serious treatment because of the long distances involved. This scheme goes a little way to helping ease that burden in times of need. In some instances they must do so without the support of their family and friends due to the distance involved. The last thing we want to see is patients declining serious treatment because of the long distances involved. This scheme goes a little way to helping ease that burden in times of need. In some instances they must do so without the support of their family and friends due to the distance involved. The last thing we want to see is patients declining serious treatment because of the long distances involved. This scheme goes a little way to helping ease that burden in times of need.

There has been some concern that a number of patients were missing out on the subsidy due to falling within the 100 kilometres cut-off, but still a considerable distance from medical treatment. The New South Wales Government has listened to the needs of our patients and since 1 January 2012, people who are required to travel a cumulative weekly distance of at least 200 kilometres to access specialist medical treatment are eligible for the scheme. By converting it to a cumulative total, more patients are now eligible for the scheme, making it more equitable for the people who need it most. The Isolated Patients Travel and Accommodation Assistance Scheme can assist leukaemia patients who are required to travel 200 kilometres in a week to access services at the Calvary Mater Hospital, Newcastle.

This is a great outcome for patients of the Hunter Leukaemia Foundation who often have to travel frequently to access treatment services. For those who live within 30 minutes of care but are experiencing financial hardship or other care issues, they are able to discuss their options with their local health district provider. Once again I commend the work being done at the Hunter Leukaemia Foundation, and I am pleased to see better outcomes for our regional patients who need to access vital leukaemia treatments. I thank the member for Macquarie Fields for moving this motion.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD (Macquarie Fields) [12.50 p.m.], in reply: I thank the member for Swansea and the member for Menai for their contributions to this debate. I, like all members of this House, am incredibly pleased that the member for Swansea has returned and that his treatment has gone so well. He is a great man and it is very fortunate that he is here. The problem with the Isolated Patients Travel and Accommodation Assistance Scheme allowance, which is unique in the Hunter is that section (c) question 5 of

the Isolated Patients Travel and Accommodation Assistance Scheme form asks the specialists to specify that it is medically necessary for the patient to remain near the location of the specialist outside the date spent in hospital. Even if the doctor says it is necessary, patients within the 100-kilometre range are still not eligible for the accommodation allowance. This loophole is not a particularly expensive loophole that could be closed by this Government.

The Isolated Patients Travel and Accommodation Assistance Scheme funding boost is good policy and deserves the support of all members of the community. However, it has left this loophole that would not be particularly expensive to close and one that could at least be costed by the Government because it does not involve a large numbers of patients in a fairly difficult and unique situation. This problem will not go away because of the increasing demand for cancer treatment services with the changing population demographic. Also growth centres such as Maitland and Cessnock are within the 100-kilometre radius, but longer than 30 minutes from the Newcastle Mater. This problem needs to be addressed sooner rather than later because it will not go away.

Accommodation facilities near the Calvary Mater Hospital, which have been alluded to by both members, are excellent but we all would agree that at times they are not sufficient to meet the demand because sometimes patients need to be accommodated for some weeks. How long they need to be there is extremely unpredictable—it all depends on the initial response to treatment. They do not always meet the demand at the moment, and this demand will increase. A change to the eligibility for Isolated Patients Travel and Accommodation Assistance Scheme will make an enormous difference to patients in the Hunter and the Central Coast that is unique to that area. It is well within the ability of this Government to change the eligibility criterion.

The Government has members from the Hunter who can continue to lobby the Minister about this change that would make a significant difference to cancer treatment services in the Hunter. As I said earlier, Calvary Mater Hospital is one of the world's cancer treatment centres. It practices world's best care and to ensure that it can continue to do so it needs to practice safe care by keeping patients with low white cell counts during the induction phase of their treatment close to Calvary Mater. It is one of the reasons why its success rates with treatment are so good. It would make an enormous difference to patients in the Hunter and the Central Coast if they were able to have accommodation support during this most difficult time. I commend the motion to the House.

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

Motion agreed to.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Postponement of Business

General Business Notice of Motion No. 772 postponed by Mr Stuart Ayres.

General Business Notice of Motion No. 778 postponed by Mr Glenn Brookes.

WESTFIELDS SPORTS HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL GROUND

Mr ANDREW ROHAN (Smithfield) [12.56 p.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) congratulates Westfields Sports High School on the opening of its new synthetic football ground and change rooms on 2 October 2011;
- (2) commends the Government for providing the funds needed for the opening of these new facilities to benefit students and the wider local community; and
- (3) thanks the Hon. Charlie Lynn, MLC, for attending and officially opening the facilities on behalf of the Minister for Education.

I am honoured to have the opportunity to move this motion in support of Westfields Sports High School. The school is located in Fairfield West just a little bit outside of my electorate of Smithfield. But before I continue

I draw the attention of the House to a significant function that will be held at the ANZ Stadium on the 9 February 2013 to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of Westfields Sports High School. I congratulate it on 50 outstanding years of achievement, and may it have another 50 outstanding years ahead of it. Westfields Sports High School is an outstanding school and has played such an important part in our local community. This coeducational school is Australia's first sports high school and is the second largest schools in New South Wales with an enrolment of more than 1,600 students from years 7 to 12.

The school is situated on seven hectares of land in Sydney's south-west and great care is taken with the physical environment, which extends beyond maintaining the grounds to conservation through recycling programs. We Australians love our sports, be it through participating, coaching, teaching, administering or spectating. Sport is an integral part of the Australian culture, which is a focus of Westfields Sports High School. The school, through its principal Mr Phillip Tucker, PSM, and the committed staff, is fully aware of the strong need to provide a partnership between education and sport. They have identified that gifted sports students also need an environment where they can learn and thrive academically as well as excel as sportsmen or sportswomen. The school's planned development of talented sports person promotes the individual and collective self-confidence of students, enhancing their ability to successfully face the world.

Westfield Sports High School was the first sports high school in Australia, and it continues to lead the way with innovative and highly developed sports programs. As I mentioned earlier, the school's development has resulted in an increased level of participation in sport at local, regional, State, national and international levels. As a result it has gained a great reputation around Australia and throughout the world for its programs and for the talent it produces, including a large number of Australian sports representatives across a variety of sports. For example, in 2011 four ex-students played for the Socceroos and the FIFA World Cup such as Harry Kewell; Michael Clarke and Usman Khawaja played test cricket for Australia; 28 ex-students played in A-league football; and 27 former students played for various clubs in the National Rugby League competition. At the school level some 17 students were selected to represent Australia and 72 were chosen to represent New South Wales in a wide variety of sports.

Westfield Sports High School also has a proud record of academic achievement. The 2011 Higher School Certificate results of year 12 students were exceptional. The dux of the school achieved an Australian Tertiary Admission Rank [ATAR] of 95.6 and there were 34 band 6 results. The school also has some extremely successful acceleration programs in mathematics, science and English to support the talented academic students who sit for the Higher School Certificate.

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

JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON ELECTORAL MATTERS

Report: Inquiry into Administrative Funding of Minor Parties

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

Mr JAI ROWELL (Wollondilly) [1.01 p.m.]: As Chair of the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters I take this opportunity to comment on the recently tabled report titled "Inquiry into Administrative Funding of Minor Parties". The committee is a current joint standing committee, which was established on 14 May 2004 and re-established on 22 June 2011. The committee inquires into and reports on matters that are referred by either House of Parliament or a Minister relating to the administration of, and practices related to, the Parliamentary Electorates and Elections Act 1912, other than part 2, and the Election Funding, Expenditure and Disclosures Act 1981.

In a letter dated 30 May 2012 the Premier, in his capacity as the Minister responsible for the administration of the Election Funding, Expenditure and Disclosures Act 1981, wrote to the then chair of the Committee, the Hon. Trevor Khan, referring to the committee for inquiry matters relating to administrative funding for minor parties. Specifically, the Premier referred to section 97E of the Election Funding, Expenditure and Disclosures Act 1981 relating to public funding of eligible parties for administrative expenditure. The Premier asked that the committee inquire into and report on whether the annual amount to be distributed from the Administration Fund to any such eligible party remains appropriate.

The O'Farrell Government is a reforming government, and the reforms to the election system are evidence of this. A significant reform that was implemented this year has limited the ability to make political

donations to individuals only. The Government recognised that this would have an impact on the administration and operation of political parties, and therefore made available reimbursements through the Administration Fund. This inquiry sought to confirm whether the funds available through the Administration Fund continue to be sufficient. The committee heard evidence of parties that were struggling to afford the administration involved in maintaining a political party. The committee heard evidence that following the prohibition on donations from organisations there are new and significant administrative costs incurred by parties and fewer donations to cover those costs. The committee heard evidence that an increase in the amount of funds available for reimbursement through the Administration Fund would be appropriate.

As the Administration Fund operates on a reimbursement model, the committee also heard evidence as to the hardship that parties were experiencing in waiting for funds to be reimbursed after receipts had been provided to the Election Funding Authority. The committee recommended that the Government review the frequency and timeliness of the reimbursement payments. In particular, the committee recommended that reimbursements be paid quarterly in arrears, with a view to providing reimbursements within one month of the provision of receipts to the Election Funding Authority. The Committee heard about the onerous impact of the 2012 amendments, particularly on minor parties in New South Wales, and the evidence of the negative impact of caps on political donations.

The committee recommended the following: a new funding formula for payments under the Administration Fund be introduced; the amount of money for the first member of a political party or an Independent allowed for reimbursement be increased from \$83,000 to \$200,000; the amount of money for the second member of a political party allowed for reimbursement be increased from \$83,000 to \$150,000; the amount of money for the third member of a political party allowed for reimbursement be increased from \$83,000 to \$100,000; and the amount of money for the fourth to twenty-fifth members of a political party remain at \$83,000 per member, with no further funding available for 26-plus members. The committee also recommended that the new funding formula be applied to expenditure accrued from 1 January 2012.

The committee was unanimous in its recommendations, and it hopes that the work that it has done in this inquiry will go some way to ensuring that diversity in the New South Wales Parliament is protected. I thank the members of the committee secretariat who worked on report and the inquiry, including Carly Maxwell, Rachel Simpson, Jonathan Elliott, Emma Matthews, Rohan Tyler and Jenny Whight. I also thank the committee members—the member for Kiama, the member for Coffs Harbour, the member for Liverpool, the member for Wagga Wagga, the Hon. Robert Borsak, the Hon. Dr Peter Phelps, the Hon. Peter Primrose, The Hon. Amanda Fazio and the Hon. Trevor Khan—for their invaluable assistance in the preparation of this report. I place on record my sincere appreciation to the Hon. Trevor Khan, the former chair of this committee, for his valuable insight and help in my transition into the role of chair of this committee. I commend the report to the House.

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

Report noted.

LEGISLATION REVIEW COMMITTEE

Report: Legislation Review Digest No. 29/55

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

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) [1.07 p.m.]: As Chair of the Legislation Review Committee I take this opportunity to comment on the recent Legislation Review Digest report tabled on 20 November 2012. This is the twenty-ninth digest prepared by the Legislation Review Committee of the Fifty-fifth Parliament. The Legislation Review Committee is the hardest working committee in this Parliament: it delivers the most reports. The committee reviewed the one bill tabled last week and, as required by sections 8A and 9 of the Legislation Review Act, the committee identified issues in that bill.

The Property, Stock and Business Agents Amendment Bill 2012 makes a number of amendments to the Property, Stock and Business Agents Act regarding stock auctioneers, entitlements to commission, trust accounts and the auditing of trust accounts. The bill gave rise to only one comment, in relation to the commencement of the bill by proclamation. The committee will always be concerned where the commencement of an Act is delegated to the Executive once passed by the Legislature. However, the committee is aware of the

administrative arrangements required and the intention of the bill and, as such, the committee did not consider there to be an inappropriate delegation of legislative powers. Further information in relation to the bill tabled last week is available in the digest, and I commend it to all members.

Throughout 2012 the committee has reviewed 91 bills and 462 regulations, which totals 551 pieces of legislation. Members will note that in the first year of the Fifty-fifth Parliament the total number of bills and regulations reviewed was 459, compared with the Fifty-fourth Parliament, in which the total number of bills and regulations reviewed was only 417. Hence the number of bills being introduced is increasing. Historically there may be more or less bills and regulations introduced into this place but the O'Farrell Government is all about quality, not quantity. In the past three weeks 27 bills have been reported in the digest. I note that during the Fifty-fourth Parliament there were occasions when only one bill was reported. So it is not unusual or different; it happens from time to time. I suggest that the member for Mount Druitt read Legislation Review Digest No. 18 of 2010.

In reviewing bills and regulations the committee must identify issues that may trespass on personal rights and liberties, and provide commentary regarding those issues in the digest. If the committee considers that an issue warrants further attention it will refer the matter to Parliament. On other occasions the committee will simply provide commentary on matters deemed worthy of discussion, even if the committee does not ultimately find that a particular provision trespasses on personal rights.

I thank the members of the committee, namely, the member for Swansea, the member for Rockdale, the member for Bankstown, the member for Parramatta and our colleagues in the other place Mr Moselmane, Dr Phelps and Mr Shoebridge, who consider the bills and issues relevant to the committee during its deliberations as required by the Legislation Review Act. I thank the committee staff who have worked on the digest, including Emma Matthews, Jason Arditi, Emma Wood, Todd Buttsworth and Mohini Mehtna. I also extend thanks and congratulations to the committee's director, Ms Carly Maxwell, for her tireless work for the committee. I wish her well as she goes on maternity leave. I commend the digest.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) [1.11 p.m.]: I speak on Legislation Review Digest No. 21 of the Fifty-fifth Parliament. I too take the opportunity to acknowledge my fellow committee members: the member for Myall Lakes, the member for Parramatta, the member for Rockdale, the member for Swansea, and our colleagues in the other place Mr Shoebridge, the Hon. Shaoquett Moselmane and the Hon. Dr Peter Phelps. I acknowledge also the hardworking committee staff and commend them for preparing the digest, given that we have had back-to-back sitting weeks. In particular I congratulate the staff on their efforts throughout the year to prepare the digest, often in short time spans during back-to-back sitting weeks.

The meeting this week was rather quick as we had only one bill to review: the Property Stock and Business Agents Amendment Bill 2012, which falls under my responsibility as the shadow Minister. Although the bill has been introduced, it will not be debated until the new year. The bill makes certain amendments to the Property Stock and Business Agents Act 2002. This principal Act was introduced by the Carr Labor Government to require the registration of real estate agents, stock and station agents, business agents, strata managing agents, community managing agents and on-site residential property managers.

The original Act contained a requirement for the legislation to be reviewed every five years. That is why the Government is reviewing the legislation. I have received a commitment from the Minister's office that all submissions made to the review will soon be made public. I look forward to having the opportunity to review those submissions shortly. The committee raised the issue that the bill might inappropriately delegate legislative powers insofar as the bill is set to commence by proclamation. However, given that the bill requires certain administrative arrangements to be implemented, the committee concluded that this was not an inappropriate delegation of powers. All in all, the Legislation Review Committee has had an interesting year. The committee members have not always agreed, but that is the nature of democracy. The member for Myall Lakes proudly boasted that it is all about quality, not quantity.

Mr Andrew Gee: It is.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK: I do not know how much of it has been quality. As the Coalition was in Opposition for 16 years I thought the Government would have introduced a whole range of legislative reforms, but that has not been the case. I wish the committee members and staff a merry Christmas.

Mr RICHARD AMERY (Mount Druitt) [1.15 p.m.]: I feel duty bound to make a contribution on Legislation Review Digest No. 29/55, dated 20 November. First, I echo the comments of the previous speakers

and thank the committee members for their work over the past 12 months. In particular, I thank the committee staff who work hard to put the propositions and briefing notes before the committee. Each week the chair of the committee, the member for Myall Lakes, appropriately recognises their work, as does the member for Bankstown, who is the Opposition's representative on the committee. The member for Myall Lakes made a provocative speech.

In a back-handed way he attacked other parliamentary committees when he said that his committee is the hardest-working committee of the Parliament. I suggest to the member that his assertion would be challenged by other committee chairs. I note the presence of the member for Davidson in the Chamber. I am sure he would disagree with the assessment by the member for Myall Lakes that his committee is the hardest-working committee in the Parliament. The weekly digests highlight the new Government's light legislative program. After 16 years in opposition and four election defeats the Government has such a small legislative program that it cannot provide the Legislation Review Committee with sufficient work.

Mr Stephen Bromhead: That's 417 for you guys and 551 for us.

Mr RICHARD AMERY: I note the interjection by the member for Myall Lakes. I shall make a couple of points. First, members should note that Legislation Review Digest No. 29/55 shows that only one bill was assessed by the committee. The member for Davidson should note that the committee chair said that his committee is the hardest-working committee in the Parliament. As the member said, the committee dealt with one bill. Was the bill a substantive bill? Was it a bill of quality over substance? The committee reviewed the Property, Stock and Business Agents Amendment Bill 2012. Was the Coalition working on that bill during its 16 years in Opposition? No.

As the member for Bankstown rightly pointed out, the bill came before the Parliament because the Government was required by statute to review the legislation under the five-year review process. Therefore, irrespective of which party was in government, the bill would be before the House. In other words, if we removed the statutory review requirement the Government would have undertaken virtually no reforms. In the final parliamentary sitting week for the year one bill was considered by the committee. I am resisting the temptation to respond to the cries of protest from the member for Myall Lakes. He said that the committee reviewed 91 bills this year. Parliament sat for more than 60 days. How many bills is that a day? I will let the member for Myall Lakes work that out. It is about 1.5.

The member for Myall Lakes highlighted the number of bills reviewed by the committee. Members should know that the light legislative program shows how the Parliament is being run. The workings of Parliament have an elastic band effect. At times we are guillotining motions, suspending standing orders and dealing with many bills in a short period. And Oppositions through the years have protested about that. At other times, because of the program, there may be a need to stretch out a bill and get a few extra speakers to make sure that the program matches. That is part of all parliaments— *[Time expired.]*

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

Report noted.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE

Report: The Economics of Energy Generation

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

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson) [1.20 p.m.]: I note that the member for Mount Druitt believes that the Public Accounts Committee is the hardest-working committee in this Parliament, and I will not disagree with him because he is a wise and experienced member in this place. We, as members of the Public Accounts Committee, were delighted to produce—and I was honoured to table yesterday—a report from the committee on the economics of energy generation. Energy economics has become increasingly relevant to people over recent years as they have opened envelopes and emails to discover continually rising electricity bills. Ironically, the price paid for wholesale electricity generation in New South Wales has fallen in recent years and now represents only 25 per cent of the retail price that consumers pay for electricity. The poles and wires component represents 50 per cent of the overall price with electricity retailers contributing a further 10 per cent. The carbon tax and other green schemes account for 15 per cent, 8 per cent and 7 per cent

respectively. There is no shortage of potential electricity supply for New South Wales. However, the notion of energy or electricity security extends beyond the availability of supply to include elements of reliability, sustainability and affordability.

Electricity generation policy should be based on the principles of open markets, transparency, consistency and economic efficiency. Such an approach should provide competitive outcomes that will best serve the interests of New South Wales residents and other consumers as well as a positive climate for investment and economic growth. There is considerable scope for a sharper focus from government on demand management as opposed to supply management, and it is an area that does need a stronger champion, in the view of the committee and as evidenced in the report. Sensibly reducing peak and total demand will reduce costs to consumers and the environment. Demand management was a major theme of the feedback received from the innovative citizens policy jury process which informed the committee's deliberations. Demand management became a key focus of the inquiry and is reflected in 10 of the report's 24 recommendations which address this area.

While the New South Wales Government needs to oversee consistent and fair regulation relating to areas such as planning and safety, this should not extend to providing preferential treatment to particular energy sources. The recognition of environmental costs as part of a market price has been addressed at a Federal level, particularly through the carbon tax and the renewable energy target. The New South Wales Government should not attempt to duplicate this role, nor be further involved in the commercial supply or subsidy of particular forms of electricity generation, as this interferes with competition and distorts the market, including for renewable energy. However, the New South Wales Government does have a role in promoting and encouraging greater innovation, research and development relating to all energy solutions, including energy storage, especially where New South Wales has a competitive economic advantage. There is real value in promoting diversity of energy sources and keeping future energy options open as technologies continue to emerge and develop, and this includes gas and nuclear options. However, the Government must be wary of picking winners in a changing marketplace.

For those who have been confused by the complex area of electricity in New South Wales and Australia this report provides a highly intelligible explanation of the context and key issues surrounding various energy sources and challenges. The committee has attempted to provide balanced observations based on the substantial evidence presented to it by a range of stakeholders, whom we thank. Among them were the participants of the citizens policy juries, whose involvement was facilitated by the newDemocracy Foundation. This innovative process of deliberative democracy was highly valued by the committee and should serve as a pilot for similar future public engagement and consultation by governments of all levels. This process also demonstrated the value of consumer education, which is a further important role of government.

The Public Accounts Committee staff have been outstanding in contributing to this report's creation and I specially acknowledge the excellent work of Dr Abigail Groves and Mr John Miller. Finally, I thank the Public Accounts Committee members, Dr Geoff Lee, Mr Bart Bassett, Mr Michael Daley, the Hon. Richard Torbay and Mr John Williams, who have all worked constructively and cooperatively to deliver a report that will hopefully prompt better and more efficient public outcomes as part of a secure energy future for New South Wales.

Mr MICHAEL DALEY (Maroubra) [1.26 p.m.]: I make a brief contribution to the Public Accounts Committee report No. 6/55, of November 2012: "The Economics of Energy Generation". I certainly do not want to put the kiss of death—or any kiss for that matter—upon the chair of this committee, the member for Davidson, but he has done a very good report by pulling this report together. The Public Accounts Committee, of which I am a member, is a very good committee. We take our duties with respect to that committee, which I would say respectfully is the most important of all the parliamentary committees, very seriously. All of the deliberations are conducted on a bipartisan basis; there is no political grandstanding at all. It is a very important committee and this is a very important report.

I am one of the fortunate people that knows a thing or two—and certainly I have a lot more to learn—about the electricity industry, having been the nominee of former Premier Morris Iemma on the Unsworth committee back in the days of ructions when we were considering privatising generation assets. I learned a lot then. The nature of the electricity industry in New South Wales is very interesting and very complicated. I commend this report not only to members of Parliament and observers of the electricity industry. I think that, notwithstanding the great many values that are inherent in this report, its really salient value lies in the fact that it is a tremendous educational tool for people who know nothing about electricity in New South Wales or know

nothing about the national electricity market and all of the things that attend it. It is written in a way that is not meant to be understood by insiders only. One could read it from cover to cover and know as much about electricity as one probably needs to know as a lay person. I commend it in that sense.

The subject matters traversed in the report are important and topical. And there is some novelty in this report. The initiative of the chairman, the member for Davidson, in involving the newDemocracy Foundation was very elucidating. I believe they brought something to this report. I thank the citizen juries who took part. I look forward to the newDemocracy Foundation playing a future role in respect of considerations that State Parliament members have to deal with. I commend also their value to local government. It is a novel way of garnering the public's views at a time when confidence and public interest in important political discourse and the political process unfortunately is at an all-time low. Finally, I congratulate the committee staff who put together this enormously complicated report—John Miller, Abigail Rose and others. They did a terrific job in pulling this together. I join with all committee members in thanking all those staff members wholeheartedly.

Mr ROB STOKES (Pittwater—Parliamentary Secretary) [1.30 p.m.]: I congratulate the Public Accounts Committee and its members on a magnificent report into the economics of our electricity generation. I draw the attention of members particularly to chapter 8, which deals with renewable energy, given that we have seen a fundamental transformation in the way energy is delivered. I commend the report to the House.

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

GAME AND FERAL ANIMAL CONTROL FURTHER AMENDMENT BILL 2012

Bill received from the Legislative Council, introduced and read a first time.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): I advise the House that I have received a written authority from the Hon. Robert Brown, MLC, advising that the Minister for Primary Industries, and Minister for Small Business will have carriage of the bill in the Legislative Assembly.

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) [1.32 p.m.]: I move:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended to permit the consideration of the Game and Feral Animal Control Further Amendment Bill forthwith.

Mr MICHAEL DALEY (Maroubra) [1.32 p.m.]: The Opposition does not support the motion, but will not vote against it. If the Government wants to do away with a lunchbreak to honour this grubby deal, be it on the Government's head.

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

Motion agreed to.

GAME AND FERAL ANIMAL CONTROL FURTHER AMENDMENT BILL 2012

Second Reading

Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON (Burrinjuck—Minister for Primary Industries, and Minister for Small Business) [1.33 p.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Government understands the reasons the Shooters and Fishers Party introduced this bill in the other place. It appreciates also that the way native bird hunting on private land is regulated is one of interest and importance to many in rural and regional New South Wales. However, the bill, as it was introduced by the Shooters and Fishers Party, proposed significant amendments to the current regulatory arrangements. It removed many

restrictions on native game bird hunting, with the policy development and administration of licences to be done by the Game Council, instead of the Office of Environment and Heritage. The Government successfully moved amendments in another place to modify the new native game bird licensing system so that it would only apply for sustainable agricultural management purposes, and also to ensure an ongoing role for the Office of Environment and Heritage.

The amended bill strikes a better balance between the important—but to some extent competing—public interests that arise in this area. The amended bill reflects the guiding principle that native bird hunting on private land must only be authorised for the purpose of sustainable agricultural management. The amended bill recognises that people already can hunt native game birds on private land in New South Wales for pest management purposes. Presently, quotas set by government and authorisations to cull native birds on private land are issued by the Office of Environment and Heritage. In fact, in 2009-10, when the former environment Minister and now Leader of the Opposition, John Robertson, was the responsible Minister, authorisation was given to cull 33,425 birds. The Shooters and Fishers Party's original bill proposed, however, that the Game Council—a New South Wales government agency—would assume responsibility for issuing a new licence to private landowners for native bird hunting and for setting quotas. Under the amended bill, native game bird hunting will be restricted to sustainable agricultural management purposes only.

The policy development, including the setting of quotas and compliance requirements, will also be undertaken by a new Native Game Bird Management Committee. That committee will be chaired by the Department of Primary Industries and comprise representatives of both the Game Council and the Office of Environment and Heritage. The committee will determine quotas on the best available science, as well as the periods and areas in which native game birds can be hunted. The administration of licences will continue to be undertaken by the Game Council, consistently with any compliance reporting requirements established by the committee. The amended bill provides a much better balance and, in the Government's view, makes significant improvements to the bill as it was originally introduced in the other place. The Government commends the bill to the House.

Mr NATHAN REES (Toongabbie) [1.36 p.m.]: I lead for the Opposition in the absence of the member for Liverpool in debate on the Game and Feral Animal Control Further Amendment Bill 2012. I indicate that the Opposition will oppose this bill. This bill is another egregious example of the Neanderthals who are the Shooters and Fishers Party leading this Government around by the nose. It is offensive in this modern era to propose the notion that in a civilised society it is appropriate for grown men to take a firearm, head into the bushland and shoot ducks, quail and pigeons, as this bill outlines. Again I read into the *Hansard* an extract from an article in *NitroExpress* magazine by the Government's Game Council champion, Robert Borsak. These are his comments on shooting an elephant:

My reflexes took over as the rifle fired the right barrel at 6 paces from the brain of the giant, he went down, as if in slow motion. Deon on my left whispered "fire again", I put the second barrel into the top of his head and it was all over. He flattened a vast area of jess as he hit the ground, as silently as his approach. It was awesome, he did not know what had hit him.

They are the comments of the man in charge of government environment policy made manifest in this offensive legislation. Members in this Chamber know that my hobby is keeping birds; I have done so all my life and I am not alone. Hundreds of thousands of people across Australia keep native and exotic birds as a hobby. This bill contains a fundamental flaw with its notion that it is appropriate to shoot ducks and/or quail. When quail are flushed from heathland they take flight extremely rapidly. The quail especially outlined in this bill and marked for special attention—that is, a bullet to the head—are the brown quail and stubble quail. Today I came prepared to this debate with a revised 2001 reprint of the 1931 original edition of Neville Cayley's classic *What Bird is That?*

I turn to page 401 where there are graphics of the particular quail we are talking about. I challenge any member of this Chamber, let alone a person in bushland or heathland, to identify a bird in flight as a buff breasted button quail as opposed to a nominated quail such as the brown quail or stubble quail from a distance of some metres with a gun in your hands. There is no way in the world these characters will be able to distinguish between the animals outlined in this bill and protected species. It is offensive and indecent that, in stark contrast to what the Premier told the people of New South Wales before the election, the Shooters and Fishers Party is leading the Government around by the nose with this offensive bill. It comes hot on the heels of their recent bid to legalise silencers for guns. The only group of people who wants silencers for guns is criminals.

The Shooters and Fishers Party is now dictating to this Government the schemes as they relate to the sale of ports and electricity. I read into *Hansard* an extract from the publication *Talking Birds* which lists the

State's bird clubs and associations. This list will give members an idea of the scale of concern that exists in the community over this proposed legislation. The list contains the following organisations: African Lovebird Society of Australia, Armidale Caged Bird Club, Association of Country Bird Exhibitors, Australian Lizard Canary Society, Australian National Cockatiel Society Branch, Avicultural Society of NSW, Bathurst Regional Avicultural Society, Blacktown and District Cage Bird Society, Border Fancy Canary Club of Australia, Brisbane Waters Cage Bird Society, Broken Hill Avicultural Society, Budgerigar Improvement Society, Budgerigar Information Service, and Budgerigar Society of New South Wales, Canary and Cage Bird Improvement Society, Central Tablelands Avicultural Association, Central West Bird Club, Clarence River District Cage Bird Club, and Coffs Harbour and District Avicultural Society.

The list continues: Finch Society of Australia, Finch Society of Australia Hawkesbury Valley Branch, Finch Society of Australia Hunter Branch, Finch Society of Australia Wollongong Branch, Gloster Fancy Canary Club of NSW, Grass Parrot and Lorikeet Society of Australia, Gulgong and District Avicultural Society, Hawkesbury Valley Water Fowl Club—they will be up in arms—Hunter District Canary and Cage Bird Society, Hunter Valley Avicultural Society, Inverell Birdkeepers Group, Kempsey Macleay Bird Club, Lake Macquarie Zebra Finch Society, Macarthur Aviary Bird Club, Maclean District Avicultural Society, Maitland Bird Club, Manly Warringah Aviculture Society, Manning and District Birdkeepers, Midstate Budgerigar Club, Nambucca River Cage Bird Club, Namoi Valley Aviculture Club, Narrabri and District Poultry Club, Native Cockatiel Society of Australia, Nepean District Cage Bird Club, New Colour and Red Factor Canary Club of Australia, Newcastle Border Fancy Canary Club, Newcastle Budgerigar Club, Newcastle/Maitland Canary and Cage Bird Society, North Coast Caged Bird Club, Northern Avicultural Society and Northern NSW Budgerigar Breeders Association.

The list goes on: Northern Rivers Avicultural Society, Norwich Canary Club of NSW, NSW Finch Exhibitors Society, NSW Ornithological Association, Orana Avicultural Society, Orange Bird Society, Parrot Breeders and Exhibitors Society of NSW, Parrot Society of Australia (NSW), Pied Budgerigar Society Red Factor Canary Club of Australia, Richmond River Bird Club, Riverina Bird Fanciers, Riverina Finch Society, Ryde District Canary and Cage Bird Society, Shoalhaven Avicultural Society, Softbill and Native Pigeon Society of Australia, South Sydney Avicultural Society, South Western NSW Budgerigar Society, Sutherland Shire Bird Society, Tamworth Cage Bird Society, Taree and District Canary and Finch Society, Tenterfield Cage Bird Society, Tuggerah Lakes Specialist Canary Society, Twin Towns Avicultural Society, Wagga and District Caged Bird Society, Wodonga-Albury Avicultural Society, Wollongong and District Avicultural Society, Yass and District Bird Club, Yorkshire Canary Club of Australia, Yorkshire Canary Club of Newcastle, Young and District Cage Bird Society and Zebra Finch Society of Australia.

They are the New South Wales listings. Each one of those clubs has dozens or hundreds of members. I will be writing to each one of those clubs alerting them to the atrocity of this bill and the notion that in a civilised society the Shooters and Fishers Party can promote the destruction of bird life in this State contrary to the progress made in environmental matters in Australia over the last 50 years. The current regime has been internationally recognised as having the right architecture for the protection of native flora and fauna. This is a retrograde step in which defenceless animals are shot out of the sky by these characters. Frankly, I find their approach to wildlife sickening. I have already quoted to the House an extract from the Hon. Robert Borsak in the other place.

This bill is offensive and is a bribe by this Government to the Shooters and Fishers Party to facilitate the passage of its legislative program. When native animals are shot the Government will be held to account. When animals not included in this bill are erroneously shot by someone whose eyesight does not match the capacity of their gun, the Opposition and the community will hold the Government to account. Every one of those clubs has dozens or hundreds of members and in every one of those clubs there will be people who have kept ducks and quail and who value the role of those birds in the environment. This bill is an atrocity. It is a shameless attempt by this Government to pretend that it is not being led around by the nose by the caveman that is Robert Borsak.

Ms ROBYN PARKER (Maitland—Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) [1.46 p.m.]: I speak in support of the amendments made to this bill by the Government and supported by the Opposition in the other place. The shooting of native ducks will protect crops such as rice from damage. It is a well-established, longstanding management practice on private land and a practice that existed during the term of the last Government. The existing Game Bird Management Program allows landholders to legally protect their crops, either by undertaking the shooting themselves or allowing licensed individuals to do so. I am

advised the program in the Riverina is an essential part of pest mitigation efforts, particularly in key agricultural regions such as the Riverina. Pest mitigation to protect rice crops is essential not just for food security but also to protect the livelihoods of these farmers.

In the last five years approvals in the Riverina have been allocated to cull approximately 617,000 birds. Compliance information shows that 141,000 birds are recorded as actually being removed. During that period drought conditions have eased and conditions have been good for rice crops and for ducks too. High rainfall has led to an abundance of food and significant duck-breeding events that have, unfortunately, seen an increase in damage to crops. When this bill was first introduced into the other place I had concerns. As the Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage I have worked hard to improve the scientific rigour of the processes proposed by the bill for assessing and monitoring the health of native bird populations. I have insisted that any licence to shoot native birds is issued only for the purpose of sustainable agricultural management.

I am pleased to say that I am confident that this bill, as amended, retains and improves upon the environmental integrity of existing pest mitigation arrangements as they pertain to native species. The current bill will also improve the efficiency of pest control efforts by consolidating the administration of licensing arrangements under one authority, the Game Council. This is appropriate, given the existing role of the Game Council in administering statewide programs involving the use of licensed, trained and accredited individuals to tackle pest species. The Government amendments to the bill make it clear that licenses will be granted only for sustainable agricultural management purposes, not for recreational hunting. Let me be absolutely clear: licences have been and will continue to be issued to help farmers protect their crops and mitigate damage. This is not about a return to open season for duck hunting on private land. In addition, the issuing of licenses will be guided by the best available science. Management practices, annual quotas, time frames, locations, reporting and compliance auditing requirements will all be set by an expert Native Game Bird Management Committee.

The Office of Environment and Heritage will be a key member of that committee and contribute significant experience in setting annual quotas, monitoring native species populations, and compliance auditing. The office has the required expertise to ensure that licences issued for sustainable agricultural management purposes do not compromise the viability of native water bird populations, and it will have a key role in monitoring the accumulated numbers of ducks allowed to be shot. The office already applies this expertise. As we have heard today, shooting of ducks to protect crops already occurs and sustainable quotas are set annually. These quotas are based on the best available data and take account of species biology and population ecology. They are adjusted up or down each year based on seasonal conditions, because we know that duck populations typically peak in periods of high rainfall and decline in periods of drought.

Claims were made in the other place this morning that implied the role of the Office of Environment and Heritage was being removed. In fact, the Government amendments to this bill ensure that the office will continue to have strong oversight of native game birds through the Native Game Bird Management Committee. Consistent with current best practice, persons seeking approval to shoot waterfowl will continue to have to pass an official identification test to ensure they have adequate knowledge of different protected species. Further, the Government's amendments—supported by the Opposition—will ensure that there is no impact on the thousands of individuals who currently perform vital wildlife rescue work across New South Wales. These fantastic, dedicated people provide an essential community service to protect and rehabilitate our injured native wildlife, and it is important to make sure that they will continue to be able to obtain licences for this purpose. The bill as originally introduced would have removed the legal defence provided by the National Parks and Wildlife Act for these dedicated wildlife carers to undertake their work, interacting with sick and injured native species.

Under the original bill proposed by the Shooters and Fishers Party, these volunteers would have required a game licence under the Game and Feral Animal Control Act, which is nonsense. I have ensured that the Government amendments address this, and these carers will continue to be able to go about their important work. It should be clearly understood that the bill only applies to the shooting of game birds on private land. It does not extend to public land, such as national parks. Regarding the issue of lead shot, which was raised in the other place this morning, the Government is well aware of the potential impacts of lead shot within our environment. Lead shot, when used as ammunition in shooting, has the potential to build up in the environment and to cause waterway contamination. The use of steel shot is a widely accepted alternative to lead. Steel shot does not cause contamination and is becoming more widely available.

For these reasons, the Government encourages all shooters to use non-toxic shot. In past years, the National Parks and Wildlife Service has run education programs for landholders and licensed shooters regarding the impacts of lead shot and what types of alternative shot can be used. In moving amendments to this bill, the

Government proposed to establish a Game Bird Management Committee. This committee will examine the risk of the ongoing use of lead shot and prepare evidence-based guidelines about alternative shot for duck management. The Government has also worked to ensure that no threatened species are included in the schedule of native game birds. This bill does not affect existing provisions dealing with the protection of threatened species. There are separate and very robust laws that exist and will continue to apply to anyone found to be harming a threatened species.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner): Order! Being mindful of the hour and that question time will commence shortly, I ask all members to keep their speeches short so that every member will have the opportunity to speak in the debate.

Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) [1.50 p.m.]: I oppose the Game and Feral Animal Control Further Amendment Bill 2012 and I am appalled at the process that brings it to the House with Government support. A blood sport banned in 1995 because of its immense cruelty is being reintroduced thanks to a Government deal with a party representing a tiny section of the New South Wales community to allow the sale of Port Botany and Port Kembla. Similarly we have hunting in national parks to enable privatisation of electricity generators. This has been for me a predictable and unpleasant welcome to the New South Wales Parliament.

Duck hunting is abhorrent. It can take a number of bullets to kill a bird outright, and hunting often involves a spray of pellets directed at a target bird. With a single bullet able to wound a bird, many ducks will be wounded but not killed. Hunters do not always try to retrieve birds immediately, and wounded birds are difficult to find in the reedy waterways. Shooting groups admit that one in four birds shot in duck hunting escape wounded. But computer simulation by animal welfare organisations and reports from rescuers show that at least as many ducks are left wounded and uncaptured as there are killed and captured. Ducks with untreated wounds suffer for long periods before they recover, die a slow and painful death, or become easy prey for predators. There is no question this is cruelty and in this day and age we should work to remove animals' pain and suffering, not expand it.

I am offended by the conservation argument being feigned around this bill. We know that environment groups oppose recreational hunting. Evidence from Victoria, South Australia and Tasmania, where open season duck hunting still occurs, shows that protected "non-game" species also get shot, including the vulnerable freckled duck. Even protected birds not easily mistaken for game birds, like the swan and long-billed corella, have been found shot. Protected species also experience stress from the noise of shots. Observations by the RSPCA in north-west Victoria found black swans taking flight at the first sound of shots and continuing to fly for hours. They were later seen to be exhausted and having trouble maintaining height; one crashed into a tent and others landed heavily on water.

An agronomist from the Department of Primary Industries said in a January *ABC* report that duck hunting would have no impact on the number of game ducks harming crops and that hunters can already shoot ducks on private land where the ducks might ruin crops anyway. As much as the Government tries to pretend that its licensing system will protect ducks from being wounded and vulnerable species from being shot, hunters will never be able to ensure a clean kill of all ducks shot, nor will they ever be able to ensure that protected species will not be shot. This would be impossible. Duck hunting is opposed by the wider community. The RSPCA reports that 87 per cent of Victorians want duck hunting banned. There is no reason to think opposition would be any different here in New South Wales.

I am certain I am not the only member who has been contacted by hundreds of constituents opposing this legislation. Duck hunting has the support of only the micro constituency of the Shooters and Fishers Party. The rushed process we are seeing on this last day of sitting for the year shows that this Government knows there will be community outrage and wants to hide this move. This is a dirty deal and it is not in the best interests of New South Wales. It is a retrograde step—bringing us a step closer to the dark ages of animal cruelty. Even the sale of our ports assets, which is the purpose of this bill, is just more selling of the family silver, and that will limit future governments' ability to raise revenue. I condemn the bill.

Mr JAMIE PARKER (Balmain) [1.57 p.m.]: I speak on the Game and Feral Animal Control Further Amendment Bill 2012. I speak today on behalf of The Greens. As members know, this bill has been debated in the upper House of the New South Wales Parliament. We oppose the bill and emphasise issues that have been raised by other members—that the bill comes before this House for a purely political reason: to have the Shooters and Fishers Party support Government business, particularly when it comes to the privatisation of Port Botany and other areas; and to ensure that the Government will have its legislation passed.

This is a very sad day. As we know, recreational shooting was banned in New South Wales in 1995 for animal cruelty reasons. However, landholders could obtain licences from the Office of Environment and Heritage to permit the shooting of native birds on private property if those birds were a pest and causing damage. While recreational shooters could be hired to do the shooting, it was prohibited to use a licence that had recreation and sport as its primary purpose. The bill before the House allows duck hunting purely for fun, purely for recreational purposes on private property, and puts the Game Council, of all people, in charge of licences. That is like putting Dracula in charge of the blood bank.

I want to spend just a few minutes, because I know that time is an issue, ensuring that members know that protected species are not guaranteed protection by this bill. From experiences in Victoria, for example, we know that many non-game birds have been retrieved from lands during duck season, including legally protected species such as the rare and endangered freckled duck. We know that shots alarm protected species and can reduce the capacity of protected species to enjoy the environment within which they live because of the stress caused to them by constant shots. We know that many birds are wounded and left in agony, with many dying a long and prolonged death. The physical action of a shotgun involves a spray of pellets rather than a single shot. It is an inaccurate and inhumane method of killing an animal. As we have heard, computer simulation reflects the observations of rescuers in the wetland. Shooters leave at least as many wounded birds uncaptured as they kill and capture. Even with shooting groups, as the member for Sydney has said, one in four birds targeted will be wounded.

It is interesting that history will be repeating itself in New South Wales. Dr Roger Meischke, an experienced veterinarian, attended a veterinary rescue unit at the opening of the New South Wales duck shooting season for several years in the early 1990s and gathered information on the cause of death or the types of wounds suffered by retrieved water birds in 1991 and 1992. There is no reason to think the type of shooting done today will be any different from what was done then. The data revealed that 40 per cent of dead retrieved ducks were killed inhumanely—that is, their injuries indicated they would have suffered prior to death. In 1993 the figure was 34 per cent.

We have also heard about the use of lead shot. The Government says it will conduct education programs and tell people about lead shot and why it is important. We know that lead shot is used in New South Wales and that birds that ingest lead shot may endure prolonged suffering before death. Water birds, often bottom-feeding species, can develop lead poisoning after ingesting just one lead shot, usually left after duck shooting. The lead from the eroded shot is absorbed and deposited into the tissues and into the environment. Despite bans and education, tonnes of lead still remain in the environment from past shooting as lead does not break down.

Duck hunting is not necessarily the most effective way of controlling ducks. The Game Council's own annual report concedes that, on average, only 0.7 feral animals are shot per trip per hunter. This is another waste of government funds to enable the Game Council to fulfil this role because it also undermines professional cost control programs run by the department. There are non-lethal and more humane means of controlling feral ducks. Habit modification, the use of lure crops, alternative crops and frightening devices are several non-lethal ways that have been demonstrated to be effective internationally in managing feral ducks. It is important that although shooting organisations are advocating the shooting of ducks there are obviously problems and better alternatives.

The Minister for the Environment claimed that the Government would be resourcing these duck kills. Where are the extra resources? It was implied there would be additional resources to monitor hunting in national parks—that was what people understood—but now we realise there are no additional resources. The Minister for the Environment said, "We're not hunting ducks in national parks." Until which piece of legislation is introduced? The next time a piece of Government legislation comes along to allow the sale of public assets the Government will seek to allow duck hunting and other forms of hunting in national parks. This is the challenge we face. This is the reason it is important that this bill be opposed. The Government simply needs extra votes in the upper House to get its legislation passed and it is prepared to make these sorts of compromises. When these compromises are made they consistently lead to even more compromises.

The final point I make is that animal welfare and conservation groups have often advanced the argument that these types of hunting expeditions do more to harm the environment through the use of lead shot, the potential shooting of protected species and the stress created for protected species. We also know that a range of towns and communities will now be subject to these so-called control methods, which it is clear do not deliver the types of response or the safety for animals that is expected. Birds will be left in agony, with many

dying a prolonged death. Many will be wounded and injured and this is not the type of approach the Government should be promoting. This cruelty alone should be enough to ban this approach. This bill should not be proceeded with. I oppose this bill strongly.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD (Macquarie Fields) [2.04 p.m.]: Today we have a bunch of young schoolchildren in the gallery. I am going to ask them to do one thing for me. I want them to put up their hands if they agree that adults should be allowed to shoot ducks. Hands up if you agree.

Mr Brad Hazzard: Point of order: The member knows that he is not to engage people in the public gallery. It is quite disorderly and difficult. I ask him not to set a precedent by doing it. It is a bit silly. He should just make his point.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner): Order! I uphold the point of order.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD: The Government has just taken a point of order, which means that I am not allowed to ask a bunch of schoolchildren whether they think innocent ducks should be shot.

Mr Brad Hazzard: Point of order: It is not as if the man is devoid of a brain. He is a medical practitioner and he understands the standing orders. There are rules in this place as there are everywhere else in society. He is being grossly disorderly and I ask you to rule him out of order and to sit him down if he keeps it up because he is breaching your ruling.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner): Order! I ask the member to direct his comments through the Chair and not to the students.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD: As Elmer Fudd said, "It's duck season." That was a joke, and this bill is a joke. This bill is nothing but an invoice from the Shooters and Fishers Party for the sale of the ports. The bill allows ducks to be shot on private property. It is a policy that the vast majority of people in New South Wales do not agree with, and nor would the vast majority of members opposite if they had been permitted a conscience vote. This is dreadful policy. It will mean ducks will be able to be shot on private property if the Game Council—for those who are young, that is the equivalent of giving Dracula the keys to the blood bank—allows it. It was banned in 1995 because it was inherently cruel, and it still is. Yet those opposite are trying to stop people debating the bill by introducing it with no consultation and no notice, even though the mechanism for allowing community debate on bills such as this is well established. Bills can be laid on the table for five days to allow for community comment. Just as I am not allowed to ask a bunch of schoolkids whether they agree with duck hunting, the people of the State are not being asked whether they think people should be allowed to shoot ducks on private property.

Every shooter will now be expected to have a degree in ornithology. I do not know how they are going to be able to protect native ducks. It is not just the people who own the land who are affected. When people drive to the country there is nothing more enjoyable than seeing ducks in the field. Those people have a right to know that those ducks are safe from this Government. This bill was read most reluctantly into the *Hansard* and while *Hansard* does not record the Minister's body language, this Minister's future hangs by a thread. She has been forced to do something she does not want to do and that she has said previously she does not want to do. She is being forced to do this at the point of a gun, figuratively speaking. This is her legacy. She does not believe in it; nobody in this Parliament believes in it.

This is dangerous public policy, which will certainly cause risk or serious injury to innocent human beings because it is inherently dangerous to allow a bunch of people onto a property with a bunch of guns to shoot a bunch of ducks from a distance. It is dangerous and it is one of the reasons it was banned. Members opposite talk about science. How many scientists have spoken in favour of this bill? There were 52 speakers opposite on the 84-word Library Amendment Bill 2011, but we have heard not one word from any of the 69 Government members about this bill. They are clearly ashamed of it. Their main aim is to get out of here by ten past two so they do not have to come to work next Tuesday. Who here wants Tuesday off? That is what these guys want; they want Tuesday off. That is what this bill is about. It is not about sensible public debate on policy; this is about having Tuesday off. This is a dangerous bill. It is poor policy. Its repeal is inevitable as this younger generation become adults. It should never have been allowed to see the light of day under these circumstances.

Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron) [2.10 p.m.]: The Opposition is opposed to this poor piece of legislation. The Game and Feral Animal Control Further Amendment Bill 2012 was prepared by the Executive government

not because of an analysis of duck shooting or any failure in legislation. It is not designed to protect bird species. It is part of a grubby deal negotiated by two members of the upper House to ensure the sale of the ports assets. Whenever public policy is based on a grubby deal and not intellect, it takes this State back to Neanderthal times, to before the intervention of the 1980s when the Elmer Fudds could run around public landholdings shooting anything in sight.

Mr Nathan Rees: Barry's Bronze Age.

Mr RON HOENIG: Indeed. I remind the House that in 1987 the then Minister for Local Government, the Hon. Janice Crosio, wanted open duck hunting banned. The member for Ku-ring-gai was opposed to it. It was a time when hunters ran around with their popguns and their shotguns, shooting anything that flew. An examination undertaken to gauge the impact upon bird species found that the recreational shooting of ducks in Australia caused suffering to countless numbers of native water birds. It found that birds suffer pain and stress when they are wounded by shotgun pellets. Computer simulation estimates and the observations of rescuers on the wetlands indicated that duck shooters wounded at least as many birds as they killed outright.

In 1987, at the instigation of the then Minister for Local Government and the then Minister for Planning and Environment, the Hon. Bob Carr, the New South Wales Animal Welfare Advisory Council inquired into duck and quail hunting practices in New South Wales. The report, completed in 1988, concluded, first, that the cessation of sports hunting would not have significant economic consequences; and, secondly, that the level of suffering and pain caused through cruelty was unreasonably high. As a result, open season on duck hunting was banned—and duck hunting was effectively banned completely.

This had an impact on rice farmers and a regime was put in place that enabled owners to protect their crops by hunting ducks on private property. A two-stage process was put in place: The Game Council provided approval for the shooting and the Department of Environment assessed whether it was appropriate and whether the shooters could tell a duck from other wildlife. This bill gives control to the Game Council, which is a retrograde step for the protection of the environment. A retrograde step for the environment should not be compounded by the environmental destruction that is about to occur for those who live around Botany Bay and which caused this legislation to be brought to the House in the first place.

Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON (Burrinjuck—Minister for Primary Industries, and Minister for Small Business) [2.12 p.m.], in reply: I thank members for their contributions to the debate. Many of the assertions made by the member for Balmain were untrue and exaggerated and have misinformed the public. In 2009-10 there was a cull quota of 33,000-plus game birds. The Government's amendments will ensure that native game birds can only be shot for sustainable agricultural management purposes. Furthermore, a Native Game Management Committee, to be chaired by the Department of Primary Industries, will be in charge of setting quotas in areas and the periods when registered licensed hunters can operate. The Game Council is not in charge completely. Finally, it is important to note that there are no threatened species on the scheduled list. I commend the bill to the House.

[Business interrupted.]

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders: Routine of Business

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: I move:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended to permit the conclusion of consideration of the Game and Feral Animal Control Further Amendment Bill prior to the commencement of the routine of business.

In view of the fact that it is almost 2.15 p.m. and that Government business would normally be interrupted for question time, I propose to facilitate the Game and Feral Animal Control Further Amendment Bill 2012 being dealt with to its conclusion. I understand that there is to be a division. I have moved this suspension so as to permit the bill to be dealt with to its conclusion, including any subsequent divisions.

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

Motion agreed to.

GAME AND FERAL ANIMAL CONTROL FURTHER AMENDMENT BILL 2012**Second Reading***[Business resumed.]***Question—That this bill be now read a second time—put.****The House divided.****Ayes, 66**

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

Noes, 21

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

Pair

Mrs Roza Sage

Ms Noreen Hay

Question resolved in the affirmative.**Motion agreed to.****Bill read a second time.****Third Reading****Motion by Ms Katrina Hodgkinson agreed to:**

That this bill be now read a third time.

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

WHITE RIBBON DAY

The SPEAKER: Sunday 25 November 2012 is White Ribbon Day. The White Ribbon campaign is led by men and its aim is to stop violence against women. I thank all members who are wearing a white ribbon today to demonstrate their support for the campaign and for their commitment never to commit, excuse or remain silent about violence against women.

RETIREMENT OF JOE BARDETTA

The SPEAKER: We have in the gallery Mr Joe Bardetta. I take this opportunity to farewell this long-serving member of the Table Office staff. I am sure that members know Joe very well. After more than 22 years of service to this Parliament, Joe will proceed on long service leave on 14 December 2012 prior to his retirement. He joined the staff of the Legislative Assembly when he came across from the Government Printing Office as a contract proofreader on 9 April 1990. He remained in that role until 22 October 1990, when he was employed permanently with the Legislative Assembly. With the establishment of Parliamentary Printing Services in 1991, Joe was transferred to the unit as a proofreader, where he remained until a restructure in 2002.

On 17 October 2002 Joe rejoined the staff of the Legislative Assembly when he was initially employed temporarily as a parliamentary officer, publications, until finally finding a permanent position and eventually being promoted to his current position of parliamentary officer, procedure administration, on 17 December 2009. Due to his background and enormous skills, over the past eight years Joe has been intimately involved in the production of the questions and answers paper, from proofreading all members' written questions and Ministers' answers, and chasing Ministers for answers to written questions when they fell due through to the typesetting and publication of the paper. Joe has become the self-styled question and answers paper guru of the Legislative Assembly.

Joe's biggest challenge arose when he oversaw the creation and implementation of the questions and answers database, which is now used to produce the questions and answers paper. His unflappable, friendly demeanour, together with his extensive English skills and eye for detail, has made Joe an integral part of the Table Office. Joe has always been somewhat of a fixture in the parliamentary gymnasium. From Monday through to Thursday he is often found working out at lunchtime. One of his colleagues joked that that was because he wants to work off the food he eats during his long Friday afternoon lunches. I am sure that is not true. When asked to describe Joe, the one thing that all his colleagues said is that he is a true gentleman. Of course, he will be sorely missed. I wish Joe and his wife, Lydia, all the best for the future.

ASSENT TO BILLS

Assent to the following bills was reported:

Biofuels Amendment Bill 2012
Environmental Planning and Assessment Amendment Bill 2012
Local Government Amendment (Conduct) Bill 2012
Statute Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill (No. 2) 2012
Forestry Bill 2012

QUESTION TIME

[Question time commenced at 2.30 p.m.]

PACIFIC HIGHWAY UPGRADE

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: My question is directed to the Premier. Will the Premier match the Commonwealth's funding offer on the Pacific Highway and pledge the full \$3.56 billion needed to complete the project?

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: It is a bit rich that an Opposition that last night opposed unlocking infrastructure funds in New South Wales this morning seeks to try to pretend it is interested in building better roads across New South Wales. After 16 years in office—and the member for Kogarah still cannot obey police orders—they left an infrastructure deficit in New South Wales that is the greatest in the country. Every time we have introduced bills and proposals to fund that infrastructure deficit, every time we have made sensible recommendations about unlocking the asset values to free up billions of dollars to put into roads, railways, hospitals and schools, what has the Opposition done? It has opposed them root and branch.

[*Interruption*]

I am pleased that the minister for middle management, the member for Maroubra, seeks to interject. He was the last Minister, along with the Labor Minister for Roads at the time, to sign up to the 80-20 funding arrangement for the Pacific Highway—that is 80 per cent funded by the Federal Government and 20 per cent funded by the State Government. That is the deal we will continue to argue should apply to the Pacific Highway because if it was good enough with a Labor State government and a Labor Federal government, it ought to be good enough with a Liberal-Nationals State Government that is committed to building roads across New South Wales. The hypocrisy from those opposite could not be greater. They did not build while in office, but they demand it from us overnight. They entered into agreements while in office for an 80-20 funding split with the Federal Government and then they roll over in Opposition and say that the funding agreement should be 50-50.

We will continue to do whatever we can to free up dollars to invest in infrastructure in New South Wales. We believe that is what the people of New South Wales want, whether they live on the North Coast, the mid North Coast, the South Coast, across Sydney or in other regions of the State. That is why, not only are we building roads like the Pacific Highway or the Princes Highway—and I note the question last week from the member for Kiama about that second stage build on the Princes Highway, which is now possible because we have managed to get the ports legislation through both Houses of Parliament—but we are also providing other infrastructure. It is about the six new schools we will be building this year; it is about the hospitals we are getting on to deliver across the State, whether in Tamworth or Wagga Wagga, or the rebuild of Blacktown and Mt Druitt Hospital or the upgrades to Campbelltown Hospital. We are determined to deliver—

Mr John Robertson: Point of order: My point of order is under Standing Order 129 and relates to relevance. It was a simple question: yes or no is all the answer requires.

The SPEAKER: Order! Questions are rarely simple and do not require a yes or no answer. The Premier is being relevant to the question asked. There is no point of order.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I reckon even the students from Cootamundra High School in the gallery today understood that we are saying that the 80-20 funding deal with the Federal Government that existed when those opposite were in office should continue to exist, and it is through that vehicle that we should seek to continue those upgrades of the Pacific Highway. I know where Cootamundra is. It is not on the Pacific Highway; it is on other roads that could do with funding as well. We will not take lectures from Eddie Obeid's godson. We will not take lectures from a person in this place, whether his—

Mr John Robertson: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Order! If the member is seeking to take a point of order about the last exchange, I advise that unfortunately I did not hear it and therefore could not make a ruling in relation to it. Government members will come to order. What is the member's point of order?

Mr John Robertson: It is under Standing Order 129. The Commonwealth has offered \$3.5 billion. Is the Premier—

The SPEAKER: Order! That is not a point of order. The Premier is being relevant to the question asked. I am having difficulty hearing because of the number and volume of interjections. The House will come to order.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: My answer could not be clearer: we are seeking the same deal that the Federal Government previously entered into with regard to the Pacific Highway. In the meantime, we will continue to unlock asset values to put into infrastructure.

COMMUNITY SECTOR WAGES

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS: My question is addressed to the Premier. What is the Government doing to ensure fair pay for workers in the social and community sector?

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I thank the member for Menai for her question, and given that she previously worked for Technical Aid to the Disabled—

[Interruption]

I say to the students in the gallery today that the member for Canterbury was the member who just interjected. That seems to be the major role of the member for Canterbury: not say anything sensible, but just make lots of noise to try to get attention to herself. As the Minister for Community Services demonstrated this week, the member for Canterbury ought not try to draw attention to herself given her appalling record as a Minister in the previous Government. I would have thought that even the member for Canterbury, on this day on which we are delivering pay increases to the most poorly paid workers who do great service for the most vulnerable across the community, should show some grace and give such workers the credit they deserve.

As I was saying before I was so rudely interrupted, the member for Menai understands this issue far better than any other member in this Chamber because she worked for Technical Aid to the Disabled. She understands the importance of today's announcement for those who work in the community sector. This is a memorable day for the 27,000 New South Wales workers who work across 14,000 non-government organisations, such as Mission Australia, the Salvation Army, House with No Steps and Anglicare, all of whom provide great care to the most vulnerable in our community. Whether they work for the elderly, the disabled, families in crisis or children, they help keep communities together. They do work that either we cannot, or will not, do and they should be cherished and valued. That is why we are saying—

The SPEAKER: Order! I warn the member for Canterbury that if she does not come to order I will place her on a call to order.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: It is unbelievable. A woman who cut services to sexual assault services when she was Minister for Community Services—

Ms Linda Burney: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Order! I will hear the member for Canterbury on the point of order. However, I suggest that if the member continues to interject, she deserves whatever retaliation she receives.

Ms Linda Burney: My point of order is under Standing Order 73. That is not true and the Premier knows it is not true.

The SPEAKER: Order! There is no contravention of Standing Order 73. The point of order is not upheld.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I cannot believe that the Labor Party is not supporting this increase to community sector workers. However, that is consistent with the action taken by the former Labor disability spokesman who, one month before the election campaign, refused to commit the Keneally Government to support the community sector wage increase. Having refused to commit in government they continue to refuse to support this billion-dollar package, funded by taxpayers in New South Wales, to provide those who work with the most vulnerable in our community with the pay increases that they deserve.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition will cease interjecting, arguing and shouting.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: Pay increases—

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: Again the House should note—

The SPEAKER: Order! If the Leader of the Opposition continues to interject he will be removed from the Chamber.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: The House should note that Eddie Obeid's godson will not support the community sector wages increases.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: He will support shonky Ministers ripping off the taxpayers of this State but he will not support the Coalition's allocation of a billion dollars to 27,000 workers who provide services through—

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: —House with No Steps, Anglicare and other similar organisations. I note that the Leader of the Opposition still has on his website a press release praising Eddie Obeid's services as a Minister of this State. That may or may not be surprising because the Leader of the Opposition was in the upper House because of Eddie Obeid; he came to the lower House only because of Eddie Obeid; and he is the Leader of the Opposition only because of Eddie Obeid.

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order: My point of order is under Standing Order 73. If that is not a personal reflection, I do not know what is.

The SPEAKER: Order! It was not a personal reflection. There is no point of order.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: It is a statement of fact, as I said yesterday. It is written up in Frank Sartor's book, it is written up in Simon Benson's book, and it is probably written up even in Rodney Cavalier's book. As I have said, this is a momentous day for community sector workers. Indeed, it is a momentous day for those workers who over the next 10 years will receive pay increases of between 23 per cent and 45 per cent for the full period of the wage increase.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: This is in line with the Fair Work Australia award. [*Extension of time granted.*]

This is also in line with the commitments that I have made since the Prime Minister telephoned me to inform me about what had been proposed. We said we would deliver our fair share on this. Today we are delivering more than our fair share because, regrettably, Canberra is not delivering its fair share. There is a funding gap shortfall. We will accept that shortfall because of our determination to ensure that these pay increases start on 1 December. However, we will still argue that that shortfall should be refunded not only to New South Wales but also to the other States and Territories.

There is good reason for doing this. Firstly, it goes to the integrity of the Prime Minister because she promised that she would fund her fair share—and that is clearly not happening. Secondly—and this is the kicker—as a result of these long overdue pay increases that we are helping to deliver, the Australian Taxation Office will collect more in tax revenue. So an outlay for the Federal Government becomes a clawback by the Federal Government. For instance, I have seen an example involving one worker who, over 10 years, receives a pay increase of \$6,100 and pays tax of \$6,500. If ever there was reason for the Federal Government to pay its fair share and ensure that the States and Territories do not have to continue the shortfall we have agreed to fund so that workers receive this pay increase, it is that. I am delighted that the member for Menai asked me this question. This is a good day for those who work across the community sector, but it is a disgraceful day when the Labor Party will not support pay increases for workers in the most vulnerable sector in our community.

STATE BUDGET

Mr RYAN PARK: I direct my question to the Premier. In light of the Premier's answer, why did the Treasurer say in a media release this morning that:

... funds released through the [port] transactions will be used to match the Commonwealth's funding offer on the Pacific Highway."

Does the Treasurer know something that the Premier does not know or did Mike Baird make another \$3.56 billion blunder?

The SPEAKER: Order! The Treasurer will come to order. The Premier has the call.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I was getting a bit anxious until the member for Keira opened his mouth. The Treasurer, the Minister for Roads and Ports, the Minister for Transport and, I daresay, my good friend the Minister for Sport and Recreation all understand that we want the Federal Government to match the commitment made in the 80:20 funding split which existed until Anthony Albanese decided there had been a change in government in New South Wales and he wanted to claw back some money. The Federal Government

is not satisfied with clawing back money from the community sector; it is trying to claw back money from the Pacific Highway. That can only have one impact. If the Federal Government does not stump up that money, we will see more accidents and deaths on that road—a road where there have been far too many accidents and deaths in the past.

Mr Ryan Park: Point of order: My point of order is under Standing Order No. 129, and relates to relevance. A few moments ago the Premier made it clear that the deal is an 80:20 funding split and earlier this morning the Treasurer committed to a 50:50 funding split. Which is it?

The SPEAKER: Order! The member has asked the question and the Premier is being relevant to the question asked.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: Again, I would say that the skill levels of the kids from Cootamundra High School who are in the gallery are far greater than the skill levels of those opposite. What I said was that the Treasurer, like every other Minister in my Government, knows that our commitment is to an 80:20 funding split. That was what the Treasurer was talking about this morning. It is those opposite who are not committed to an 80:20 funding split. Despite the refusal of those opposite to commit to an 80:20 funding split, they would see the State have to stump up billions of dollars more to get the Pacific Highway funded but they will not tell us where the money is to come from. On the one hand those opposite oppose legislation to free up funding for infrastructure, including funding for the Pacific Highway, but on the other hand they continue to argue that roads that they did not build when in government should be delivered overnight by this Government.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: One might expect more from the member for Keira, after all—and I will keep a straight face here—he was the Deputy Director General of Transport in New South Wales.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I need to keep a straight face because he was appointed by the former Labor Government without merit selection.

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

Mr Ryan Park: Point of order: My point of order is under Standing Order No. 129, relevance. My question was clearly about the Pacific Highway. I am not sure that those opposite are concerned about it but when we have a discrepancy of \$1.5 billion dollars—

The SPEAKER: Order! I have heard the point of order; I do not need a speech on it. The member for Keira had his opportunity to ask his question. The Premier is being relevant to the question.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: The member for Keira has made an outrageous claim that we on this side of the House do not care about the Pacific Highway. Let me remind him that the Pacific Highway starts in my electorate, travels partially through the electorate of Hornsby, then goes to the Central Coast—where all the seats are held by the Liberal Party—and the member for Wallsend has a part of the Pacific Highway in her electorate.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Maroubra will cease shouting at the Premier.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: The Pacific Highway then goes to Newcastle and on to Port Stephens. It then goes from Port Stephens to the Queensland border and passes through Liberal and Nationals seats. There is more concern for the Pacific Highway from those on this side of the House than there is from those opposite. That is why in our first budget we put additional funding into the Pacific Highway—in stark contrast to the actions of the Federal Government, which took \$300 million out of that funding in a mini-budget. Never let it be said that we on this side of the Chamber are not delivering on our commitments to increase funding for the Pacific Highway. We did it in our first budget, and we are determined to continue to do it, but we want to do it on the basis of the historic Federal-State 80:20 funding agreement. The member for Keira still needs to get the towel behind his ears. He still needs to understand that when we talk about the historic funding agreement with the Federal Government that we are talking about an 80:20 funding split. That is what we will continue to argue and that is what we will continue to expect after the next Federal election from the Abbott Government.

MURRAY-DARLING BASIN PLAN

Mr JOHN WILLIAMS: I address my question to the Deputy Premier. What is the New South Wales Government's initial response to the final Murray-Darling Basin Plan released today?

Mr ANDREW STONER: I thank the member for Murray-Darling for his question. The member is rightly concerned about the future of countless inland communities in the Murray-Darling Basin, given the content of the Federal Government's Murray-Darling Basin Plan. After five years of tough negotiations, today's release by the Federal Government of the fifth and final version of the Murray-Darling Basin Plan should mark the triumph of the national interest over the parochial, of a sustainable future over short-sightedness, and, most of all, a triumph of science over regional politics. With great regret, I inform the House that this is not the case. Earlier today the Federal Minister for Water made his Murray Darling Basin Plan law. Despite the fact that New South Wales is the biggest player—compromising 56 per cent of the Murray-Darling Basin Plan—we were left to find out over Twitter.

If this is the Commonwealth's proposed consultative and collaborative way forward, it will not get very far. The New South Wales Government is in the process of studying the detail and implications of the final plan. However, our initial reaction is that it is not acceptable to New South Wales. The Commonwealth Government must understand that if it wants to implement this plan, it needs the support of the States and, principally, New South Wales. Let us be frank, this plan is a politically driven outcome. It is a plan for Labor's marginal seats in South Australia. New South Wales has long advocated the need for a binding cap on water buybacks at 3 per cent per valley per decade to allow communities and industries time to adjust. Unfortunately, we have seen no commitment from the Commonwealth to do that.

The Commonwealth Minister has advised that he could not commit to capping water buybacks at New South Wales's precise and realistic rate, but he believed that if the sustainable diversion limit adjustment mechanism works to its full potential, if prospective infrastructure-based water recovery is achieved and if a number of the proposed projects proceed as planned, the required purchase rate should be under the New South Wales limit. To put it simply, we will not be bullied into selling down the river our regional communities on the basis of multiple ifs from a Federal Labor Government desperate to fall over the line again at an election next year. Today at the National Press Club, Tony Burke said that New South Wales believes that there are projects around to achieve 650 gigalitres in sustainable diversion limit offsets. That is not true, and he knows it. In fact, I will do the unthinkable and quote what I said on 26 October—a reliable source:

We are a long way from being confident—

[Interruption]

Members opposite should listen to this. They did not listen the first time so they should listen now. The member for Toongabbie should know a little about this and he should support this Government and stand up for New South Wales. I said:

We are a long way from being confident that the SDL adjustment mechanism will deliver up to 650GL in offsets against this target.

That is why there must be a binding cap. A binding cap will force the Commonwealth Government to work harder on infrastructure projects to deliver water savings, rather than falling back on lazy and destructive buybacks. Tony Burke's message to us through the media was, "This is in your hands." My message to Tony Burke is this: If you do not put in place your own cap, you might find that New South Wales does take your advice and take things into its own hands. The Commonwealth also needs to show a genuine commitment to help our communities adjust to any changes that the plan imposes on them.

The Federal Government is still imposing arbitrary limits and ignoring the advice of New South Wales hydrogeological experts, and that will jeopardise substantial economic development in regional New South Wales. The Commonwealth also needs to ensure that third party impacts are properly addressed, such as flooding and inundation of private property. This Government is not confident that the Commonwealth can adequately and responsibly manage the water it already holds, let alone the additional water it is seeking. *[Extension of time granted.]*

Indeed, this is an extremely important item for every person living in New South Wales because the bulk of our food comes from west of the range; it is grown in the Murray-Darling Basin. So the availability of

high-quality, inexpensive Australian food for our population, let alone for export, depends on this issue, not to mention the ongoing sustainability of inland communities and the decentralisation of population throughout the State. The New South Wales Government, thanks in large part to the hardworking Minister for Primary Industries, has managed to secure a number of improvements to the plan, including that water recovery must now be equitably shared between all basin States. There is also at least a formal acknowledgement by the Commonwealth that our costs of implementing the plan must be covered.

It is worth noting again that New South Wales governments have been doing the heavy lifting on water reform since 1995—and I acknowledge the previous Government's work on this—with the largest and most open water trading market, the development of statutory water sharing plans, provision of water for the environment and water recovery programs that have seen more than 860 gigalitres of surface water returned to the environment each year. The Commonwealth should be under no illusion about the level of community concern that exists throughout regional New South Wales. For communities such as Griffith, Dubbo, Tamworth and Deniliquin, water is their life blood. The Commonwealth wants to take the quick and dirty option and buyback the water, reducing the productive capacity of New South Wales. The Government will not allow that to occur. We stand side by side with our basin communities as we seek an equitable and sustainable future for our great food and fibre basin. [*Time expired.*]

PACIFIC HIGHWAY UPGRADE

Mr MICHAEL DALEY: My question is addressed to the Treasurer. Are members to conclude from the Premier's answer to the question asked earlier by the member for Keira that once again the Premier has overruled the Treasurer? Or is it the case that the Treasurer is now withdrawing the offer he made in his release this morning to "match your money" and has made yet another Mike Baird blunder?

Mr MIKE BAIRD: While I was sitting here I was thinking, "Please don't tell me they are going to ask me a question." And the member for Maroubra comes over the top and asks me a question. I love a mature debate. We are talking about the Pacific Highway. Members opposite are having a go at the words "matching the commitment". Those words are clear: the Government said it would provide 20 per cent of the funding, and that is exactly what we have done. But the Commonwealth has not matched its commitment.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: What I love about members opposite is that they are consistent.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: They are talking about the Pacific Highway.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: What were their actions on the Pacific Highway? When Labor handed down a mini-budget what did it do with the Pacific Highway?

The SPEAKER: Order! I call the member for Keira to order for the second time. I call the member for Maroubra to order. The member for Keira and the member for Maroubra will stop shouting.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Labor ripped funding out of the Pacific Highway. On the day that the ports transaction legislation went through the Parliament to provide funding for the Pacific Highway, what did members opposite do? They opposed every part of the legislation.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Members opposite do not want funds to go to the Pacific Highway, whereas the O'Farrell-Stoner Government is delighted to put money into the Pacific Highway. This is a great day for the people of New South Wales because on the back of that ports legislation we have funding for the Pacific Highway, and that is a boon for the North Coast community. We also have funding for the Princes Highway, and that is a boon for the South Coast community. And we have funding for West Connect, and that is a boon for people across western Sydney—rather than sitting in congestion, they will get a solution from the O'Farrell-Stoner Government. We also have funding for the Bridges to the Bush Program, and that is a boon for regional communities across New South Wales. That is what the O'Farrell-Stoner Government is about.

The SPEAKER: Order! Government members will cease interjecting.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Labor left problems behind and we are delivering the solutions.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Labor could not find the money. We are finding the money for the infrastructure.

The SPEAKER: Order! I call the member for Maroubra to order for the second time. He will cease shouting at the Premier. The Treasurer has the call.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Members opposite are consistent. When they were in government they cut funding for the Pacific Highway. The Labor Government did not care; it did not provide the funding. This Government is doing the exact opposite. Now members opposite say that more funding should be provided. The consistency issue is a pattern for members opposite, including the member for Maroubra, who is my management hero.

Mr John Robertson: Point of order: My point of order is 129, relevance. The question was pretty clear: Has he been overruled or was it a blunder. Which one is it?

The SPEAKER: Order! The Treasurer has been relevant to the subject matter of this question and the previous question.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: If ever they wanted to know about a blunder, all 20 of them know they blundered by putting in the Leader of the Opposition. That is the biggest blunder they made. It is pretty simple, it is about consistency and those opposite are completely inconsistent on the Pacific Highway. The thing about the member for Maroubra is that he came into this House and he seemed to have something against The Greens and the member for Balmain. In this House he called The Greens charlatans. He also said this:

Let us make no mistake about this ... The Greens are the greatest shysters in politics.

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order: I refer to Standing Order 73. The Treasurer should not make personal reflections about the member for Balmain.

The SPEAKER: Order! I do not believe the Treasurer was making personal reflections about the member for Balmain. There is no point of order.

Mr Michael Daley: The member for Balmain has never lost \$1 billion, but they have.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Maroubra will resume his seat. I do not think the Treasurer is casting personal reflections on the member for Balmain.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: The member for Balmain is a decent bloke; it is the wrong party.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will come to order.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: If the member for Maroubra does not like The Greens, he can say that. He has done that quite consistently. The only problem with that in terms of the consistency of his argument is that he spent six months of the election campaign pretending he was one. That is how consistent those opposite are. We have put money into the Pacific Highway and we are proud of it. [*Time expired.*]

CHILD PROTECTION

Mr DARREN WEBBER: My question is directed to the Minister for Family and Community Services. How will the Government improve the lives of the most vulnerable children in New South Wales?

Ms PRU GOWARD: I thank the member for Wyong for his question and his commitment to doing better for vulnerable children and young people. Today I released a comprehensive child protection reform discussion paper proposing a suite of far-reaching reforms to legislation, policy and practice. Our State's child protection system needs to be more flexible, responsive and sustainable so it can improve the lives of children and young people who are at risk. The proposals are designed to promote good parenting, provide a safe and

stable home for children and young people in care, and create a child-focused system. Some of these reforms will generate lively debate, which I thoroughly welcome. We cannot improve services and lives in New South Wales without real, and at times bold, reform. I encourage the community and our non-government partners to be involved in the consultation process, and submit their feedback and ideas on the proposals. Submissions will be open to the public until 8 March next year. A number of stakeholder briefings will be held in Sydney and regional New South Wales.

Children entering care with no possibility of being able to live with their birth parents need a permanent family who gives them love, nurtures them and provides a stable future. For some children—the right children—open adoption offers the best chance of a home for life. Many children and young people in care experience the detrimental effects of too many placements, being moved from one to the next. This discussion paper proposes that we first try to help families change so that their children can live at home. If this is not possible, children should then live with other family members who have long-term guardianship, and if that is not an option then open adoption. Children should only go into the long-term parental responsibility of the Minister, which is foster care, as a last—not a first—resort. For other children and young people, particularly Aboriginal children, adoption is not culturally appropriate, so to provide the stability and certainty they deserve, long-term guardianship by a relative or kin is a preferred option.

The Government is also proposing reforms to improve contact arrangements to meet the changing needs of children through case planning; ban convicted sex offenders of children from using social media; and strengthen the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 to prevent the unlawful publication of names and images of children and young people on social media sites. We have a tremendous opportunity in front of us to make a very real, long-term difference for children and young people in New South Wales. What a pity the Opposition has chosen not to join this campaign. This morning the response around the State from individuals and from those in the care sector was united in agreement—agreement that we need to provide children with real childhoods, real love and real stability.

There was just one voice of dissention, one voice that I think betrayed her role as the former failed Minister, and instead chose to represent this incredibly important discussion as a grubby little debate about money. This idea, she said, is about cutting costs. Tell that to those people lining up to adopt children. Tell them that it is about cutting costs. They want children to be part of their families and children desperately want to feel loved. If that was not enough, in what I consider a new low even for this former failed Minister, the former failed Minister then went on to say that children in foster care are not brand-new cuddly babies; many of them carry deep scars and often disabilities. The member for Canterbury thinks that these children, who in her words carry scars or suffer disabilities, do not deserve to be adopted.

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

Ms PRU GOWARD: Nobody would want them—that is the implication of that comment. [*Extension of time granted.*]

Ms Carmel Tebbutt: Point of order: My point of order is under Standing Order 73. Some leeway is acceptable when Ministers are responding to questions, but this Minister has attacked the member for Canterbury in a most unsavoury way. If she wants to do that, it has to be by way of substantive motion. It is an absolute lie and it is disgusting.

Mr Brad Hazzard: To the point of order: I understand the member's assertion, but I think that she should withdraw the assertion that it was a lie. That is unparliamentary language.

The SPEAKER: Order! I do not uphold the point of order under Standing Order 73. I did not judge that there was too much personal reflection coming from the Minister that had not already come from the other side—it is a bit of a two-way street at the moment. The Minister has the call.

Ms PRU GOWARD: In fact, I was quoting from this former failed Minister's own comments in the press. This is not a lie; this is what the former failed Minister has asserted. The former failed Minister, who showed so little interest—

The SPEAKER: Order! Opposition members will cease making personal reflections on the Minister.

Ms Linda Burney: Point of order: I refer to Standing Order 73. At least I did not have staff walk out on me—

The SPEAKER: Order! That is not a point of order, nor is it appropriate. The member for Canterbury will resume her seat.

Ms PRU GOWARD: For the benefit of those opposite who think there would not be people who want and value as part of their family children with disabilities or children with scars, we currently have more than 700 children for whom there are people seeking adoption from their foster carers. So we have foster carers who are caring for children with, in the words of the former failed Minister, disabilities and scars who want those children, love those children and want to care for those children.

Mr Richard Amery: Point of order: My point of order is under Standing Order 75. The Minister should know to address other members of the House by their correct title. The continued reference to the former failed Minister is out of order.

The SPEAKER: Order! I remind the Minister that standing orders provide that members refer to other members by their correct titles.

Ms PRU GOWARD: The member for Canterbury, who was the former failed Minister for Community Services, needs to remember that people in this State care for and love these children, and that applies to foster carers. The member for Canterbury is very welcome to put in a submission, but it would be very nice if the member acknowledged the importance of permanent care for our children.

NSW SCHOOL SPORTS UNIT

Ms CARMEL TEBBUTT: My question is to the Minister for Education. Will the Minister reverse his decision to cut funding for the NSW School Sports Unit so that representative State sports carnivals, which students have trained so hard for, can now go ahead?

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: I am always happy to answer questions about education, particularly questions from the Opposition because they are always wrong. Of course the Department of Education and Communities supports sport in schools. It is an absolutely critical part of the non-academic curriculum, and all experts in education value the role that things like sport, music, drama and other extracurricular activities play in students' learning. The assertion in the question that somehow sports events will no longer go ahead is completely wrong. Today I had the pleasure of attending the rehearsal for the Schools Spectacular, which is on tomorrow night. I urge any member who has not seen the spectacular to go along—it is a great showcase for public education in this State.

More than 3,500 students from right across New South Wales take part. Today there were students from Norfolk Island and Menindee Central School participating in an absolute extravaganza. If members want to see something that makes them proud of education, particularly public education, I urge them to go to the Schools Spectacular. I refer to the Schools Spectacular because this is part of the scare campaign. Members opposite suggest the Schools Spectacular will not be shown in the future and there will be no more sport. I have seen a joint press release from the Leader of the Opposition and the shadow Minister for Education saying that the budget measures will impact on 34 million textbooks. That is just outrageous. It says more than three million school laptops will be affected and 17,000 schoolteachers. I am reading from their press release.

Ms Carmel Tebbutt: Point of order: It is Standing Order 129, relevance. The question is about sport, not textbooks or the Schools Spectacular, and I would appreciate an answer.

The SPEAKER: Order! I believe the Minister answered the question at the beginning. Perhaps the member for Marrickville was not listening, but I was.

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: We are restructuring. Nobody has been more transparent about this than I have. I answered questions at a press conference on 11 September. There is infinitely more transparency than we ever got out of the former Labor Government. I said what we had to do and what decisions we were making. It is about a restructure and there is a consultation process. In some parts of the department that process has finished; in others it is continuing. The first round of consultations about the regional restructure finished on Tuesday. There will be another round in a week or so. I cannot be fairer, more reasonable and more transparent than I have been.

We are changing the way we support schools, and of course we should. The last time a restructure was undertaken Andrew Refshauge, the former member for Marrickville, was the Minister in the former Labor

Government and 1,000 jobs went. In this restructure across a large department 600 positions will come out of the bureaucracy compared with the 1,000 that were cut 10 years ago when Labor did it. Of course we should restructure because things now are substantially different from what they were 10 years ago. For the benefit of the member for Mount Druitt there is the internet. Members opposite think they have all this intel about dramas within the Department of Education. The only Intel they have is the one in their computer. I will explain that—

Mr Guy Zangari: Point of order: It is Standing Order 129, relevance. The Minister is being irrelevant to the question asked by the member for Marrickville.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister has answered the question and is being relevant. Perhaps the member was not listening.

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: Given the member for Mount Druitt's understanding of information technology I will explain it so that he can understand the joke. Intel is a really big company in the United States that is involved with computers. I am answering the question. We are doing things differently. There is now so much more web-based support that schools can access without necessarily having to rely on the support of a person driving around to every single school. They will still get that support, but so much more is delivered online now, as it should be. The media landscape has changed and so has the landscape around how we support schools. That is precisely what we are doing. Consultation is taking place and there has been a lot of transparency. [*Time expired.*]

DISABILITY SERVICES

Mr ANDREW GEE: My question is directed to the Minister for Disability Services. How does today's wages announcement support the Government's reforms to disability services?

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: I thank the member for Orange for his question because today is an important and momentous day for some of the lowest paid workers across the State who opt to work in a profession that provides care and support to some of the most vulnerable in our community. Today's billion-dollar announcement relating to disability services comes at a time when we are putting \$2 billion of growth money into programs and when we have put up \$585 million for the launch site of the National Disability Insurance Scheme in the Hunter. We are also trying to secure an additional 47,000 places for people with disability across the State.

It is tremendous to be part of a Government that today has announced \$1 billion-plus—because we are going to cover the Commonwealth's shortfall—for 27,000 workers who go to work every day and undertake all-too-often thankless tasks throughout our community. This announcement is critically important not only to the individuals who benefit from the care provided by those workers but also to the workers themselves. Their wage levels are simply unacceptable. Today's announcement will mean, depending on the pay grade, a pay increase of between 23 and 45 per cent. I know that the work undertaken through organisations such as National Disability Services to get to this point has been critical in securing that outcome.

As the Premier alluded to earlier, the Commonwealth is stumping up only \$199 million. The Commonwealth has to come back to the table and, given the tax take it will receive through this process, reinvest that money into the pay packets of those low-income workers. Today's announcement is fundamental as it relates to disability reform. We cannot secure the workforce required to support people with disability across the community, particularly given the current high unmet need, if we do not make it an attractive environment so that they will join the workforce. Through our program Care Careers, which is administered by National Disability Services, we are aiming to have 10,000 new employees enter the sector by 2015. This comes at a time when we are moving to a person-centred approach in terms of individualised funding, planning and support for people with disabilities so that they have choice and control over their own programs.

It also comes on the eve of the National Disability Insurance Scheme. The full governance and funding of this scheme will be negotiated at the Council of Australian Governments in the next fortnight. It is a scheme that people continue to cry out for every day. Those care workers we are seeking to attract will take comfort from this billion-dollar announcement. The majority of people who currently work in the sector are women and that led to the Fair Work Australia hearing involving the application by the Commonwealth and the Australian Services Union. They will enter this Christmas period knowing that this wage increase has been achieved. That is something that is to be recognised across the board. I am keen to ensure that those workers continue to enjoy the support of this State Government. It is pleasing to work alongside the Minister for Community Services, the Premier and the Treasurer to achieve this outcome, which will be one that is applauded across the sector today.

ENVIRONMENTAL DEFENDERS OFFICE

Mr GREG PIPER: My question is directed to the Premier. With the Environmental Defenders Office existing to provide free legal advice to persons wanting to uphold New South Wales law and current concerns about its future, will the Premier act to ensure that funding is allocated to ensure the continuance of this important organisation?

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I thank the member for Lake Macquarie for his question. Those matters are currently under consideration by the Government in respect of the Department of Attorney General and Justice. Everybody knows that we have to tighten our belts. We said at the time of the budget that all areas of expenditure need to be assessed to ensure we are getting proper value for money for taxpayers. As the member for Ku-ring-gai, I know the good work that the Environmental Defenders Office can do. For example, it successfully challenged the town centre's draft local environmental plan on behalf of the community of Ku-ring-gai. The support from the Environmental Defenders Office for the Ku-ring-gai community raises the issue that the Attorney General has to grapple with. As the question suggests, we need to ensure that those who cannot get access to legal advice, get access to that legal advice.

The Environmental Defenders Office is one of a number of organisations across the State that provides legal advice to citizens who might otherwise go without it. Requests made to the Government over the past 25 years to fund those centres have always outstripped the available source of funding. There always has to be a rationalisation and a prioritisation that the funds are available. For instance, it is difficult to know how to continue to fund cases for communities such as Ku-ring-gai, which is a high socio-economic area on the Federal Government census data, but to refuse additional funding for community legal centres in areas of this city that have a much lower socio-economic demographic. That is an ongoing issue that successive governments have tackled.

Geoff Smith, Chief Executive Officer of the Environmental Defenders Office, and Kirsty Ruddock, Principal Solicitor, have both been participating with the Department of Planning and Infrastructure in an attempt to deliver planning reforms to New South Wales. They are actively working as part of the public participation charter. I am confident that by tightening our belts across the whole of Government we can reach a settlement that will not only ensure that funding continues to flow to a variety of legal centres but that it does so in a way that is justifiable to areas that have been denied resources in the past.

I should also make the point that I saw a replay of last week's 7.30 program. The impression one got from that program was that the total source of funding from the Environmental Defenders Office was the State Government. That is not true. Only two-thirds of its funding comes from the State Government; the remainder comes from a number of other sources. As we seek to put some integrity into the system to ensure that we better balance the funding request for access to Legal Aid funds from across a range of communities, we need to do so in a way that reflects the resources available to the State.

GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA: My question is directed to the Minister for Education. How is the Government delivering on its commitments and supporting front-line services, including schools?

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: What a great year it has been. Every member of this Government can go back to their electorates over the break and proudly say that they delivered exactly what the people of New South Wales asked for in March of last year: the right decisions not based on factional deals or backroom deals for the people of this State who place their trust in us. We can proudly say that this year there are 210 more police than there were under the former Labor Government, almost 3,000 more nurses, and more than 500 teachers. We can go back to our constituents and say, "We delivered. We did what you asked us to do in March of last year." All members make representations to their constituents, but some are more effective than others.

The Premier referred to the email I received from the member for Blacktown. He received the letter in January and sent his reply in July. That was pretty good; he got off the la-Z-boy in July and sent the reply. The problem, which involved a fellow who could not get into a TAFE course, had been dealt with by then. Not only had the fellow enrolled before the reply was sent, but he had finished the course. I am not sure that the good burghers in Blacktown are getting the representation they expected. The member for Mount Druitt is a trier. There are courses at TAFE such as certificate I in computers. The Leader of the Opposition wrote to me, "Dear Minister"—

Dr Andrew McDonald: Point of order: The question was about front-line services and schools, and the member is clearly moving away from the question. I ask that he be brought back to the point of the question.

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

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: I am not naming any names—except his. The Leader of the Opposition then said, "I have forwarded your letter on to the Hon. Adrian Piccoli." He wrote to me, saying that he forwarded a letter on to me. I have a feeling that he sent it to the wrong person. He also enclosed a petition, asked me to sign it, and return it to his office. I am not sure what is going on in his electorate, let alone in his mind.

Mr John Robertson: Point of order: It is pursuant to Standing Order 129—relevance. The Minister should be talking about front-line services, such as the \$24,000 cut at Alstonville High School. The member for Lismore will be keen to go back to talk about how much of that money the Government has cut.

The SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. The Leader of the Opposition will come to order.

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: We are all ears on advice about how to most effectively spend money in education. I have an interesting suggestion from the member for Wollongong, who is not here today. The lice ladies are back. I have a four-year-old and a two-year-old, so soon I might have to deal with lice. The member for Wollongong suggested we spend money establishing a 24-hour, seven-day-a-week lice hotline. They are homeless on my head.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister for Education will return to the leave of the question.

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: We are always happy to spend money on education and front-line services, but I am not sure that that is one suggestion that will be looked at favourably. [*Extension of time granted.*]

I return to where I started. Every member of the Government can go back to his or her electorate and proudly say that the Government has delivered what the people asked it to deliver in 2011. Members should look at the front-page headlines that good governments generate, including "Top teacher wage bonus". That is the type of headline that this Government has been generating. We have a terrific Minister for Transport whose work generated a great headline in the *Rouse Hill-Stanhope Garden News*. Like most members, I subscribe to that publication. I ask members to contrast that with the headlines generated by the Labor Party, which included, "Rotten to the core".

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister should not wave props. He will put that prop away and return to the leave of the question.

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: This Government has been delivering. I will be able to go back to my electorate and, like all Government members who attend school end-of-year presentations, I will be able to report proudly at those events on this Government's achievements. Of course, members opposite will be at lunch rather than at their local schools. I am happy to circulate those pages to remind members of the great work this Government has done, led by the Premier and the Deputy Premier. That work is reflected in a poll released about a month ago. Polls come and go, but almost two years into this term of government every Government member can be very proud of what we have achieved. I invite Government members to look at the 14 members opposite on that very crowded frontbench—everyone in the Labor Party wins a prize. After two years in office, this Government can be very proud of its achievements.

Question time concluded at 3.31 p.m.

UNPROCLAIMED LEGISLATION

The SPEAKER: Pursuant to Standing Order 117, I table a list detailing all legislation unproclaimed 90 calendar days after assent as at 22 November 2012.

DEPARTMENT OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Report

The Speaker tabled the report of the Department of the Legislative Assembly for the year ended 30 June 2012.

Ordered to be printed.

DEPARTMENT OF PARLIAMENTARY SERVICES**Report**

The Speaker tabled the report of the Department of Parliamentary Services for the year ended 30 June 2012.

Ordered to be printed.

STANDING ORDERS AND PROCEDURES COMMITTEE**Report**

The Speaker tabled report No. 3/55 entitled, "Amendments to Standing and Sessional Orders", dated November 2012.

Ordered to be printed.

JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON ELECTORAL MATTERS**Reference: Local Government Elections**

Mr JAI ROWELL: I inform the House that, pursuant to Standing Order 299 (1), the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral matters has received a reference from the Minister for Local Government and Minister for the North Coast to conduct an inquiry into the 2012 local government elections, the full details of which are available on the committee's website.

COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORT AND INFRASTRUCTURE**Report**

Mr Casuscelli, as Chair, tabled report No. 1/55 entitled, "Utilisation of rail corridors", dated November 2012, together with transcripts of evidence.

Report ordered to be printed on motion by Mr Charles Casuscelli.

PETITIONS

The Speaker announced that the following petition signed by more than 10,000 persons was lodged for presentation:

Wentworthville Railway Station Easy Access Upgrade

Petition requesting the provision of lift access and/or ramps to platforms at Wentworthville railway station, received from **Dr Geoff Lee**.

Discussion on petition set down as an order of the day for a future day.

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

Palliative Care Services

Petitions requesting the provision of sufficient palliative care services to meet existing and anticipated future demands for such services in all areas of the State and in all types of institutions and places where such services are required and the provision of additional funds to support training of palliative care workers, received from **Mr Mike Baird, Ms Katrina Hodgkinson, Mr Richard Torbay, Mr Kevin Anderson, Mr Andrew Constance, Mr Kevin Humphries, Mr Andrew Fraser, Mr John Williams, Mr Donald Page, Mr George Souris, Mr Thomas George, and Mr Paul Toole.**

Mascot Public School Preschool

Petition requesting a stop to the introduction of reduced hours from 30 hours a week to 15 hours a week at Mascot Public School Preschool, received from **Mr Ron Hoenig**.

Public School Staffing and Funding

Petition requesting support for public school communities through the provision of professional scale salaries, a statewide staffing system and proper funding, received from **Mr Andrew Constance**.

Education Funding

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

Sapphire Corner Store and Pacific Highway Upgrade

Petition requesting compensation to the proprietor of the Sapphire Corner Store for the loss of earnings and water bills suffered during the construction work and future work of the Sapphire to Woolgoolga Pacific Highway upgrade, received from **Mr Andrew Fraser**.

NSW Planning Green Paper

Petition calling for an extension on consultation on the NSW Planning Green Paper for four weeks to allow for genuine participation by citizens and councillors, received from **Mr Jamie Parker**.

Pets on Public Transport

Petition requesting that pets be allowed on public transport, received from **Mr Alex Greenwich**.

Walsh Bay Precinct Public Transport

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

Pet Shops

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

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

Palliative Care Services

Petitions requesting the provision of sufficient palliative care services to meet existing and anticipated future demands for such services in all areas of the State and in all types of institutions and places where such services are required and the provision of additional funds to support training of palliative care workers, received from **Mr Troy Grant, Mrs Leslie Williams, Mr Rob Stokes, Mr Stephen Bromhead and Ms Pru Goward**.

TAFE Arts Education

Petition requesting that the value of TAFE arts education to New South Wales be recognised and that funding of TAFE arts education continue at viable levels, received from **Ms Carmel Tebbutt**.

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**.

PRINTING OF PAPERS

Motion by Mr Brad Hazzard agreed to:

That the following papers be printed:

Report of the New South Wales Electoral Commission entitled "Report on the Conduct of the Election, Clarence State By-election", dated 18 April 2012

Report of the Public Service Commission entitled, "How it is, State of the NSW Public Sector Report 2012"

Report of the Animal Research Review Panel for the year ended 30 June 2011

Reports for 2011:

New South Wales State Coroner into deaths in custody/police operations
Industrial Relations Commission of New South Wales
Wild Dog Destruction Board

Reports for the year ended 30 June 2012:

New South Wales Law Reform Commission
Professional Standards Councils
New South Wales Scientific Committee
New South Wales Bar Association
Rental Bond Board
Fair Trading Administration Corporation and the Motor Vehicle Repair Industry Authority, in one volume
Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal
Public Service Commission
Cooks Cove Development Corporation
Department of Planning and Infrastructure, incorporating the annual report of the Building Professionals Board
Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority
Sydney Metropolitan Development Authority
Independent Transport Safety Regulator
Office of Transport Safety Investigations
Country Rail Infrastructure Authority
Art Gallery of New South Wales Trust
Australian Museum Trust
Library Council of New South Wales
Trustees of the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences
New South Wales Film and Television Office, trading as Screen NSW
Sydney Opera House Trust
Anti-Discrimination Board of New South Wales
Guardianship Tribunal
Judicial Commission of New South Wales
NSW Trustee and Guardian, incorporating the report of the Public Guardian
New South Wales Institute of Psychiatry
State Transit Authority of New South Wales
Sydney Ferries
NSW Sporting Injuries Committee
State Water Corporation
Workers' Compensation Dust Diseases Board of NSW
Consumer, Trader and Tenancy Tribunal
Mental Health Review Tribunal
NSW Institute of Sport
Sydney Olympic Park Authority
Venues NSW
Coal Innovation NSW Fund
Transport Construction Authority
Public Transport Ticketing Corporation
Destination NSW
Greyhound Racing NSW
Harness Racing New South Wales
Racing NSW
Border Rivers-Gwydir Catchment Management Authority
Central West Catchment Management Authority
Hawkesbury-Nepean Catchment Management Authority
Hunter-Central Rivers Catchment Management Authority
Lachlan Catchment Management Authority
Lower Murray Darling Catchment Management Authority
Murrumbidgee Catchment Management Authority
Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency
Cancer Institute New South Wales
New South Wales Health Foundation

Central Coast Regional Development Corporation
 Hunter Development Corporation
 Board of Surveying and Spatial Information
 Department of Finance and Services, including reports of:
 State Contracts Control Board
 Waste Assets Management Corporation
 NSW Government Telecommunications Authority
 Australian Centre for Advanced Computing and Communication Pty Ltd
 NSW Land and Housing Corporation
 Office of the Valuer-General
 Office of the Surveyor-General
 Office of the Registrar-General
 Office of the Geographical Names Board
 NSW Architects Registration Board
 State Property Authority
 Teacher Housing Authority of New South Wales
 Trustees of the Parliamentary Contributory Superannuation Fund
 Veterinary Practitioners Board of New South Wales
 Namoi Catchment Management Authority
 Northern Rivers Catchment Management Authority
 Southern Rivers Catchment Management Authority
 Sydney Metropolitan Catchment Management Authority
 Western Catchment Management Authority
 Barangaroo Delivery Authority
 Department of Premier and Cabinet
 Infrastructure NSW
 Internal Audit Bureau of New South Wales, trading as IAB Services
 Department of Trade and Investment, Regional Infrastructure and Services
 Roads and Maritime Services
 Lifetime Care and Support Authority of New South Wales
 Motor Accidents Authority of New South Wales
 WorkCover Authority of New South Wales
 Cobar Water Board
 New South Wales Dams Safety Committee
 New South Wales Food Authority
 Forestry Commission of New South Wales, trading as Forests NSW
 Game Council of New South Wales
 New South Wales Rural Assistance Authority
 Sydney Catchment Authority
 Department of Attorney General and Justice
 Legal Aid Commission of New South Wales
 Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions
 NSW Businesslink Pty Ltd
 Department of Family and Community Services, Volumes One to Three
 Centennial Park and Moore Park Trust
 Jenolan Caves Reserve Trust
 Lord Howe Island Board
 Historic Houses Trust
 New South Wales Environmental Trust
 Parramatta Park Trust
 Royal Botanic Gardens and Domain Trust
 Taronga Conservation Society Australia
 Western Sydney Parklands Trust
 Community Relations Commission
 New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council
 New South Wales Electoral Commission
 Election Funding Authority of New South Wales
 Natural Resources Commission
 Department of Health, volumes one to four
 Health Care Complaints Commission
 Chiropractic Council of New South Wales
 Dental Council of New South Wales
 Medical Council of New South Wales
 Nursing and Midwifery Council of New South Wales
 Optometry Council of New South Wales
 Osteopathy Council of New South Wales
 Pharmacy Council of New South Wales
 Physiotherapy Council of New South Wales
 Podiatry Council of New South Wales
 Psychology Council of New South Wales
 Board of Studies and the Office of the Board of Studies
 New South Wales Board of Vocational Education and Training
 NSW Institute of Teachers
 Department of Transport
 Rail Corporation New South Wales

Independent Liquor and Gaming Authority
Responsible Gambling Fund
New South Wales Treasury, incorporating the reports of:
 New South Wales Self Insurance Corporation
 Electricity Tariff Equalisation Ministerial Corporation
 State Rail Authority Residual Holding Corporation
 Liability Management Ministerial Corporation
 Lotteries Assets Ministerial Holding Corporation, Volumes One to Three
Ausgrid
Endeavour Energy
New South Wales Treasury Corporation
Macquarie Generation
Essential Energy
Superannuation Administration Corporation, trading as Pillar Administration
Eraring Energy
Landcom
Long Service Corporation
TransGrid
Delta Electricity
Sydney Water Corporation, trading as Sydney Water
SAS Trustee Corporation, containing the separate reports for:
 Buroba Pty Ltd, State Infrastructure Trust, State Infrastructure Holdings (SEA Gas) Pty Ltd
 State Super Financial Services Australia Limited
 Valley Commerce Pty Limited
Hunter Water Corporation
Newcastle Port Corporation
Port Kembla Port Corporation
Sydney Ports Corporation
New South Wales Crime Commission
Ministry for Police and Emergency Services
Fire and Rescue New South Wales
New South Wales Police Force
NSW Rural Fire Service
Chairperson's Report of the Victims Compensation Tribunal NSW Climate Change Fund

Report of the Ministry for Police and Emergency Services for the period 4 April to 30 June 2011

SPECIAL ADJOURNMENT

Mr BRAD HAZZARD (Wakehurst—Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Infrastructure NSW) [3.39 p.m.]: I move:

That the House at its rising this day do adjourn until Tuesday 19 February at 2013 at 12 noon.

Members will recall that I said this morning the House may be required to sit next week to debate certain legislation. The House has now dealt with that legislation and accordingly I anticipate no further Government business until the usual time for adjournment of the House this afternoon.

Question—That the motion be agreed to—put.

Motion agreed to.

SEASONAL FELICITATIONS

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL (Ku-ring-gai—Premier, and Minister for Western Sydney) [3.40 p.m.]: I move:

That the House take note of Christmas felicitations.

Apparently 'tis a season of goodwill, or at least once the Parliament adjourns. I simply want to thank everyone in this Chamber and around this building for their efforts over the past year; efforts that in big and small ways go to ensuring the governance of this State, and, I would argue, the good governance of this State. Madam-Speaker, I want to thank you and your fellow Presiding Officers, including the Deputy-Speaker, Assistant-Speaker and Acting-Speakers. I thank the Clerks and the attendants who make this place operate. We have had some departures and some arrivals this year, but I think the operation has run smoothly. I thank the Leader of the House, who proves it is not only God who moves in mysterious ways.

I thank the Whips, the member for Wagga Wagga, the member for Penrith and the member for Murray-Darling, who practically try to ensure when it comes to Liberal members that people turn up on time

and are in the right place at the right time. I thank all of my colleagues from the joint party room, and especially the members of the Liberal party, for their efforts in this place and beyond, particularly in their electorates. They have worked hard this year to ensure that the concerns of their communities are represented in Parliament and that Ministers, departments and agencies across New South Wales address the issues that they confront on a daily basis. They also have endeavoured to ensure that those communities understand the challenges and directions in which we are taking the State.

There are many parts of this Parliament that are not seen to visitors who sit in the gallery and at times some are more important than others. Catering has been less important to me this year, but I thank all those who work in the catering department. I do not think I have been into the bars much this year, but I thank those who feed and water our staff and visitors to this place, as well as the members of Parliament. I thank the Hansard staff for making our words understandable, taking out those "ahs" and "Madam Speakers" that I state, Madam Speaker. In particular, I thank them for the Santa's cave on level eight. People who do not have access to the private parts of this building will not know that the Hansard department began some years ago by decorating one small corridor. It has now extended and is almost reaching the steps down to the Chamber. The decorations include the use of coloured lights—I am sure environmentally friendly coloured lights to keep Kevin Rudd happy—and other Christmas decorations which add a spirit of the season to the building.

I thank the Department of Parliamentary Services for everything it has done. I especially thank the cleaners, people who do not always get a mention at this time. Whether it is on level two, where I see a few members morning or night, or where Joe apparently goes at lunch time, or on levels on which our offices are located, they always work so fastidiously and do a great job. They are also incredibly polite to us, no matter how we are feeling at the time. I want to note a couple of things. I think this is the year that members of the parliamentary sports team took off in a big way, although I hear that we lost the relay this week to the Department of Parliamentary Services. I know the Hon. Lynda Voltz blames the Hon. Jeremy Buckingham both for calling a division just as the event was to start and for managing to pip the member for Pittwater at the post.

Mr Mike Baird: It was a tie.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I have been misled, have I? Never believe Labor—no, this is the season of goodwill. I also note that this year members of the parliamentary cricket team beat the primary club with a man-of-the-match winning performance by the member for Davidson. Although, as I have said elsewhere, it is never a good idea to disagree with your captain publicly on the field, particularly when that captain, the member for Dubbo, was a policeman in his previous life. I also thank our friends on level six, those people we cannot live without and cannot live with—the parliamentary press gallery, who entertained us last night. I bet we do not read in the Sunday papers about the journalist who apparently managed to lock himself in the security guardhouse on the way into Parliament House on the night of Melbourne Cup. Apparently those things are not meant to be on the public record, so I will not go any further, and names will not get out.

However, I again express my concern about the mental health of the chief political reporter of the *Australian* and his obsession with a former member of this House. I note it is a bipartisan concern of the member for Toongabbie as well. I wish all members of Parliament, our staff and the staff of the parliamentary departments all the best. I hope that they have a good break over the Christmas period and get to spend time with their families. At the end of the day, when all of this is over, the people who are there are our families. We should never forget that, as much as we tend to when times get busy and hectic. The Leader of the House told me that whilst I have been allocated 10 minutes I should keep my speech shorter.

Mr Brad Hazzard: Does that sound pretty normal?

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: As I said, you move in mysterious ways. I acknowledge that we have two new members of the House. I wish both members compliments of the season. I wish the member for Heffron Happy Hanukkah, and I wish the member for Sydney Merry Christmas for the holiday season. I also want to reflect on the fact that this may well be the last Christmas that we have the member for Northern Tablelands with us. He has left the Chamber; he must be out campaigning. I assume there will be a Federal election between now and next year's Christmas felicitations. I certainly hope that happens sooner rather than later. We know that the member for Northern Tablelands has decided to leave a big bowl and go to a smaller fishing hole. I wish him well and thank him for his service to this place.

I finish by thanking my partner and colleague the Deputy Premier. Without his joint leadership of the Liberal and Nationals parties, we would not be able to achieve our goals. We committed ourselves as a new

Government to deliver our program. Ultimately, the electorate will make that choice in March 2015. In the meantime, we will continue to work hard. I thank every member of this House for doing what their communities elected them to do 19 months ago—that is, represent them in this Chamber of democracy, to give voice to their concerns and to try to deliver to them and their children better opportunities and a better life.

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON (Blacktown—Leader of the Opposition) [3.47 p.m.]: In a spirit of goodwill I too wish everybody in this Chamber all the best for the festive season, regardless of how they may spend it and what they may celebrate. I thank Madam Speaker, the Deputy-Speaker, the member for Lismore, the Assistant-Speaker and Acting-Speakers. I thank the Clerk and others at the table for their work and assistance to us throughout the year in a very impartial way, which is greatly appreciated. The way in which they conduct themselves is also greatly appreciated and acknowledged. I too thank the Hansard staff. As the Premier quite rightly said, they make our speeches read much better than they sound on the audio and, I am sure, more presentable to those who may be suffering from a sleep disorder and are looking for something to help put them to sleep. As I said, our spoken words read much better in *Hansard*, and I thank them for that.

I also thank the catering staff, who continue to provide great service to us all, not just for Parliament members and staff but also for functions throughout the year. They do a fantastic job. I thank the security staff who are very professional, cooperative and welcoming, and at times rather tolerant. They provide a great service to all of us, making sure that we are safe and secure and yet still able to gain easy access to the building. I also acknowledge the cleaners, who are the unsung heroes of the building. A few of us are here when they are cleaning offices, emptying bins or cleaning up the front of the Parliament. They are the ones who make this place look presentable each and every day, not only for us but, more importantly, for the public, our school students and our guests who visit Parliament House. They perform one of the most critical functions and make Parliament House respectable and presentable for visitors.

The attendants in this Chamber, who are called on to do a great many things in this Chamber, go about their work diligently, quietly and efficiently. They do a great job and members from both sides of the Chamber appreciate the work they do each and every day for us. Thank you for your efforts and all the best for the festive season. I thank my Deputy Leader, the member for Canterbury, for her support throughout the year. She does a great job, and I thank her for the contribution she makes both in this Chamber and to our party. I thank our Leader of the House, the member for Maroubra. His is a difficult job; the Government Leader of the House will appreciate the difficulties he faces. He performs his role with vigour and without fear and does it most effectively at every step along the way.

I thank the Opposition Whip, the member for Mount Druitt, for his great work in mustering the troops and ensuring that we are where we need to be. He keeps count and we are getting closer. I am sure things will continue to improve in that vein. I thank the Deputy Whip, the member for Cabramatta, for his great work. I also thank the member for Keira for his work as the former Deputy Whip. My thanks also go to the members on this side of the Chamber. There may be only 20 of us but we do what good oppositions are supposed to do: hold the Government to account. From time to time it gets rather heated in the Chamber, but we all take our job seriously because a good opposition makes a good government. We will continue to do so regardless of whether others like the way we do our job.

I thank my staff for the fantastic work they do with limited resources. My staff work very hard to make sure that we are all properly briefed about legislation to be introduced into the House. It is a tough job working for the Opposition, but I do not need to say too much about that because those on the other side were in opposition four years ago. I wish everyone the best for the festive season. Hopefully, we will all have the opportunity to spend time with family and friends and to do the things that are important in life, namely, reconnect with the people in our local communities. I look forward to seeing everyone back here next year well rested and reinvigorated for a bigger and better 2013.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD (Wakehurst—Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Infrastructure NSW) [3.52 p.m.]: It is my great privilege to extend season's greetings to my colleagues on both sides of the House. In particular, I acknowledge the Premier and the Deputy Premier for their leadership of the Government. I also acknowledge John Robertson, the Leader of the Opposition. I acknowledge the Liberal and Nationals members, the Independent members, The Greens member and, of course, the Labor members in this the birthplace of democracy in New South Wales. It is appropriate to acknowledge each of the members who have come here to represent their electorates and take part in the democratic process. I believe that we all try to do the right thing by the people of New South Wales.

I thank the Speaker. As Leader of the House I regularly deal with the Speaker and I appreciate the occasional indulgences afforded to me when things are a little hectic. I also thank the Speaker's staff: Joe Andrade, Gladys Kleiner and Luke Sikora. I thank Deputy-Speaker Thomas George and Assistant-Speaker Andrew Fraser. On behalf of all members I thank all those who work for us at the coalface in our electorate offices while we are working here. I convey the appreciation of all members to our electorate staff for their great efforts. I particularly address thanks to my long-suffering electorate officer Noelene Barrell and Lisa Nagle and Julie Hegarty who have not suffered me quite as long. I thank the Government Whips: Darryl Maguire, John Williams and Stuart Ayres. I also thank Opposition Whip Richard Amery. We all look forward to his quips that fly across the Chamber from time to time. All members are appreciative of the efforts of the Whips to ensure that we are in the Chamber on time to participate in the democratic process.

I thank the Opposition Leader of the House, Michael Daley. It is part of our roles to tussle, but that is not always the case. We always strive to ensure that this place runs well. I also acknowledge his advisers Mitchell Wilson and Dylan Parker. I thank the Clerks at the table: Ronda Miller, Mark Swinson, Les Gonye, Helen Minnican, Catherine Watson, Vicki Buchbach, Elaine Schofield, Stephanie Hesford, Carly Maxwell and Rachel Simpson. They do a first-class job in making sure that the New South Wales Parliament, the mother parliament in Australia, is well conducted. I thank also the recently retired Deputy Serjeant-at-Arms Greg Kelly. We all miss Greg and wish him well in his retirement. I thank the Table Office staff: Cheryl Samuels, John Hatfield, Jenny Lamont, Joe Bardetta and Sarah-Anne Fong. They also do a first-class job in ensuring that urgent papers and documents are presented when they need to be.

I thank all ministerial staff because not all Ministers will have the opportunity to do so. It is a very hard slog to work for a Minister in this Government. We have a lot of work to do and we will address that work as we proceed. In particular, I thank the staff in the Premier's office. They are at the pivotal point of all that happens in this Parliament and in government. I thank Peter McConnell, the Premier's Chief of Staff. I also make particular mention of Senior Policy Adviser Natasha Luschwitz. Natasha is due to be married in the next week or two. On behalf of all members, I wish you and your fiancé a wonderful celebration of marriage and a very happy life thereafter.

I thank the Hansard staff. The work they do never ceases to amaze me. As the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition have correctly observed, they do an amazing job in turning our somewhat lacking words into words that befit this mother of parliaments. I thank the Chamber attendants: Ian Delahunty, Danny Heldal, Peter Tuziak, Steve Smith, Chris Herbert, Ian Thackeray, Chris Papadopolous, April Lowndes and Lynne Vitali. I thank the catering staff. The Premier acknowledged that he has not been using their services very much lately. From the look of me one would suspect that I have, but I have not. When I do use their services I appreciate all their efforts, as do the members on both sides of this Chamber. Some of the catering staff have worked here for many years; they are almost like members of our families.

The Parliamentary Library staff, who are at the cornerstone of our democratic process, do an amazing job. These days they tend to help Opposition members more than Government members. The Parliament's technical staff very much deserve our thanks because our computers and telephones always seem to fail at the wrong time. I also thank the Information Technology Services staff. I thank my ministerial staff. I thank Kath McFarlane, my Chief of Staff, and Lee Dixon, my Deputy Chief of Staff. I also thank the various staff who help me with policy, media and so on. In particular, I thank Tim Robertson, Adam Raskall, Elliot Hale, Lydia Robertson, Kacey Cogle, Emma Gittoes, Emma Batchelor, Sue Kiprovich, Paulina Kruminate and Bill Young, who gets me where I need to go on time.

I thank Craig Baumann, the Parliamentary Secretary for Regional Planning, for his great work. I thank the departmental planning staff who deal directly with my office: Lin Wrona, Chris Ray and Matt Cooper. I particularly thank the Director General of the Department of Planning and Infrastructure, who is a man of great integrity, honesty and application and leads a very dedicated staff. I also thank my ministerial staff who have moved on: Ingrid Jansons, who at the moment is travelling the world, Megan Batchelor and Belinda Graham. I place on record my very special thanks to Tania Tucci who, for the past six or seven months, has been having a health battle. We appreciate all her endeavours. She still has a long battle ahead. Tania, our thoughts are with you.

Finally, I thank the most important people, my family. I thank my wife and my two boys. This is my twenty-first or twenty-second year in this place and they have had to miss out on a bit along the way. I thank them for putting up with me on that basis. We may do battle in here, but I think all members have the right spirit. We come into this place and try to ensure that the State is a better place as a result of our endeavours. As

Leader of the House I thank members on both sides of the Chamber for working so well with me and for allowing this place to function, I hope, reasonably well. I have received a note from a colleague saying, "Wind up", so I will. Thank you.

Mr MICHAEL DALEY (Maroubra) [4.00 p.m.]: I will make a brief contribution to the Christmas felicitations. First, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his continued support and friendship. I congratulate him on a terrific year. By his nature, he does not know how to take a backward step, and he did not take one this year. Apart from the dogged determination he brings to the job, he also cares about public discourse and about the people of New South Wales. On behalf of all Opposition members I thank him for leading us tremendously well this year. I thank also the staff in the leader's office, from the Chief of Staff, Mike Bailey, through to the media team, who are terrific.

I should not single out anyone but I particularly thank Ian McNamara, who has carriage of economic matters. He has done a terrific job assisting me this year, and I thank him and all the members of the leader's staff. I thank the Leader of the House. We have our occasional jousts. I refer to him as "dear leader", and other such terms of affection. This year he has been more than fair. We have tried our best to get government business through this place without any unnecessary interruptions. When we think there have been transgressions we have debated them, but we always respect each other at the end of the day. So I thank him and his staffer, Emma, and, before her, Ingrid, who is overseas enjoying herself.

Mr Brad Hazzard: In Portugal.

Mr MICHAEL DALEY: She is in Portugal. Madam Speaker, I thank you and all the other members who occupy the chair. We probably disagree at least as much as we agree and we have had some fiery moments this year. However, being the Speaker is a tough job. I respect you and the job you do, as I respect all the members who sit in the chair. I look forward to more jousting in the best of nature next year. I thank the Opposition Whip, the member for Mount Druitt, who has been a crutch for all of us to lean on at times, with his enormous experience, wisdom and even-tempered nature. I thank his deputies, the member for Keira and the member for Cabramatta.

I thank Jan Clifford in the office of the member for Mount Druitt. Keeping the House going on both sides is difficult and requires constant coordination and concentration. It is similar to a drummer in a band: If you miss a beat something can go wrong. In the time I have known Jan, since she worked for Gerard Martin until now, she has never had a bad day. I congratulate and thank her. I thank the Clerks, Ronda Miller, Les and all those who give us guidance from time to time for their wisdom, adjudication and the service they and the people who work for them provide to this place. In the vein of previous speakers, I too thank the cleaners who come into our offices every day. Each morning our offices are not the way we left them the night before; they are neater.

Mr John Williams: Especially yours.

Mr MICHAEL DALEY: I am fairly tidy. Every morning our offices are in good condition, which enables us to work. That simply means the cleaners, who often do not get thanked and go unnoticed, have come in and done their job. I thank them for the work they do. I thank my electorate office staff, particularly Dylan Parker and Mitchell Wilson, who work with me. They come in here to help me as a member of Parliament but 99 per cent of their day is spent assisting me as the manager of Opposition business. It is fair to say that they have worked tremendously well with the staff in the office of the Leader of the House and with the Clerks to ensure that we all get where we need to be and say exactly what we need to say at the right time.

I thank my colleagues in the Opposition. We are small in number in this place but the morale and camaraderie are terrific. And it is fun. Being in opposition is tough; we play an important role but we must have fun in the job. There are so many demands that if we do not have fun we miss out on our purpose for being here. So we work hard but we have fun. In that vein, I thank Government members who approach our jousting in the right spirit. A couple of them are sitting on the Government benches across from me now. Some have only one speech in their pocket, but that is life. I look forward to seeing the one-trick ponies next year when we swap grenades.

Finally, I follow in the vein of the Leader of the House. I thank my family, particularly my wife, Christina. This is not a normal job; it is unusual in many respects. The nature of our job means that a much greater burden is placed on our wives, husbands and partners than occurs in most other jobs. Families would fall

apart if we did not have partners, wives and husbands at home keeping our families together. So I thank my wife, Christina, who did not see me for nine months prior to the last election. She sees a bit more of me now but not as much as other wives would see their husbands. Finally, I wish everybody who keeps this place going all the best. I look forward to seeing you next year.

Mr ANDREW STONER (Oxley—Deputy Premier, Minister for Trade and Investment, and Minister for Regional Infrastructure and Services) [4.06 p.m.]: I cannot believe the parliamentary sitting year is over. It has gone particularly quickly this year, due partly to the fact that we have had so much on the agenda, so much reform and so many decisions. A lot has happened, and that is for the good of New South Wales. It has been a robust year in this place. No doubt we have seen some robust debates but, as I said, the legislative reforms and budgetary and policy debates have been for the betterment of our great State. To quote Winston Churchill:

It has been said that democracy is the worst form of government except all the others that have been tried.

That is certainly true in the bear pit. I am proud to lead a strong team in The Nationals, and I pay tribute to them all. A couple of them are in the Chamber: the Parliamentary Secretary for Police and Emergency Services, the member for Tweed; the Parliamentary Secretary for Natural Resources, the member for Dubbo; and the Nationals Whip, the inimitable member for Murray-Darling. There are 22 other Nationals in this place and in the upper House. I am proud of them all and the contributions they have made over the year. As a considerable part of the Government, through this tough year—last year was also fairly tough, with some difficult decisions—I am confident we have laid a solid foundation for the future prosperity of New South Wales. We have the budget back in shape, we are introducing reforms to get the economy moving again and we are already seeing signs of that.

While it has been a tough year, it has been a good year. To all those who have participated in debates, I thank them for their contributions. I thank everyone who has ensured the ongoing functioning of this House. The Speaker has done a difficult but sterling job. The Deputy-Speaker, the member for Lismore, brought his cattle auctioning skills to the House in keeping members under control. All the Acting-Speakers do a terrific job. I thank the Leader of the House, who has a particularly difficult job. I see that the member for Tamworth and the Assistant-Speaker, the member for Coffs Harbour, are also in the Chamber. They are also members of my team. All of them have done a terrific job, including the Leader of the House and the shadow Leader of the House. I thank the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly, the lovely Ronda Miller, and her staff who keep this Chamber running.

Thanks to the Hansard staff, who successfully interpret the often boisterous and, some would say, unintelligible debate that occurs in this place. Thanks to the ancillary and back-office staff who help us do our jobs, including those in accounts, building services, catering and security, the special constables, library staff, information technology staff, procedure office staff, and the cleaners. However, despite my request during last year's seasonal felicitations, Cafe Quorum staff still appear to be giving the member for Keira triple shots in his coffee. I again appeal to Alex: In 2013, please wean him off the triple espressos. Thanks also to the press gallery on level 6, who keep the public informed about what we do.

I thank my electorate office staff in Kempsey, particularly Patricia Baker, who retired last week after many years of service to the people of Oxley, and also Jodie Griffiths and Rob Nardella in a difficult electorate office on the mid North Coast. I thank the Premier, the Leader of the parliamentary Liberal Party, member for Ku-ring-gai, and my Coalition partner in this Government. He is a strong coalitionist, and that is one of the reasons we have such a strong and stable government in New South Wales. I also thank my ministerial staff, Rod Bruce, Lis Davies, Tara Black, Bree Price, Laura Clark, Ben Shine, Sean O'Connell, Edward Yabsley and Tom Callahor, who recently joined my team.

I thank my wife, Cathy, and my children, Steven, Beau, Gemma, Abbie, Annalise and Nathaniel—yes, six—for their patience with what is a very difficult role for a family. I do look forward to the Christmas period when I can spend more time with the loved ones who support me in this place and cope with my never-ending absences. I ask everyone to stay safe on the roads, or if they are travelling overseas, and at our beaches, including those on the glorious mid North Coast this summer. I finally wish everybody a happy, holy and safe Christmas—remember that Jesus is the reason for the season—and the best for the New Year: A very successful 2013 to all.

The SPEAKER: I do not want to repeat the comments that have been made in respect of the staff of this Parliament. Suffice to say that I think when we enter this place we sometimes think we are the centre of the earth as members of Parliament and we do not realise the extraordinary efforts made by everybody who works in this building. Upwards of 300 employees work in this building on a daily basis, keeping it going, and I am

absolutely grateful for all their efforts, whether they are cleaners or Hansard or the staff of facilities. As I progress in this position as Speaker I become more and more aware of the efforts they make to keep this place going. I thank all of them—every single one—for the fine work they do and for their absolute passion for their jobs. Some of the positions are not necessarily paid terribly well. They have long hours, but they have passion and commitment for the Parliament of New South Wales. I wish them a very merry Christmas and a wonderful break over Christmas.

I wish the very best to all members, especially the new members who have come into this place, and their electorate staff. Electorate staff also play an enormously difficult role, especially when members are not in the electorate because they are here in Parliament. The electorate officers deal with the problems of the electorate on a day-to-day basis, and they do an extremely difficult job. In particular, I thank my personal staff, firstly in the Speaker's office: Luke Sikora, Joe Andrade and Gladys Kleiner. They do a marvellous job. They work on a daily basis in a busy office—the Speaker's office—and they do it cheerfully, consistently and professionally. And they do it well. I do not know where I would be without them, so I thank them very much for all their efforts this year.

I thank also my electorate office staff. We will all enjoy returning to our electorates, presumably tomorrow or the next day, and will not be back here until February—although I might return once or twice in between. I am sure all members, especially regional and rural members, are looking forward to going home and sleeping in their own beds for a sustained period rather than staying in Sydney. I thank my staff in the electorate office of South Coast: Lynne Arnold, Adam Carney and Samantha Luxford. I also thank my driver, who from time to time drives me to the electorate or drives me around the city.

I thank my Deputy-Speaker and Assistant-Speaker and my panel of Acting-Speakers, who can be called on at any time—even though they are on a roster—to fill in for somebody else. I can see the member for Menai and the member for Coffs Harbour in the House now while others are probably busy somewhere else. The member for Tweed was a temporary Speaker. They are called on from time to time to sit in this chair, not because I do not want to be here but because I am often called away on other duties. Certainly the role of Speaker extends far wider than sitting in the chair during question time from 2.15 p.m. or opening the House at 10 a.m. I thank all of them because they have come to terms so professionally and so well with the standing orders. They handle their role extremely well. I often watch them when I am back in my office. I watch what they are doing—just keeping a check on them, to see how they are handling the House—and I am enormously impressed by them. I thank them very much for undertaking that role. I thank the Deputy-Speaker, Thomas George; the Assistant-Speaker, Andrew Fraser, and the Acting-Speakers of the House: Lee Evans, Melanie Gibbons, Sonia Hornery, Gareth Ward and John Barilaro. I thank them very much for all their efforts.

Everybody thanks the Clerks at the table and I am going to add my thanks to Ronda Miller, Mark Swinson, Les Gonye, Helen Minnican, Catherine Watson, Elaine Schofield, Vicki Buchbach, Stephanie Hesford and Carly Maxwell. Why do we all thank them? It is because we would be absolutely sunk without them—or I would be. We are not aware of all the standing orders, regulations, protocols and procedures. Even though we think we are, we are not. We have to rely on their advice every day in this place, and they offer that advice objectively, professionally and cheerfully always, especially to me. Every time I ask advice of any of them, they are there to provide it, so I thank them most sincerely for their efforts this year.

Thanks to all the staff in the Department of Parliamentary Services and the Executive Manager, Rob Stefanic, for a wonderful year. Of course, thanks to Mark Faulkner and all the team at Hansard, and to the Manager of Education and Community Relations, Jeannie Douglass. To the party leaders, Barry O'Farrell, Andrew Stoner and John Robertson: It has been a bit of a fiery year, and a fiery couple of weeks in particular, but I think everybody has shown their commitment to the people of New South Wales—whatever side of politics they are on. The party Whips—Daryl Maguire, John Williams, Richard Amery and Stuart Ayres and, I think from time to time, the member for Cabramatta—do a wonderful job. Making sure that speakers are here on time is not a terribly glamorous job, but they do it cheerfully and in a most consistent manner.

The shadow Leader of the House, who is not here at present, said that he and I had clashed but that he respects me. I respect him too because he has a job to do—which is to make trouble for me—and he does that very well. I also thank the attendants: Ian Delahunty, Ian Thackeray, Chris Papadopoulos, Lynne Vitale, Danny Heldal, April Lowndes, Stephen Smith, Peter Tuziak and Chris Herbert. We had some celebrations in my office the night before last to thank them particularly for the role they play, going about their business very quietly but again completely committed and passionate about their role as part of the Parliament of New South Wales. Thanks also go to members of the media.

I have had it pointed out to me by, believe it or not, the Minister for Fair Trading that there is one group of people who never seem to get thanked. We try our best to make sure we mention everybody if we can, but a group of people that has never been thanked—not once, not ever—is the clerical officers at the switchboard. One can imagine what kind of job they have, dealing with people who want to get through to various individuals in this place every day. I am going to name all of them: Gina Pye, who is the supervisor, Julie Musgrave, Grace Peake, Elayn Gemmell and Margaret Barnes. Well done to all of them and I apologise that they have never been thanked before. Sometimes we do take some of these positions for granted. I thank everybody in this place. To all members: I hope you have a wonderful Christmas, a wonderful New Year, and that we do return refreshed and ready for a good 2013.

Mr RICHARD AMERY (Mount Druitt) [4.19 p.m.]: I begin by acknowledging your complimentary comments, Madam Speaker, to me and the Government Whip and others, and thank you for them. This is the second year I have had the opportunity to speak in this debate as Opposition Whip. In this position one deals more with the running of the Parliament, the standing orders, procedures, votes and all the other issues than in any other position I have held in the 29 years I have been here. No matter how long you are here it is a learning curve. I have been pleased to hold the position and to work with the Government Whip, the member for Wagga Wagga, the Deputy Government Whip, the member for Murray-Darling, and my former Deputy Whip, the member for Keira, who has been succeeded by the member for Cabramatta following the promotion of the member for Keira to the shadow Cabinet. I congratulate them on their work and thank them for what I believe is a cooperative effort between the Whips' offices.

The Opposition Leader of the House has already acknowledged that my office has been enhanced and my role certainly has been assisted by the work of Jan Clifford. We all recognise the role she plays not only in running the Whips' room but in running the Chamber, and indeed the Parliament. I am sure that if Jan were not working in this place members on both sides and the parliamentary staff would be adversely affected. I thank Jan for her efforts. I thank the parliamentary officers. They have already been mentioned so I will not read out their names, but it is obvious that if we did not have someone we could turn to very quickly to get advice on procedure the place would be virtually unworkable. I thank Ronda Miller and the table officers for their work. The legislative program has been light, as I have said, but irrespective of that shortcoming the officers of the Parliament, Hansard, the attendants and the staff have had to work hard to keep the place running. I am always in awe of the Hansard reporters, who work so hard to make sure every word spoken in this place is recorded. I am also amazed at the range of technology in their office—

Mr John Williams: No notebooks.

Mr RICHARD AMERY: No, The Nationals Whip is incorrect. They not only have recording and listening devices and shorthand machines and so on but I notice good old spiral notebooks and biros are part of their equipment. They are a multi-talented group and I thank them very much on behalf of all members. The catering staff have been mentioned and they certainly should be recognised. I have been in opposition before, between 1988 and 1995, and I want to put on record the work the Parliamentary Library does in providing information to members. It is even more crucial when we are in opposition and without the support of government departments.

Of course, since the 1970s Parliament has had a presence in each electorate. The first office for the Mount Druitt electorate was a small room in Beames Avenue, Mount Druitt, when the local member was my predecessor, Tony Johnson. He then moved to a Department of Housing office at Mount Druitt, which I first occupied in 1983. I then moved to an office next door in the same building in the mid 1980s to accommodate the second staff member approved by the Premier of the day, Neville Wran. From there we moved to a room without windows in the Westfield shopping centre. I am pleased to report that this year, staying in the Westfield shopping centre, we moved along the gallery level to a new office, providing more space, light and security for my staff.

I thank the Parliament for providing the resources to make sure that we have a more modern and certainly better-lit office for my constituents and better security for my staff, particularly Leisa Cabban, who started work as a young lass in my office in 1985. I acknowledge the good work that Leisa, Sarah Hatch and Lorraine Strath do not only for me as the local member but also for my electorate. It is impossible to name everybody. I thank the attendants; Danny is always looking after us in opposition. I promised not to name people but I want to recognise him. I thank all members but particularly the Leader of the Opposition, John Robertson, and the member for Maroubra, Michael Daley, for their great leadership and stewardship in this Parliament. It has been a difficult one politically; it always is. It has been a great challenge for the Labor Party to rebuild after the last election and I congratulate them on the work they have done over the past 18 months.

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE (Wagga Wagga) [4.24 p.m.]: Members of Parliament are privileged to serve their electorates in this place. With that in mind, I thank the electors of Wagga Wagga for their continued support, which allows me to represent them here. I am sure all members share that sentiment. When I made a contribution to this debate last year I had no idea that the community of Wagga Wagga and the region were about to experience flooding on an enormous scale. We were just recovering from an unpredicted flood in 2010 when we were hit again in 2012. I acknowledge all those people who have helped our community get back on its feet. The State Emergency Service and many volunteers helped evacuate people and are now helping people in our area to rebuild their lives. I can say with great pleasure that at least 50 per cent of people are back in their homes and I look forward to seeing the rest of the community re-established. I acknowledge again the efforts of emergency services workers and others.

We are only as good as the staff who surround us and support us. With that in mind, I acknowledge my staff in Wagga Wagga who are the face of the electorate and the face of the member when I am here in Parliament. They have a very difficult job. I thank the staff who work there for their continued efforts. Three of my staff members have more than 75 years experience in total. They go about their jobs with diligence, and I thank them. In the Parliament we are supported by Rebecca Cartwright, who is very able. Everyone knows Rebecca and appreciates the effort she puts in for all members of Parliament no matter what our political persuasion. I also thank Nicole Hatton, who works here on sitting days as our additional temporary staff member. I say to them that I appreciate the effort they make and I know that my fellow Whips appreciate the service they give to all members of this place.

I thank the Whips—the member for Murray-Darling, the National Party Whip; and Stuart Ayers, the Deputy Liberal Whip—for the way they go about supporting me and our upper House colleague, the Hon. Dr Peter Phelps, to manage the troops, so to speak. I thank all our Liberal-Nationals colleagues for being compliant and for helping us do our job. They are a great team of members of Parliament, led by Barry O'Farrell and Andrew Stoner. The team is committed. We have had a difficult year—there is no doubt about that. Government is not easy, but with commitment and leadership we are getting there. We are making decisions that need to be made.

The community in the Wagga Wagga electorate is looking forward to next year because this year they saw the turning of the sod for a brand-new \$400 million Wagga Wagga Base Hospital. This month it was announced that a new bridge, Kapooka Bridge, will be built, at a cost of \$40 million. This has been championed by members for more than 30 years and it is finally being delivered. A new courthouse is being provided, at a cost of \$17 million. Again, it is much-needed infrastructure in our community. Last week the Minister for Health was in Lockhart announcing a new multipurpose health centre, at a cost of \$8 million, and of course improvements to Gocup Road go on. This has been a momentous year because of the disaster we had to deal with but there has also been good news. I had the honour of opening the new Tumut Public School, which cost \$8 million. In two weeks I will open the new Gadara Special School for children with disabilities. That is another great event that our community is looking forward to.

Much has been said about all the people who support us in the Parliament, whether it be the Clerks, Hansard, the parliamentary staff, the cleaners and everyone who goes about their job so professionally. In the 13 years I have been here I have admired the way in which the staff do their jobs, irrespective of political persuasions or leanings. That is a great credit to the staff who support us here, whether in catering or any of the areas that perhaps do not get the recognition they should. I want to show my appreciation to them and extend it to all those members who have supported the Whip's office, particularly the Leader of the House, who has a very difficult job. I thank him for his efforts and for the way in which he works with our office. We get the job done. I wish you all well. I wish everyone a very happy and safe festive season and best wishes for the New Year. Travel safely if you are travelling and we will see you next year.

Mr JOHN WILLIAMS (Murray-Darling) [4.29 p.m.]: It gives me great pleasure to speak about the great people who make up the Nationals team. First, I thank my National Party colleagues for sticking together and working through this year, which has been a tough year. They are the greatest team in this Parliament. We have certainly had plenty to take on the chin. We have a brave bunch of boys in the National Party and we are doing a good job of dealing with those challenges. I recognise our Coalition partners, the Liberals, and the Opposition. The mateship in this Chamber is not understood. Whilst we debate vigorously in this House, we always find ways to appreciate each and every individual.

We are entering a time of goodwill, which is a time to look back over the year and appreciate those who have been around during the course of the year. It is also a time to enjoy the company of family members

and others in a truly relaxed environment. During this period of goodwill, we might even see the member for Wollongong and the member for Shellharbour get together and enjoy the season. We will see the love flow that used to exist. I am looking forward to that in the New Year. I thank the staff, the people who keep this place running: the clerks and Hansard. I particularly thank the staff in the Government Whip's office: Rachel Hayes; her predecessor, Hannah Parsons; and Emma Gittoes, who is now with the Leader of the House. I thank them for their great work. I recognise Rebecca Cartwright, who always has a smile on her face, and Nicole Hatton. It is a challenge sometimes, but we get the job done.

I keep talking about the boys in the National Party. The Minister for Primary Industries, and Minister for Small Business, amongst others, has reminded me that we have girls in the National Party. Everyone is the same in the National Party: we are a strong group who tough it out in the same way. The girls do the hard yards as the men do and that is forgotten. Thanks, ladies; it has been great. You have managed to maintain the tone of good behaviour that we are all used to in our great party. I got a nudge earlier from the Minister for the Environment, who has been brave enough to come into our party room on a couple of occasions to brief us. Last week, she was described as the best Minister for the Environment that we have had. We have got work in progress, but we are coming a long way; the progress has started. We are starting to put the balance back into this sensitive area.

I also thank the staff in my Broken Hill and Deniliquin offices. They are great people who have helped me in my job and put up with what I do. I also thank my wife, who has endured my absences. I look forward to spending some time with her; I do not know whether she will appreciate it, but it will be great. I remind members that I am running a Christmas drive for the Matthew Talbot Hostel and those less fortunate people in this community. My office has sent out reminders about donations that members can provide cash in-kind. Some people are doing it tougher than others in this country and it is a great opportunity to support them. Thank you. Best wishes for the season and I look forward to seeing you all in the New Year. Drive safely.

Mr STUART AYRES (Penrith) [4.34 p.m.]: I thank the Premier for his leadership of the Government over the past year. I will move quickly to the people who enable this House to operate. To Ronda Miller and her team of clerks, thank you for your support over the past year. We have managed to survive the year well and have kept things ticking over in the back rooms as the year has moved on. To Hansard, you continually amaze me with how you can turn the drivel that comes out of the mouths of members into decent, well-written speeches. It says a lot about the skill of Hansard. To people in the Government Whip's office, particularly Rebecca Cartwright and Nicole Hatton, thank you for your kind support and for allowing the Government Whip's office to operate as a professional office throughout the course of the year.

To the Chamber attendants who go about their business discreetly and allow members to continue to do their work, thank you. As a result of the quality of the work that you do, you are noticed by many of us. To the catering staff who keep the troops fed, thank you very much. It makes us more tolerable as we get towards the end of each sitting session. To the Ministers and their staff, there is a strong service of members on both sides of the House to be commended for their work throughout the course of the year. To many electorate offices, including my own, Rhonda Hanbury and Enid Golding, and Ross Grove, who left my office to become the Mayor of Holroyd, thank you for your support.

To all the electorate offices around the State, you are the engine rooms in all of the areas that we represent. Without your strong support throughout the year, we would not be able to do our jobs. To my partner, Marise, who is a senator: we are like ships in the night passing between Federal Parliament and this Parliament. I would not be able to do this job without your support. I expect the member for Marrickville has an understanding of the challenges of two politicians in the one household. It is particularly difficult, but we are both incredibly passionate about our communities and our country and we serve at the pleasure of the people in this State and this nation. On that note, I defer to what is the most important business before this House, and that is the petition.

Ms LINDA BURNEY (Canterbury) [4.37 p.m.]: I simply offer my thanks to the many people who have been mentioned in so many of the seasonal felicitations this afternoon. It is the people in the electorates, our staff and our communities who enable us to do the work that we do. I have had mixed feelings about 2012 for two reasons: New South Wales was once again beaten in the State of Origin; but Canterbury almost won the grand final, and there is always next year. I say an enormous thank you to everyone and wish everyone in this Chamber a restful, peaceful and happy Christmas-New Year season. May we all come back refreshed for next year.

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): I endorse all the comments of those who contributed to the Christmas felicitations this year. I too would like to thank my electorate staff for the great jobs that they do: Diane Leahy, Campbell Forsyth and Fiona Baker. None of us would survive without fantastic staff. I note that this is the last day of the session. The blood pressure of the Leader of the House is still up; he still has business to complete. I say to him: Congratulations on a hard year, especially the last week of the sittings. It has been tough for you. You have done a great job. Well done. You have kept us all together. You have enabled us not to have to sit next week, which was a small miracle. I wish all the members, staff and everybody mentioned today a happy and holy Christmas. Enjoy the Christmas break.

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: Routine of Business

Mr BRAD HAZZARD (Wakehurst—Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Infrastructure NSW) [4.40 p.m.]: I move:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended at this sitting to provide for the following routine of business:

- (1) consideration of the petition on palliative care funding and services presented by the member for Ku-ring-gai;
- (2) introduction of the Crimes (Criminal Organisations) Control Amendment Bill 2012 and the Civil and Administrative Tribunal Bill 2012;
- (3) consideration of the petition on the proposed development called "The Landing" presented by the member for Gosford; and
- (4) private members' statements.

This has been a stressful and a difficult week. The House is running a little behind time, but there is an important matter that must be addressed through a petition regarding palliative care services. We have guests in the gallery who would like to hear how the Government will deal with the matter. Rather than deal with the Government business that would take place at this time—two bills on the *Business Paper* standing in the name of the Attorney General—I propose that the petition regarding palliative care services be dealt with. I then propose that the Attorney General give his second reading speeches on the two bills standing in his name. The House will then deal with the second petition, and thereafter private members' statements. At the conclusion of private members' statements the House will adjourn subject to an earlier resolution.

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

Motion agreed to.

PALLIATIVE CARE SERVICES

Discussion on Petition Signed by 10,000 or More Persons

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER (North Shore—Minister for Health, and Minister for Medical Research) [4.49 p.m.]: I welcome the debate on palliative care services in New South Wales. It is the second debate on this topic since the Coalition has been in government. The Premier, who had intended to lead for the Government on this debate, has become unavailable. I will lead in his stead. It was in August last year that the first debate on palliative care occurred. The community presented the Premier and this House with a petition of more than 23,000 signatures calling for the restoration of funding for palliative care services in northern Sydney. It was brought to my attention when I was the shadow Minister for Health, and I was pleased that the matter was brought to the attention of the House. By way of background, the former Labor Government had made deep cuts to palliative care services on the North Shore and it was having problems due to mismanagement of the State's Health budget. In last year's debate the Premier and I made commitments that we would develop a palliative care plan and we would not disregard this important service as it had been disregarded by Labor.

The Government made a commitment to restore the funding for palliative care services on the North Shore and it has delivered on that commitment. As Minister for Health I made a commitment that we would

undertake an analysis of the demands for palliative care services across New South Wales to ensure that this Government is providing the best possible services for those who need them and Health NSW has delivered on that commitment. The analysis showed that around 13,000 people in New South Wales die each year of cancer with about two-thirds receiving specialist palliative care. A similar number die of other conditions where death is predictable, but only about 10 per cent of those receive specialist palliative care in their last year of life. Some 70 per cent of Australians say they want to die at home, but only 16 per cent are able to do so. More than half of them die in acute-care hospitals, 20 per cent in hospices and 10 per cent in nursing homes.

The New South Wales Government has a current annual budget of \$86 million for specialist palliative care and many more millions are spent on providing palliation for patients in general hospital wards. Palliative care is delivered in a range of settings: public and private hospitals, community clinics, residential aged care facilities and in the home. Good palliative care services already exist in private and public sectors, delivered by a variety of organisations. However, their availability is not equitable across the State. The former Labor Government ignored the need for community palliative care in outer-metropolitan Sydney and rural New South Wales. Dr Yvonne McMaster, whom I presume is in the gallery today, was the person who brought us the first palliative care petition. This petition of more than 56,000 signatures shows that she has worked tirelessly with the community to raise the equity of access issue.

Following the Government's commitment to the community last year I worked with the Ministry for Health and others to develop this Government's plan to increase palliative care services across New South Wales. Recently I was proud to launch this plan with Palliative Care NSW at its annual conference in Dubbo. I believe this is not the end but the start to addressing these inequities. The Government has provided additional funding of \$5 million each year for the next four years, to a total of \$35 million over that period, on top of the money already provided. The Government has called for expressions of interest from community-based and other organisations to assist in enhancing community-based palliative care services across New South Wales, especially in those areas that have the worst service record. I have seen some fantastic work done by people in palliative care. I have seen the marvellous use made of technology and I have nothing but great admiration for the people working in this area. I could speak about it for hours. I am proud that this is one of the most important policies the Government has produced. It will do much more: This is only the beginning.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD (Macquarie Fields) [4.54 p.m.]: I have a vision that one day every one of the 90,000 health workers in this country will see palliative care as a core business; that may be the person who answers the telephone when families ring in distress or the orthopaedic surgeon who has to be involved in a team that has to decide whether to repair the fractured hip of somebody with dementia. Palliative care needs to come out of the shadows. For far too long it has been a matter of too little too late, and inequity of service. I acknowledge the Minister's commitment to palliative care and echo it. It is time that palliative care became central to patient care rather than peripheral to it. The first thing that health workers do when they are sick is access palliative care. They know how effective palliative care is and how much more appropriate it is than standard medical care when death and illness are inevitable.

Some 59,416 people have signed the petition. It is the largest petition ever brought before this House. Petitions are vital because they send a message to this Parliament that palliative care is absolutely vital to the future of health care in Australia. The problems in palliative care are many, and New South Wales is short of at least 21 full-time equivalent palliative care positions and 200 palliative care nurses. The \$35 million is welcome, but as the Minister acknowledged it is not enough to fill the gaps in palliative and ensure the one thing that everybody in this Chamber wants and that is for everybody who needs palliative care to be able to access it when they need it. Peter Cleasby stated:

Palliative care services are in a critical condition. The growth in demand has not been met by new recurrent funding. This demand comes from two main groups: people with a terminal non-cancer diagnosis (making up 20-40 per cent) and a subset of people whose extended treatments allow more life, but at times more complex death.

He goes on to state:

Regrettably it seems that Palliative care is something of an after thought, a box ticked without addressing the distressing detail of inequity of access ... Until politicians and health bureaucrats hear such a demand loudly made to begin to address the gap (now \$30-\$40 million annually) there can be no certainty that a specialist palliative care service will be able to be there for all who need their care, support or advice when that time comes.

That care is required 24 hours a day, seven days a week. We must focus on not only community support but also inpatient hospital care because not everyone wishes to or can die at home. Every palliative care service needs at

least one palliative care nurse to visit aged care facilities and sufficient beds in hospices. I pay tribute to the hospices at Camden and Braeside in my electorate. Palliative care services also need to provide nurse practitioner and doctor visits to aged care facilities to ensure that every citizen in New South Wales can access proper care at the end of their life. Peter Cleasby acknowledges that this Minister for Health is more engaged in the issue than many of her predecessors. However, he also states:

At the risk of seeming ungrateful, words of caution and uncertainty must be spoken for there is a deep concern that the Government's response is at best incomplete, and at worst a risk to Palliative Care itself.

These quotes are on his blog, which is available to one and all. It is against this past and present reality that this petition has been introduced. The concern for many is that the Government is overplaying the death at home factor while not addressing the role that specialist palliative care services play across the New South Wales public hospital system, where more than 53 per cent of New South Wales citizens now die. As members know, patients are more likely to die in a general medical ward, an intensive care unit or an emergency department than at home. They are the areas in which staff need support to provide palliative care. Palliative care should be everyone's business, from the receptionist in the emergency department to the senior orthopaedic surgeon. The only way we can move forward is for all health workers to accept palliative care as a central element of their daily work. To achieve that palliative care services must be properly funded to provide education, support for staff who provide the care and advocacy to ensure that this form of care is never again too little too late. I commend the petition and thank the petitioners.

Mr KEVIN HUMPHRIES (Barwon—Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Healthy Lifestyles, and Minister for Western New South Wales) [4.59 p.m.]: I am also pleased to participate in this debate about the inequities in access to community palliative care services in New South Wales. Like other members, I was appalled to learn that of the 70 per cent of people who wish to die at home only 16 per cent realise that goal. As the member for Macquarie Fields said, more than 50 per cent of people die in hospitals, 20 per cent die in hospices and 10 per cent die in nursing homes.

I was very pleased that the Minister for Health launched the State's first comprehensive palliative care plan on 1 November in Dubbo at the 2012 Palliative Care New South Wales State Conference. The plan sets out the New South Wales Government's policy, which is designed to ensure that everyone has access to quality palliative care regardless of their economic or social circumstances, their geographical location or their medical condition. That will be achieved by focusing on four clearly defined action areas, including expanded community-based palliative care services, especially in rural areas and for special needs populations.

I acknowledge Dr Yvonne McMaster and the work that she and her wonderful team have undertaken. Dr McMaster reminded me yesterday that my electorate of Barwon, which covers 30 per cent of the State and has the smallest population base of all 93 electorates, gathered the largest number of signatures for the petition. Nearly 20 per cent of the populations of Gilgandra, which is north of Dubbo, and Coonabarabran, which is even further north, signed the petition because they do not have palliative care services. We in western New South Wales rely on our larger regional centres for inpatient and outreach support—for staff and facilities. Until now no New South Wales Government has had a palliative care plan for communities west of the Divide. We had no cancer action plan west of the Divide and we had no renal dialysis action plan. Interestingly, when special interest groups were identified it was found that the Indigenous populations in places such as Bourke, Brewarrina and Wilcannia were not accessing palliative care, cancer care or even renal care because they had to travel too far from home and they had no means of transport. Those people are making life decisions—deciding to die without that support.

For the first time in this State's history we now have a palliative action plan. I do not believe that it was an accident that it was launched in Dubbo, in the west of the State, where access to those services and support is limited. The plan includes a focus on integration of primary care, aged care and specialist palliative care services across the State, expanded support of families and carers, and the extended capacity of palliative care services, particularly in remote areas. The member for Macquarie Fields pointed out that this petition is one of the largest ever presented to the House.

The action plan also provides that palliative care education will be included as part of general medical, nursing and allied health education and training and that extended support will be provided to families and carers of people receiving palliative care. This may include increased access to advice and support and after-hours telephone support or access to other assistance with day-to-day living such as domestic help. The New South Wales Health Agency for Clinical Innovation will, through the newly formed Palliative Care Network, promote the adoption of best practice by service providers and maximise use of resources. In addition

to this plan, the Minister announced the allocation of \$35 million over four years in addition to the current annual budget of \$86 million for specialist palliative care, and many millions more will be spent on providing palliation for patients in general hospital wards. We are talking about hundreds of millions of dollars. It is a top-up, incremental gain that will expand the Government's plan for New South Wales and the Minister for Health should be congratulated on introducing it. This additional funding will enable new models of care to be developed, foster new partnerships and establish linkages to create an integrated network of primary care, specialist palliative care, aged care and community services.

On 15 November the Minister declared open a "request for proposal" process to expand community-based services to enable more people living with a terminal condition to receive palliative care and support when they need it in their place of choice. We know we must build up community-based options, and we are seeking to involve families more directly in the provision of palliative care to their loved ones to make it possible for more people to have a real choice about dying at home.

One component of the plan—extended capacity of palliative care services—specifically outlines actions designed to support specialist community-based palliative care and palliative care in the primary care sector to be implemented by the Agency for Clinical Innovation, the New South Wales Palliative Care Network, the Ministry of Health and the Health Education and Training Institute. These actions include promoting sharing of best practice between service providers across the State; supporting education of health professionals and the development of statewide tools to assist them with early referral to palliative care; encouraging local health districts to participate in the Program of Experience in the Palliative Approach, a national program focusing on training of the health workforce in the palliative approach; advocating for increased palliative care content in general medical, nursing and allied health education and training; increasing palliative care content in general medical, nursing and allied health education and training; and improving regular access to professional development for doctors, nurses and allied health workers in palliative care.

The Health Education and Training Institute focuses on clinical and non-clinical education and training. As part of the plan, the Health Education and Training Institute will work to improve access to professional development and advocate for increased palliative care content in general training. For the benefit of those in the gallery and my colleagues, I note that this Government is moving forward on palliative care. It is building and expanding the network and considering new models of care. I look forward to supporting the Minister for Health earlier in the new year, when the Minister will be announcing the successful tenders to look at enhancing these crucial services across New South Wales. I again compliment those in the gallery and Dr McMaster on her excellent work.

Mrs BARBARA PERRY (Auburn) [5.02 p.m.]: It is with great pleasure that I speak in support of this very worthy petition outlining the critical need for more palliative funding and services in New South Wales. First, I to acknowledge those such as Dr Yvonne McMaster who organised this petition, and I thank each and every one of the nearly 60,000 people from all around New South Wales who signed it. By signing this you are advocating on behalf of those who can no longer speak for themselves. By signing the biggest petition that this Parliament has received you are sending a clear and strong message.

This petition at its heart is about recognising the inherent dignity and worth of every person, and their right to die well. A good death, of course, does not just happen automatically; we hear all too often of distressing cases of death marked by suffering. Dying well is dependent on good palliative care services—the intervention and compassion of teams of highly skilled practitioners making considered judgements in consultation with patients and families to ensure that dying patients are as comfortable as possible while underlying disease take its toll on their bodies.

It is in that vein that I mention briefly the work done at St Joseph's Hospital at Auburn, which is in my electorate, with which I have had a great affinity and a great connection. Most recently a friend of mine, Kathryn Gazzard, whom I spoke about in this House, died a beautiful death. I was there a minute before she took her last breath. But I saw the care and love given by all at St Joseph's, and I thank them for their incredible work, as indeed I do everyone who works in this very challenging yet in many ways rewarding field of providing service to those who are dying.

This petition acknowledges the profound difference that good palliative care can make. It is far more than the cessation of curative treatment. It is not passive; it is an active process which anticipates and addresses problems to minimise the impact of illness. We know also that investment in this area makes good financial sense as it takes the pressure off other areas of our system that currently are having to implement stop-gap measures in the face of a rising tide of need.

I acknowledge, as has the shadow Minister for Health, that historically this area has not received the attention it deserves. Health has focused on the crisis and on the curative. Palliative care is often an afterthought. We do not compare well to other States in terms of our ratios of specialist doctors and palliative care nurses. As shadow Minister for Disability I well know the desperate need for palliative care for people with congenital or acquired intellectual disability or other disabilities. For these people palliative care decisions should be made in the best interests of the patient rather than in the interests of the hospital, doctors, legal systems or someone else.

Today, in that regard, I especially welcome to the Parliament and acknowledge the presence here with us of Michael Lee. Michael signed the petition and has come to Parliament to hear this debate. Michael's mother, Margaret, is with him. Michael, who is 40 years of age, is married to a beautiful woman, Joanna. He has motor neurone disease. Michael, we think you are wonderful to be here today; but you are here because you believe passionately in the right of people to die with support and dignity. Michael, I know it is very hard for you but thank you very much for being here today.

We need bipartisan focus on this matter. A good death should be the norm. We do not want suffering among the dying to be the order of the day. It should not be a lottery dependent on what made you sick, how much you earn, or where you live. We do not want to see 70 per cent of people having to die in hospitals when most of them wish to die at home. The need is growing by about 17.3 per cent and current services are stretched, especially here in New South Wales. Until palliative services are given the full attention and funding they deserve a good death for all will not become reality.

Mr ROB STOKES (Pittwater—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.05 p.m.], by leave: I thank the House for its indulgence in allowing me to contribute to the discussion on the issue raised by this important petition. I know that every member of this House would want the opportunity to speak on a matter as important to all of us as the need for improved palliative care outcomes across our communities. On that note, I join all in this House in thanking everyone in the gallery for coming here today and providing their support to this cause. Thank you for the work that you have done in gathering so many signatures. This is a momentous and historic occasion for this House. This is the largest petition that has been presented to the New South Wales Legislative Assembly. It is to your great credit and the credit of the communities that you represent that you have brought this issue before the House. It is also a wonderful moment for the House to conclude a year's deliberations by discussing an issue on which there is bipartisan support.

On this issue we can agree on the importance of providing support to our communities. In many ways the provision of palliative care services is so much the mark of a civilisation. It is difficult to conceive of a situation in which more real support is needed than when people are facing a terminal illness. As Dr Yvonne McMaster once said to me, "Life is a sexually transmitted terminal disease to which we all face a conclusion." Palliative care is an issue that we should all be concerned about, because each and every one of us will face that conclusion, and each and every one of us may at some point in our lives require palliative care or have members of our families who have required it or will require it.

Palliate is from a Latin word meaning to cloak, to cover. It refers in a medical sense to providing relief without hope of cure. In some senses it is forgotten by the medical profession because doctors like to be able to cure problems, to solve problems—as do other health workers. This is a difficult area of medical service and one on which there has not been enough focus for far too long. It is an area of personal stories and personal sacrifice. The member for Wakehurst, the Leader of the House, has asked me to mention, at a personal level, someone very important to him: Dr Peter Moore, who has provided palliative care medical services on the northern beaches of Sydney for very many years. He is known as the angel of the northern beaches for the work that he has done. In that context I mention Dr Megan Best, a medical ethicist, who has been a palliative care specialist at Braeside Hospital for many, many years. An English poet once said:

Death begins at life's first breath
And life begins at touch of death.

The moment that people become aware of the reality of terminal illness in their lives is often the moment from which they can really enjoy life to the full, because they are aware of its transitory nature. That is one of the huge benefits that palliative care provides in that it focuses on not just the medical needs but also the spiritual and community needs of people with terminal illnesses. It is a vital medical service and it is terrific that you have brought this petition to the attention of the House. On behalf of all members, I join in commending all of you for the work you have done in bringing this matter to the attention of the House. I also join with other

members in commending the Minister for the huge contribution she is making to the New South Wales Government plan to improve palliative care services. I seek leave to table copies of the New South Wales Government plan to increase access to palliative care.

Leave granted.

Document tabled.

Discussion concluded.

CRIMES (CRIMINAL ORGANISATIONS CONTROL) AMENDMENT BILL 2012

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

Second Reading

Mr GREG SMITH (Epping—Attorney General, and Minister for Justice) [5.11 p.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Government is pleased to introduce the Crimes (Criminal Organisations Control) Amendment Bill 2012. The bill will provide for mutual recognition of declarations and orders for the control of members of criminal organisations that are made in other States and Territories. The Crimes (Criminal Organisations Control) Act 2012 was introduced in 2012 to repeal, repair, and re-enact the 2009 Act, which was ruled to be invalid by the High Court. South Australia, Queensland and the Northern Territory already have similar legislation in place. Western Australia has introduced a bill, as has Victoria. With the majority of Australian jurisdictions having introduced such legislation, the majority of Ministers at the April 2012 meeting of the Standing Committee on Law and Justice agreed that it would be desirable to pursue a nationally consistent approach to criminal organisation legislation. It was proposed that this would be through State and Territory legislation that provided for the declaration of criminal organisations, orders controlling the activities of members of declared organisations and the mutual recognition of interstate declarations and control orders.

The New South Wales Act already contains the first two elements, and it is the aim of this bill to introduce the mutual recognition element. It is well known that criminal organisations operate across borders, and it would be undesirable if members of declared organisations were able to escape the consequences of a declaration or control order by shifting their activities to another jurisdiction. A mutual recognition mechanism eliminates such a possibility by allowing a declaration or control order made in one State to be registered in the Supreme Court of another State or Territory and enforced as if the declaration or order had been made in that State or Territory.

The proposed amendments in item [15] of schedule 1 to the bill would allow a New South Wales Supreme Court registrar to register a declaration or control order made in another jurisdiction upon application. On registration, interstate declarations and control orders would operate as if they had been made in New South Wales. Recognition of declarations will apply to the group against which the original declaration was made. For example, registering a declaration of the Queensland chapter of an outlaw motor cycle gang in New South Wales would not result in the declaration applying to the New South Wales chapter of that group. However, control orders could be taken out in New South Wales against members of the Queensland chapter if they entered New South Wales. Due to differences between jurisdictions on the conditions able to be imposed under control orders, the registrar would be able to refer the interstate order to a court for variation to ensure consistency with local control orders.

The Government is introducing this bill in recognition of the fact that the majority of jurisdictions represented in the Standing Committee on Law and Justice agreed that mutual recognition provisions were an essential element of a nationally consistent scheme. This also presented an opportunity to make a number of additional amendments that will improve the operation of the Act. The Government is aware that the Queensland organised crime legislation is currently being challenged in the High Court by the Gold Coast chapter of the Finks Motorcycle Club. The High Court's decision may have implications for legislation of this kind, and New South Wales has opted to intervene in the matter. The Government will not progress this bill through the House until the High Court has handed down its decision. If any aspect of the Queensland legislation is found to be invalid, the Government will review all provisions of the bill in light of the High Court's findings.

First, the bill amends the definition of "serious criminal activity". Section 3 of the Act currently defines "serious criminal activity" as any of the following: obtaining material benefits from conduct that constitutes a serious indictable offence; obtaining material benefits from conduct engaged in outside New South Wales, including outside Australia, that, if it occurred in New South Wales, would constitute a serious indictable offence; and committing a serious violence offence or engaging in conduct outside New South Wales, including outside Australia, that if it occurred in New South Wales would constitute a serious violence offence.

Item [2] of schedule 1 to the bill amends the Act to include the offences in the definition of "serious criminal activity" in section 6 of the Criminal Assets Recovery Act 1990, which include: drug trafficking offences; an offence that is punishable by imprisonment for five years or more and involves theft, fraud, obtaining financial benefit from the crime of another, money laundering, extortion, violence, bribery, corruption, harbouring criminals, blackmail, obtaining or offering a secret commission, perverting the course of justice, tax or revenue evasion, illegal gambling, forgery or homicide; firearms offences involving their unauthorised manufacture or sale; drug premise offences; sexual servitude and child prostitution offences; criminal group offences; and destruction of property offences.

The majority of these offences would already fall under the definition of "serious indictable offence" in the present Act, but some of them, whilst very serious offences in their own right, do not involve obtaining material benefits. The amendment will ensure that the eligible judge may take into consideration activities where these offences have been committed by members of the organisation or where material benefits have been obtained from the commission of the offences. Second, the bill amends the Act to give more detail on the facts about which an eligible judge must be satisfied before making a declaration in respect of an organisation. Under the existing section 9, an eligible judge must be satisfied that members of the organisation associate for the purpose of engaging in serious criminal activity and that the organisation poses a risk to public safety and order in New South Wales before making a declaration.

Item [6] of schedule 1 to the bill amends section 9 to state that the eligible judge must be satisfied that members in New South Wales associate for criminal purposes. In its existing form the legislation makes it clear that a declaration may be sought against an organisation even if it is based outside New South Wales. The intent of the Act is to control the activity of an organisation and its members in New South Wales, regardless of how big it may be globally. This amendment will make it clear that the Commissioner of Police can seek a declaration in respect of an organisation that has a national or global presence and will allow that application to be based on the activities of the people we are concerned about, being the organisation's members within New South Wales. Item [7] of schedule 1 to the bill also amends section 9 to provide that it must be the continued existence of the organisation that poses a risk to safety and order in New South Wales.

The amendments in this bill will ensure that police may focus on organisations that are involved in the commission of a wider range of offences whilst at the same time focusing on organisations that present a continuing threat. This amendment is consistent with the intended operation of the Act, which is to break up the criminal activities of established and ongoing criminal groups. The amendment will ensure that the Act does not capture random acts by groups of individuals who do not represent an ongoing threat and do not warrant intervention under the Act.

Third, item [16] of schedule 1 to the bill inserts a new section 20A into the Act which will make the reasons given by an eligible judge for making a declaration to be admissible in control order proceedings as evidence that the organisation is a declared organisation; that a person identified as a member of that organisation is, in fact, a member; that members of the organisation associate for criminal purposes; and that the continued existence of the organisation represents a risk to public safety and order in New South Wales.

Fourth, item [5] of schedule 1 inserts new sections 8A and 8B, which amend the Act to provide the eligible judge with certain powers with respect to the examination of submissions during an application for a declaration. These will include powers to question persons making submissions, and to require persons present to produce documents or to summon persons who may have relevant information, and a general power to do all things necessary for the exercise of the eligible judge's functions. The bill also includes a contempt provision for those who fail to comply with the eligible judge's requirements or otherwise disrupt proceedings.

Fifth, item [12] of schedule 1 extends the duration of a declaration from three to five years. An application for a declaration will be a time-consuming process involving significant investigative resources and large volumes of evidence. Under the existing provisions, if the commissioner wishes to renew an existing declaration against an organisation because it remains a threat to public safety in New South Wales, the NSW

Police Force will need to begin preparations for the renewal application well in advance of the declaration's expiry in order to ensure the declaration continues uninterrupted. In practice, this will mean that after expending significant time and resources obtaining a declaration, the NSW Police Force will have to repeat the process long before the three-year declaration period lapses. The bill will ensure that the hard work done by the NSW Police Force to obtain a declaration will not be wasted by extending the duration of a declaration to five years. I commend the bill to the House.

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

CIVIL AND ADMINISTRATIVE TRIBUNAL 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) [5.24 p.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

It is with great pleasure that the Government introduces the Civil and Administrative Tribunal Bill 2012. This bill establishes the New South Wales Civil and Administrative Tribunal [NCAT]. Fifteen years ago the Administrative Decisions Tribunal Act passed through Parliament with bipartisan support. At the time the former Attorney General, the late Hon. Jeff Shaw, QC, described the proliferation of tribunals in New South Wales as "inequitable for litigants" and "an inefficient application of resources". It was Parliament's intention that the Administrative Decisions Tribunal would be the first step in reducing the large number of tribunals in New South Wales.

Yet, despite a number of recommendations and proposals for further consolidation over the past 15 years, New South Wales has maintained its ad hoc tribunal system. This is despite the fact that during the same period a number of other State and Territory governments in Australia have taken bold steps to reform their tribunal systems. One could say that New South Wales has been left behind. That is why in October 2011 the Minister for Finance and Services, the Minister for Fair Trading and I asked the Legislative Council's Standing Committee on Law and Justice to consider opportunities to consolidate tribunals in New South Wales.

The standing committee conducted a thorough inquiry. It received 88 public submissions, held three public hearings and spoke to representatives from consolidated tribunals in a number of other jurisdictions. I thank the committee members for their hard work and dedication. I also thank those individuals and organisations who took the time to make submissions to the inquiry. The committee published its final report in March 2012. The report found that "stakeholders described the current tribunal system as complex and bewildering". To reduce this complexity, the committee recommended that the Government pursue the establishment of a new tribunal to consolidate existing tribunals where it is appropriate and promote access to justice. This bill establishes that tribunal.

The Government has identified 23 tribunals or other bodies that will join the New South Wales Civil and Administrative Tribunal. These include some of the larger and better-known tribunals, such as, the Consumer, Trader and Tenancy Tribunal; the Administrative Decisions Tribunal; the Guardianship Tribunal; and various health professional tribunals. A number of other tribunals, or other entities that exercise tribunal functions, will also join the New South Wales Civil and Administrative Tribunal, including the Local Government Pecuniary Interest and Disciplinary Tribunal; the Aboriginal Land Councils Pecuniary Interest and Disciplinary Tribunal; the various local land boards established under the Crown Lands Act 1989; and the Charity Referees, who exercise certain functions under the Dormant Funds Act 1942. The New South Wales Civil and Administrative Tribunal will also take over the functions of the Vocational Training Appeal Panel.

I am proud to be a part of this exciting and long-overdue reform. I am also proud to be part of a Government that is committed to improving services for the people of New South Wales. Tribunals perform an invaluable role within the justice system. They provide timely, efficient and flexible points of access for citizens seeking to resolve disputes or to have a review of executive action. They are also cheaper, faster and less formal than court proceedings. But the ad hoc nature of our current tribunal system creates inefficiencies. Currently, many of the separate tribunals maintain their own infrastructure, including separate facilities and separate administrative structures. This results in unnecessary duplication. It also creates much of the confusion referred

to by the standing committee in its report. The New South Wales Civil and Administrative Tribunal will reduce these inefficiencies. It will be a one-stop shop for tribunal services. It will be independent, transparent and accountable, and it will place customers at the centre of service design.

The New South Wales Civil and Administrative Tribunal will have a single contact point, with one website and one phone number. When members of the public need to access a tribunal, they will not be confused about where they need to go. In almost every case, it will be the New South Wales Civil and Administrative Tribunal. The New South Wales Civil and Administrative Tribunal will have consistent client service standards. It will reach out to culturally and linguistically diverse communities. It will also make sure that tribunal users benefit from forms and materials that are simple and easy to understand. By taking advantage of existing tribunal facilities, the New South Wales Civil and Administrative Tribunal will also be able to provide greater access for people in rural and regional communities. The economies of scale that come with a tribunal of this size will also provide opportunities to share resources more effectively. This will deliver benefits to the community through better value for money and a more consistent user experience. Best practice will be identified and rolled out across tribunals, leading to better quality decision-making and enhanced public confidence in our tribunal system.

The Government acknowledges that not every tribunal has direct customers. The general public, for example, does not file applications in every tribunal that is being consolidated, but all tribunals will benefit from this reform. All members will receive consistent training and professional development opportunities. The size and flexible membership structure of the New South Wales Civil and Administrative Tribunal will provide a collegiate and collaborative environment to work in. Under the New South Wales Civil and Administrative Tribunal our highly skilled members will receive new opportunities to share their knowledge and experience with a broader range of colleagues. Members of our health tribunals, for example, will be able to share their extensive professional discipline experience with members on the Administrative Decisions Tribunal professional discipline lists.

Members of our smaller tribunals, like the pecuniary interests and disciplinary tribunals and local land boards, will benefit from being part of a larger membership structure with more opportunities to interact with their colleagues. However, while members might discover new opportunities under the New South Wales Civil and Administrative Tribunal, this does not mean that expertise will be lost. The Government is conscious of the need to preserve the specialist expertise of our current tribunals. Where a member is appointed to the New South Wales Civil and Administrative Tribunal, he or she will not automatically be able to sit on any matter that comes before the tribunal. Members will only be able to sit on particular matters if they are qualified to do so. Particular qualification requirements will be set in consultation with stakeholders.

The benefits associated with this reform are substantial but the Government is aware of the challenges associated with establishing a tribunal of this size. A significant amount of work will need to be done before the New South Wales Civil and Administrative Tribunal can start hearing matters. That is why the Government has decided that the New South Wales Civil and Administrative Tribunal will not open for business until January 2014. This will allow the Government to take a staged approach to the development of the New South Wales Civil and Administrative Tribunal. This bill represents the first stage of that process.

The bill sets up the divisional structure of the New South Wales Civil and Administrative Tribunal. It will have five divisions: Consumer and Commercial, Administrative and Equal Opportunity, Occupational and Regulatory, and Guardianship and Victims Support. To reflect the unique arrangements under the health practitioner national law, a separate health list has been created within the Occupational and Regulatory Division. Other divisions will also be able to manage their caseload in lists. Some tribunals, like the Administrative Decisions Tribunal and the Consumer, Trader and Tenancy Tribunal, will be used to working in a divisional structure. Members of those tribunals would know that the structure of the New South Wales Civil and Administrative Tribunal will enable emerging jurisdictions to be easily absorbed in future. It also means that should any of the small number of tribunals not joining the New South Wales Civil and Administrative Tribunal straight away be deemed suitable for consolidation in future, they will be able to do so with minimal disruption.

The structure of the New South Wales Civil and Administrative Tribunal will also provide each division with the flexibility to tailor services to meet the needs of their particular user groups. A one-size-fits-all approach will not be taken. Professional representation on panels will be preserved and community members will continue to play a key role in assisting tribunals to reach fair and just outcomes. The bill also establishes the New South Wales Civil and Administrative Tribunal governance framework. The New South Wales Civil and Administrative Tribunal will have five categories of member: president, deputy-president, principal member,

senior member and general member. The bill provides that the New South Wales Civil and Administrative Tribunal president will be a Supreme Court judge. This will ensure that the New South Wales Civil and Administrative Tribunal is independent and free from the direct control of the Executive.

The bill also enables members of the New South Wales Civil and Administrative Tribunal to be appointed before 1 January 2014. This will mean that the president and certain other members will be able to develop tribunal rules and enter into any other arrangements necessary to make sure the tribunal is ready for business. To ensure that the skill and expertise held by the members of our existing tribunals is preserved under the New South Wales Civil and Administrative Tribunal, the bill contains transitional provisions that automatically transfer tribunal members to the New South Wales Civil and Administrative Tribunal on 1 January 2014. All members will be appointed for the balance of their current terms and their existing entitlements, including remuneration, will be preserved.

The bill also contains savings and transitional provisions required to transfer matters to the New South Wales Civil and Administrative Tribunal when it opens for business and other administrative provisions relating to the tribunal. However, the bill does not set any detailed provisions relating to practice or procedure. Nor does the bill confer any jurisdiction on the New South Wales Civil and Administrative Tribunal. This is because the Government wants to make sure that detailed requirements, including appeal structures, composition requirements for panels and other procedures are set in consultation with interested stakeholders. These provisions, as well as consequential amendments required to confer jurisdiction on the New South Wales Civil and Administrative Tribunal, will be the subject of further legislation which the Government will introduce next year after a detailed consultation process.

The Government has established a steering committee to guide this consultation process and to ensure that the New South Wales Civil and Administrative Tribunal is open for business by January 2014. The steering committee consists of senior departmental representatives, including the Director General of the Department of Attorney General and Justice and the Deputy Director General of the Ministry of Health. The steering committee will shortly invite stakeholders to form a reference group to assist them. The reference group will include representatives from the tribunals themselves, their user groups, professional associations and other interested stakeholders. Because these representatives will be experts on the tribunals that are being consolidated, the reference group will provide invaluable assistance to the steering committee and to the Government. The reference group will also provide a forum for stakeholders to voice any concerns and to ensure that the New South Wales Civil and Administrative Tribunal meets their particular needs.

The Government has had the benefit of the 88 public submissions to the standing committee's inquiry in developing this proposal so far. The current bill has also been the subject of consultation across government. In addition, a number of tribunal heads and administrators have reviewed the bill and provided valuable advice. I thank everyone who has been involved in this project so far for the collaborative spirit in which they have approached this task. Many tribunals and departments have shown a willingness to embrace this change that I find impressive. The Government has received many expressions of interest from people who want to be part of the reference group. I look forward to working with our tribunals and with the community to deliver a tribunal that meets and exceeds their expectations. I commend this bill to the House.

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

GOSFORD FORESHORE DEVELOPMENT

Discussion on Petition Signed by 10,000 or More Persons

Mr CHRIS HOLSTEIN (Gosford) [5.43 p.m.]: I welcome all those in the gallery who have travelled from the Central Coast today and thank them for their patience. I am happy to speak to the petition before the House because it relates to my electorate of Gosford on the beautiful Central Coast. The petition relates to The Landing project, which is part of the larger Gosford Challenge project. The people of Gosford and indeed the Central Coast have been very supportive of the Gosford Challenge, which was initiated in 2007 and became the vision for the future of Gosford. That was then developed into a master plan and thereafter The Landing, which was to be first phase of the redevelopment of Gosford city for the future. The total area covered by the Challenge is 345 hectares. The current Landing project, which covers the three stages of the development, is 97.5 hectares.

Up to the release of the plans for The Landing almost a year ago there had been overwhelming support for the Challenge and the master plan. I believe that at the time of putting the plans for The Landing together some mistakes were made which departed from the parameters of the Challenge and the master plan in certain respects. Out of the three stages of The Landing there has been a broad acceptance of stage one, whilst the contentious stages two and three have been deferred at this point. Further plans for these stages will not proceed without consultation. Like the Minister, I support moving forward with stage one of The Landing. The Minister has asked the Central Coast Regional Development Corporation to review stage one with a view to seeking improvements prior to it going on public exhibition again. But let us not lose sight of what is at stake.

Gosford city has been in terminal decline for many decades in the areas of infrastructure, investment and jobs growth. The Challenge project is designed to kick-start Gosford back to life so that our children and grandchildren can reap the benefits. Currently 44 per cent of our working population has to travel outside the Gosford local government area for work. In a survey in the "State of the City Report 2012" by Gosford City Council it was revealed that 94 per cent of our residents have a bad or indifferent perception of Gosford city centre. The time for urgent action is overdue and we owe it to future generations to act without further delay.

Gosford City Council has been a driving force behind the revitalisation plans and has received ample bipartisan political support by the Central Coast Regional Development Corporation since that body's inception. We are a growing region. Between 70 to 80 per cent of our population in the coming decades will be home grown, meaning it will be our children and our grandchildren raising families. Do we want them commuting to Sydney for work or do we want them to have jobs on the coast? Surely to live and work on the coast would be a desirable goal for anyone.

I acknowledge that we have one of the most beautiful waterfronts in New South Wales and I would not want to see that ruined, nor do my colleagues in the State Government or on the Gosford City Council. The Gosford Challenge is all about connecting the city and the people with the waterfront so that it can be enjoyed for what it is. Therefore we must develop our city and its connections to the waterfront in a commercially viable way for the ratepayers of the Gosford local government area and potential investors. It should be reasonable in its approach and sustainable for the environment. Most of all, it should be done to deliver real outcomes for future generations. Our emerging population no longer wants half-acre blocks. They want low maintenance, high-quality housing. They want access to the waterfront and when there they want to sit down with friends at trendy cafes, visit boutique shops, access playground facilities, relax in a park or garden and enjoy the views.

I will digress to address another issue about The Landing. The pool relocation is about building a quality, state-of-the-art facility that will meet community needs and that will follow the same process as the Peninsula Leisure Centre. I know about that because as a councillor I was heavily involved in bringing the Peninsula Leisure Centre to the Woy Woy community. The community will be consulted through a needs analysis that will be conducted by Gosford City Council. It is the community—the very users—who will decide the pool size, pool numbers and the way in which it is used. If the Gosford Challenge can deliver we will have a thriving city that is vibrant, provides recreational opportunities and is home to an iconic performing arts centre. It will give people jobs and help to reduce our commuting population. I am confident that with the right will, some common sense and the efforts of good people in Gosford we can achieve all this. Future generations will thank us for our persistence.

The development of Gosford will happen because it has to happen. There is no choice in the matter for Gosford council or for the State Government. The overwhelming majority of the Gosford population will not accept a do-nothing approach, but it is about doing the right thing. Although we are experiencing some growing pains I am confident that we have learned from our earlier mistakes. With a spirit of compromise on all sides in the debate we can move our city forward to become a place where people will want to live and where business will thrive as part of a living city.

Ms LINDA BURNEY (Canterbury) [5.48 p.m.]: I speak on behalf of the New South Wales Labor Party in this discussion on the petition signed by more than 10,000 persons—a petition on which the visitors in the gallery worked so hard to call a halt to the development of The Landing. I congratulate the Gosford Waterfront Action Group and everyone else who has been involved in collecting over 10,000 signatures. It is an enormous effort and it says two things. First, the community has extreme and deep feelings in relation to this proposed development. Secondly, they want the right to have a say in what happens to the public open space at Brisbane Water. I congratulate them on doing that.

This debate really is about access to and availability of public land and water versus inappropriate development that will gobble up a defining part of Gosford. It is mind boggling to think that the beautiful

waterfront that we see when we drive into Gosford might be covered with buildings and office towers and a range of other things. I understand that the Central Coast Regional Development Corporation is revising its proposal and will now proceed with only stage one. In many ways that is a great victory for the Gosford community. I am sure that current residents and future generations will be very thankful for their efforts. I listened carefully to the member for Gosford. I also read carefully in *Hansard* the speech that he delivered in this House on 19 October 2011. He said that the project was up to the doing stage and he wanted the rubber to hit the road. I hope he was not referring to his constituents and the people in the public gallery today when he went on to say:

I have no doubt that the usual soothsayers, doomsayers, didn't know-ers, not-in-my-backyarders, or NIMBYs, and the "build absolutely nothing anywhere near anything" bunch, or BANANAs, will creep out from under their rocks. They are the noisy minority.

The member for Gosford then quoted Winston Churchill. As I said, I hope that he was not referring to the visitors in the gallery when he made those statements. I have seen a letter from Brad Hazzard which says:

... in light of the strong community concerns with Stages 2 and 3 of the project, Central Coast Regional Development Corporation will not be proceeding with its proposal to seek the rezoning of land for stages 2 and 3.

I note that the member for Gosford added the word "consultation". I say to the members of the public in the gallery that they must stay strong because I do not read that letter as saying that stage two and stage three are off the agenda. That is an important thing for them to pursue and I know that they will. I understand that stage one is currently being revised. It proposes a range of facilities that have been broadly canvassed here. While all the facilities sound great on paper—the art centre, the boardwalk, the pool and so on—it is vital that the community and the developers get together and reach agreement on how to proceed. I will come back to that in a moment. There are heritage issues involved with the memorial park. I note that a great deal of work has been done, particularly in relation to the commemoration of wars in which the Gosford community has participated over many years. As for the destruction of Gosford Memorial Park, Pamela Williams said:

The concept plans call for the subsequent destruction of Gosford Memorial Park to accommodate a performing arts centre by excavating the headland on which the memorial park is situated. The access will be used to add a wharf area.

Gosford Memorial Park was dedicated to public recreation in 1886, and I support the residents of Gosford in wanting it to remain that way. The prospect of local residents thinking about the park being excavated is distressing. I urge the Central Coast Development Corporation to take a consultative approach to this development and continue talking to the community. In conclusion, I am concerned that the Government's proposed green paper on planning will cut out any capacity for the residents of Gosford to have a say ever again. I commend them for their actions.

Mr Brad Hazzard: That's total rubbish.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Gareth Ward): Order! The Leader of the House will come to order.

[Interruption]

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Gareth Ward): Order! The member for Canterbury will resume her seat. The Leader of the House will come to order.

Mr CHRIS SPENCE (The Entrance) [5.53 p.m.]: It is hypocritical for the shadow Minister for the Central Coast, who does not live on the Central Coast, to present an argument that this development is wrong. I remind her that this development started under the Labor Government.

Ms Linda Burney: That's true.

Mr CHRIS SPENCE: It was approved by the Labor Minister for Planning. After the Labor Government established the Central Coast Regional Development Corporation it walked away from it and left it abandoned. Now members opposite are criticising what has subsequently occurred. As the member for The Entrance I have a keen interest in the development of Gosford as our regional capital city because my electorate ends within several hundred metres of the Gosford central business district. Over a number of years I have watched, with a mixture of horror and sadness, as Gosford has slowly died. But before I begin there is a

pertinent question that should be asked: What does our local population think of Gosford city? A recent survey of locals' perceptions of Gosford, contained in the "State of the city report 2012", compiled by Gosford City Council, confirmed that only 5.8 per cent have a good perception of the Gosford city centre.

What is of much greater concern is that developers have had a negative perception of Gosford for decades. This means little or no development, no jobs growth, no significant public infrastructure, increasing commuter traffic, and no future for our children and grandchildren. Potential investors are well aware of the numerous frustrated and unsuccessful previous development attempts in Gosford. I acknowledge the 10,000 signatures on the petition opposing the proposed development of The Landing in Gosford. However, I politely point out that another 140,000 people live in the Gosford local government area and, overall, 310,000 people living on the Central Coast did not sign a petition. In my opinion this could be Gosford's last chance for decades and it should be grasped with both hands.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Gareth Ward): Order! The member for Canterbury has had her opportunity to contribute to the debate.

Mr CHRIS SPENCE: The Gosford challenge enjoyed substantial community support, and Gosford City Council even won the Doherty award for its excellent communication with ratepayers. The Landing stages one, two and three were put on exhibition more than a year ago. While there were a couple of unfortunate errors to which the member for Gosford alluded, nonetheless a development was supported. I look forward to the revised stage one of The Landing going back on public exhibition early in the New Year. The Gosford waterfront must be integrated with the future development of Gosford so that it can be revived and, indeed can prosper.

Gosford should have cafes, shops and a vibrancy to attract people back to the waterfront, so that all the people of Gosford can avail themselves of what it has to offer and it does not remain the desolate place it is today. While those who oppose the development may be well intentioned, they must remember that the overwhelming majority of people in the Gosford local government area support this development. Like my colleague the member for Gosford, when I drive past the Gosford waterfront I hardly ever see anyone using it, which is a crying shame. The waterfront must form part of any future development in order to bring it back to life so that residents and visitors can enjoy its use again. [*Time expired.*]

Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) [5.56 p.m.]: I am pleased to support the petition signed by more than 10,000 people relating to The Landing on Gosford waterfront. Recently it was noted in this Chamber that the former Labor Government had a role to play in this development, and that is true. Undoubtedly the Labor Government worked with the then mayor of Gosford, who is now the member for Gosford.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Gareth Ward): Order! The member for Balmain will come to order.

Mr CLAYTON BARR: I refer to what the member for Gosford said in this House last year when he spoke about The Landing. He acknowledged his support for The Landing when he said:

I have no doubt that the usual soothsayers, doomsayers, didn't know-ers, not-in-my-backyarders, or NIMBYs, and the "build absolutely nothing anywhere near anything" bunch, or BANANAs, will creep out from under their rocks. They are the noisy minority.

The noisy minority—10,000 people—signed the petition. While preparing my contribution, I thought I would look at the electoral history of the district of Gosford. One fantastic thing about all the electorates on the Central Coast is that they are swinging seats at the moment. They are won and lost by Labor and by the Liberal Party. Never at any stage in the history of Gosford has it been won or lost by 10,000 or more votes. It is always been won by fewer than 10,000 votes. In fact, history tells us that in 2011, 2007, 2003 and 1999 the electorate of Gosford was won or lost by 1,000 to 2,000 votes. It is important for the people of the Central Coast to know that this petition does not end on this day in this House. They can have a bigger, longer, stronger say at the next election when they choose to re-elect or not re-elect those who stood up for them.

Undoubtedly, members from Central Coast electorates will be able to show the people of the Central Coast the many pages of representations they have made on their behalf to object to the development to ensure that they get the development they want. They should ask their local members to show them all the representations. But they should not hold their breath to see much in terms of quantity. The people of the Central

Coast who signed the petition are entitled to have their say in this Chamber, have the debate today and cast their vote again. If they do not get representation they should change their vote at the next election. The power is with them—embrace it. [*Time expired.*]

Mr JAMIE PARKER (Balmain) [5.59 p.m.], by leave: I speak on behalf of The Greens. First, I acknowledge and congratulate the members of the Gosford community who are in the gallery today, in particular the Gosford Waterfront Action Group, Gary Jackson, with whom I have had some involvement, and all those who helped to collect the signatures on the petition. I acknowledge also Mr David Shoebridge, a member of the Legislative Council, who is here today to offer his support. As the member for Balmain, which has a significant amount of waterfront, I will make some important points. In terms of the type of development that takes place on the waterfront, a lot of mistakes have been made. One thing we are hearing loud and clear from this genuine, consistent and dignified group of residents and local community people is that they do not want to see those mistakes, which have happened in many places in Sydney, made on the Gosford waterfront site.

One thing is clear: We know that alienation of public land, waterfront land in particular, is always done in the interests of developers; but once that land is lost to the public, it is lost forever. Redress at a later stage by demolishing buildings and reopening spaces is next to impossible. When I was the Mayor of Leichhardt, the challenge we faced was spending approximately \$14 million on a very small parcel of land. If good decisions had been made at an earlier stage, that would not have been necessary. Clearly, development is important: No-one in this Chamber is saying that development should not proceed. I have been a strong supporter of appropriate development that has met and exceeded all the new housing targets in my community. However, the issue is: Where should this development be?

The question that has been asked is whether this development should be on the waterfront, in the central business district or in a place that is apart from the waterfront—which makes developers salivate—and what would that provide for the community? It is not enough simply to construct a building to create a vibrant city or a vibrant town. The infrastructure is important, but it is more about how the community is united, how it works together and how the functions of the community build on each other. It is important to note that the State Government referred to returning planning powers to the community. This petition represents the community speaking loudly and clearly. For example, when the proposal was exhibited in 2011, 680 submissions were received, and 96 per cent of those opposed the proposition. It is clear that issues relating to community consultation need to be addressed.

I am delighted that the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Infrastructure NSW is in the Chamber for this discussion. As recent correspondence indicates, the Minister will have an opportunity to listen to the community and make sure that public consultation is the focus in resolving this issue. The Minister will be able to ensure that when the use of this precious waterfront is determined, it is determined by taking into account not just the interests of the development industry but the interests of the entire community. In that way the community will be heard, and environmental as well as social impacts can be assessed, particularly future sea level rise implications. I commend everyone who is present in the gallery and who travelled to Sydney to hear the debate on this petition. I look forward to working with you to ensure that mistakes made in the past are not repeated in the future in Gosford.

Mr DARREN WEBBER (Wyong) [6.02 p.m.], by leave: I participate in this discussion on the petition as someone who has a strong emotional attachment to the Gosford central business district. Not so many years ago I was born in Gosford. I grew up in Tumby Umbi and later in Terrigal. I well remember that, prior to major regional shopping centres being established on the Central Coast, my family went to the Gosford central business district when significant domestic items, such as clothing and shoes for school and, on some occasions, even groceries, had to be purchased. I also remember having a love-hate relationship with the Gosford swimming pool when I was growing up. Every weekday, my mother and father would get me up at 4.00 a.m. to go to swimming training in Gosford. That was both good and bad.

Since the completion of stage one of the Erina Fair shopping centre, it is fair to say that Gosford has really struggled. Across the Central Coast, regional shopping centres have been constructed—Erina Fair, Bay Village, Lake Haven and most recently Westfield Tuggerah—and traditional suburban shopping strips such as at Gosford, The Entrance, and to a lesser extent Toukley, Long Jetty and Killarney Vale, have really struggled. People like the convenience of going to an air-conditioned major retail shopping centre that covers a large area. I have to admit that I like it. It is unfortunate but, as much as I try to support local shops in the Wyong town centre, it is simply more convenient to go to a shopping centre. That opinion is shared by many: Clearly the majority of shoppers go to regional shopping centres.

Since Gosford lost its cinemas, it has not been the same. I was born in Gosford and lost a grandparent there, but the main reason I go to the Gosford central business district now is to go to the Gosford Hospital or to the Bluetongue Central Coast Stadium. It is fair to say that it is human nature not to like change. I distinctly recall people in The Entrance lining up with arms linked in front of bulldozers prior to revitalisation of that town. But look at The Entrance now—it has not looked back. I played a grand final at Grahame Park before it was revitalised and became the Bluetongue stadium. I remember people saying that Grahame Park would never be the same again, so the bowling club was retained—which completely changed the stadium's design. Look at the Bluetongue Central Coast Stadium now. It is the most prestigious football stadium in Australia.

The proposal is about revitalising Gosford and bringing the waterfront to the central business district. If Wyong had a waterfront as part of its central business district, it would be a completely different place. Having said that, I emphasise that this is stage one. As a neighbouring precinct, Wyong supports stage one of the revitalisation of Gosford, which is important for the Central Coast. I support the proposal wholeheartedly while acknowledging the petition that has been signed by 10,000 people. As I stated earlier, it is human nature to find that change is hard. I ask people who have signed the petition to look at The Entrance and at the Bluetongue Central Coast Stadium to see that change is not always bad.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD (Wakehurst—Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Infrastructure NSW) [6.05 p.m.], by leave: At the outset of my contribution to discussion of this petition, I thank the residents in the public gallery who have travelled to Sydney to listen to the debate and who demonstrate that there is a fair level of interest in this issue. I am the Minister responsible for this issue. I was not until 19 months ago, so let me say this: I have not expressed any views politically. A few moments ago, I was a little stirred up, as people in the gallery may have noticed, but until that time I have not expressed any political views.

I actually think the former Government was trying to do the right thing as far as the community was concerned in the sense that it recognised there has been a bit of an issue in Gosford over the years. I have visited Gosford and other areas on the Central Coast many times. It was probably around the time that Erina Fair was built that things started to go really haywire in the centre of Gosford. I acknowledge that the former Government and local Coalition members of Parliament tried various approaches, particularly Chris Hartcher. Chris Hartcher, who is the Minister for Resources and Energy, Special Minister of State, and Minister for the Central Coast, is very sad that he is unable to be here to participate in the discussion. He is in Melbourne. Establishment of the Central Coast Development Corporation was done with good intent, but I am not sure that it received sufficient resources and guidance on how to engage with communities.

When I became the Minister and examined the proposal, I was a little surprised at stage two and stage three. I do not have any documentation with me, so I apologise for my remarks being off the top of my head. I thought stage one had some positive features, but I was not quite convinced about stage two and stage three, particularly the buildings that would be constructed around the foreshore. In particular, a walkway that was located under a building did not appear to me, as the planning Minister, to make a lot of sense. I brought in the chair of the Central Coast Development Corporation and spoke to him about those issues. I expressed the view that we needed to find a better way to get the community engaged in the process and to recognise that stage two and stage three really did not make a lot of sense. I did not think the possibility of alienating any of the foreshore was something that the community or I would be particularly comfortable with. Generally that is a view that a number of residents have also expressed to me.

Unfortunately, this is the end of a long week and a long session, so perhaps there is a little bit more politics involved in this discussion than is usual. But in all genuineness, I ask the people in the public gallery to understand that the Government and the Opposition believe we will be able to find the right way through this issue. Gosford certainly needs something. When driving into Gosford from the Pacific Highway, perhaps up to Mann Street, Georgiana Terrace and heading out to Erina Fair on the Central Coast Highway, Mann Street looks a bit sad now, but the right balance must be struck. I promise the people in the gallery that I am absolutely keen to ensure that the Central Coast Development Corporation does not get it wrong, liaises big time with residents in the community, and finds a way to enliven Gosford, but not to the point of detracting from opportunities to access public space on the water's edge. A balance must be struck. In conclusion, I acknowledge the effort made by people in the gallery in travelling to Sydney from Gosford. I hope you take the remarks I have made in good faith and accept my assurance that the Government will keep working with you. Thank you very much.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Gareth Ward): Order! Before concluding the discussion, I add to the Minister's remarks my thanks to members of the public in the gallery for attending the debate. I come from a

regional community and appreciate how difficult it is to get to Parliament. I think it is wonderful that you have taken the opportunity to be present in the Chamber during the discussion of this petition. Congratulations on all the work you invested in this discussion. You should be very proud. Have a safe trip home, and I wish you all the best for the holiday season.

Discussion concluded.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

BRIGHTSIDE MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING PROGRAM

Mr ROBERT FUROLO (Lakemba) [6.10 p.m.]: I am pleased to update the House on some developments in my electorate. I had the pleasure of attending the Morris Iemma Indoor Sports Centre at Riverwood for the launch of the YMCA Brightside Mental Health and Wellbeing Program. This is an important program because it is designed to assist those people in the community who suffer mental health issues. The program was designed in collaboration with Suicide Prevention Australia and the Black Dog Institute and I had the pleasure of talking to some of the participants in the program. The YMCA provides people referred by their practitioners as needing assistance regarding mental health with free membership to the gym at the Morris Iemma Indoor Sports Centre. Those who receive assistance through the Brightside program are tested by trainers at the gym and a program is developed for them.

There is plenty of evidence to show that physical activity on a regular basis is very important in assisting people suffering from mental health issues, and I congratulate the YMCA on the introduction of the Brightside program. It is also supported by Canterbury City Council through its Active Canterbury Together project and is funded by the Australian Government. The program aims to design a customised exercise program for participants, minimise factors that contribute to distress and loss of wellbeing, and maximise the circumstances that foster wellbeing and create a foundation for continued participation in regular exercise. I made the point when I addressed those who were at the launch that the Morris Iemma Indoor Sports Centre was a very appropriate place to host a mental health program given Morris Iemma's commitment to raising the profile of mental health in New South Wales and throughout the country.

When he was the Premier, Morris Iemma was the driving force behind the National Action Plan on Mental Health and he successfully lobbied to make mental health a priority issue on the Council of Australian Governments agenda in 2006. Indeed, arising from that, an historic agreement was reached by the Commonwealth and all the States to work together on a national plan of action on mental health and arising from that was a commitment to invest \$4.1 billion towards mental health, which has since risen to more than \$5 billion, with extra money put in. The Brightside program run by the YMCA is an example of a great partnership existing with the council, aiming to meet the various needs of local residents, including those with mental health issues. I congratulate the YMCA on hosting this program. The Morris Iemma Indoor Sports Centre was a joint venture of the former Labor Government and Canterbury City Council, and I had the great pleasure as mayor of the city of Canterbury of opening that centre.

When we developed the idea for the centre one of the objectives was that it would not just be a hall, gymnasium or indoor sports centre; a range of community programs would be run from the centre. That was one of the reasons why we selected the YMCA to operate the centre and, in my opinion, it has more than lived up to council and community expectations. The YMCA's continued hard work in the community, providing access to sporting facilities for families and young children, and working with local schools and with the Brightside program, is an example of its wonderful commitment to the local area and its deep understanding of community needs. I congratulate the YMCA and the Canterbury City Council on their fantastic work and acknowledge the participation of quite a number of people from the Riverwood community who have benefited from regular exercise at the Morris Iemma Indoor Sports Centre. Congratulations to all involved.

COOGEE CHRISTMAS CARD COMPETITION

CANCER COUNCIL INFORMATION CENTRE

Mr BRUCE NOTLEY-SMITH (Coogee) [6.15 p.m.]: It gives me great pleasure to make some remarks about two recent events in my community. On Monday 19 November I was pleased to attend Bronte Public School to announce the winner of my inaugural Christmas card competition for public primary schools in

the Coogee electorate. The judging was tight. The entries were wide and varied, and of a very high quality. In fact I was so pleased with the quality of the entries that I am contemplating holding a competition among local schools to design more of my office stationery. I also thank the judges who so ably helped me to choose the winner: Jane Lawry, the senior marketing manager at Westfield Bondi Junction; Yosi Tal, director of Designer Rugs; and Councillor Sally Betts, the mayor of Waverley. This year's winner was Poppy Olsen, a 12-year-old student at Bronte Public School. With thanks to Designer Rugs, Poppy's design will be reproduced on two rugs, one for Bronte Public School to keep and one for her to keep.

Poppy's entry was called "Christmas Trees", and her design and all the other entries can be seen on my website. Poppy is quite an impressive young lady. At the age of 12, she has already set her sights on becoming a skateboarding world champion, and she is well on the way. She has already been to the United States to compete in the Gatorade Free Flow Tour, where she skated in tandem with skateboarding legend Tony Hawk. She has also signed her first sponsors and is looking to head overseas even more frequently in the next year. Poppy has her own website, from which she sells her artwork as greeting cards, and her work is extremely popular. Earlier this year Waverley Council even asked her to paint some signal boxes in and around Bondi Junction to help beautify the streetscape. I see some of the designs every day, and they are brilliant. I am sure the House will join me in congratulating Poppy on winning my Christmas card competition, and I hope my constituents will enjoy her designs.

Later on the morning of 19 November I attended the Prince of Wales Hospital oncology unit to launch the Cancer Council's new information centre. I have spoken previously in this place about some of the great cancer care and treatment facilities in New South Wales and in my electorate, specifically at Prince of Wales Hospital. As one of New South Wales and Australia's premier cancer treatment facilities, the introduction of an information centre at the Prince of Wales Hospital will be a great addition to complement the excellent care and treatment provided. The Cancer Council is an independent not-for-profit organisation centred on bringing together ideas and charity works to produce an independent voice for all those affected by cancer and guide communities on ways to prevent, treat and manage cancer diagnoses.

This is the Cancer Council's fourteenth information centre in New South Wales, offering a range of resources to those affected by cancer, whether as a patient, family member, carer, or friend of someone with cancer. Although cancer diagnosis is certainly an inherently frightening and difficult process to come to terms with, the information centre will provide a place for patients to have time out from the hustle and bustle of the hospital atmosphere. The centres are designed as a relaxing place to access a range of resources such as information booklets, support group services available in the local community, and DVDs and books about cancer through the library. They are staffed by trained volunteers whose job is to assist visitors to the centre in finding the resources they need within a supportive and caring environment. At the launch I had the pleasure of congratulating a number of people involved on setting up the information centre, and I make mention of a few of those in the House today.

First, I congratulate Professor Robyn Ward, the Director of Cancer Services at Prince of Wales Hospital, who works tirelessly to ensure that the hospital continues to deliver foremost cancer treatments and care. Secondly, I congratulate Professor Michael Jackson, Director of Radiation Oncology at Prince of Wales. Professors Ward and Jackson were instrumental in the development of the centre and I applaud their efforts, particularly for their engagement of organisations such as the Cancer Council. I also congratulate Nicola McEwen, the Community Network Coordinator for the Cancer Council's Central and Southern Sydney region, and Gill Batt, Director of Cancer Council Information and Support Services on their work in making the new centre possible. I am pleased to have this new information centre located in Coogee and I remind the House that it will not just benefit my constituents but the many patients who come to Prince of Wales Hospital from all over New South Wales and Australia.

MOBILITY SCOOTER SAFETY

Mr DONALD PAGE (Ballina—Minister for Local Government, and Minister for the North Coast) [6.20 p.m.]: I bring to the attention of the House the increasing use of motorised scooters, and the safety issues surrounding their use. Four-wheeled motorised scooters are very popular with the elderly and people with disabilities because they offer them mobility and independence they would not normally have. This type of freedom is very important. However, a number of issues associated with the use of motorised scooters have been raised in my electorate of Ballina, and my research shows those issues are also common in other parts of New South Wales, and indeed, around Australia.

In October this year, two women walking along a footpath in Ballina were struck from behind by a motorised scooter driven by a 92-year-old woman. Both pedestrians were badly hurt. One of the ladies, who was 80, fractured her collarbone. The other woman, a 66-year-old Ballina resident, sustained serious leg injuries, including two broken ankles, a broken leg and several broken bones in her foot. This incident will have long-lasting ramifications for both victims. Although it was an accident, this is little comfort for the women who were simply walking on the footpath at the time. Motorised scooters in New South Wales are not covered by third party insurance. Therefore the two women injured in the accident are not entitled to any help with their medical expenses, and they are not inclined to want to sue a 92-year-old lady for damages.

Since this accident occurred, many people have rung my office reporting their own experiences involving motorised scooters. A Monash University report estimates that more than 700 hospitalisations occurred in Australia between July 2006 and June 2008 as a result of injuries involving motorised scooters. A significant proportion of the injuries result in persistent health problems. The report also found there were at least 62 identified fatalities relating to motorised scooters from July 2000 to August 2010. It also makes the point that the use of motorised scooters is expected to increase substantially in the coming years with the ageing population.

In New South Wales a user of a motorised scooter is not classified as a driver, but instead a pedestrian. Therefore motorised scooters cannot be driven on the roads. The scooters must not go any more than 10 kilometres per hour to retain their pedestrian status. In reality these scooters can travel much faster than 10 kilometres per hour, which has led to calls for speed limiters. No licence is required, nor is there any competency or skills test applying to drivers of motorised scooters. This lack of rules seems to apply across Australia, although in Queensland, owners of motorised scooters are able to register them for no charge. I shall draw a distinction between motorised wheelchairs and motorised scooters. Motorised wheelchairs travel much slower than four-wheeled motorised scooters, and generally are not a problem.

Another report entitled "Mobility Scooter Usage and Safety Survey Report", released in September this year, found that approximately 231,000 Australians use mobility scooters and, surprisingly, half of them are under 60 years of age. However, safety training or tuition appears to be haphazard. Of course, motorised scooters are important in helping people get out and about, but I acknowledge the concerns of other members of the community who are worried about the safety of other pedestrians. Transport for NSW is a member of the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission's Mobility Scooter Reference Group, which has identified a number of issues surrounding the use of motorised scooters. It is clear, given the recent accident in Ballina and others places, and the calls I have received in my office, that the safety issues surrounding the use of motorised scooters are concerning for many people in my community. I know that what is happening in the Ballina electorate is also reflected in most other parts of New South Wales and Australia.

I recently raised this issue with the New South Wales Minister for Roads, a very good Minister, and I welcome his recommendation that the New South Wales Staysafe committee hold an inquiry into motorised scooters. The Minister has asked the Staysafe committee to look at things such as the skills and competency of scooter drivers, insurance and vehicle standards, including design, mass and speed controls. The ageing population has resulted in a steady increase in the use of these scooters and a rise in the number of serious casualties as a result of their involvement in accidents. I point out that not all incidents are reported to police or health authorities. A large number of accidents also occur on private property. Motorised scooters enable elderly and immobile members of our community to get out and about, and enjoy a degree of freedom and independence. This is very important to their personal wellbeing, and I support that. However, we must protect the safety of people using motorised scooters as well as other pedestrians who share the footpaths with them. I welcome the reference by the Minister for Roads and Ports to the Staysafe committee to look into these issues.

DIWALI HINDU FESTIVAL

Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool) [6.25 p.m.]: I draw to the attention of the House a function I attended on 3 and 4 November this year. It was a Deepawali or Diwali festival, held at Northumberland Street at Liverpool. Diwali is the Festival of Lights. It is the best-known and certainly the brightest of the Hindu festivals. This particular event was organised by Shree Sanatan Dharm Pratinidhi Sabha of Australia Inc, an organisation that has been running Deepawali Mela, the Diwali festival, in Liverpool for the past six years. I am pleased to say I have been at each of those festivals. I particularly acknowledge the work of members of the association, particularly the leadership of the association that not only arranges these functions but also does a range of other work as well. I acknowledge the national president, Pandit Jagdish Sharma; the general secretary, Yogesh Chandra; the national treasurer, Marcus Pran; and one of the members of the organising committee whom I dealt with and who was the master of ceremonies for the event that I attended, Satish Prasad.

The event ran for two days. It featured a number of stalls including the remarkably tempting Indian food stalls, together with a number of other stalls. It also featured traditional cultural, religious and even Bollywood presentations. Last year something like 21,000 people attended the festival, and the numbers this year seemed even greater than that. Some of the sense of the festival and the mela can be gained from the comments by the national president, Pandit Jagdish Sharma, in the Deepawali magazine that was distributed. Among other things, the message in that booklet stated:

Deepawali signifies the triumph of good over evil, light over dark. The slaying of demon Narakasura by Lord Krishna is commonly cited as the origin of the Deepawali. But the values and principles that Hindus affirm when they commemorate Deepawali are relevant to all. They have much in common with the values promoted by our other religions in Australia.

Further Deepawali has become an occasion for social togetherness, both within the Hindu community, neighbours and friends of all races and religions in Australia. Friends from other races are often invited to share the joyous atmosphere.

A little later in that message, Pandit Jagdish Sharma says:

However Deepawali is not just a time for merry-making, it is also time for us to remember the less fortunate around us, and bring light into their lives. Share kindness, goodwill and generosity.

This Diwali mela was largely organised and attended by members of the Fijian Indian community. Liverpool is the centre, in a sense, of the Fijian Indian community in New South Wales. Many people from that background live in south-west Sydney. There is an extraordinary range of people there. I have a number of friends in the community who include a couple of former Fijian Labor members of Parliament who were held up at gunpoint in the first coup. Indeed, many of this community have come from Fiji as a result of the coups in Fiji. They have been very much Fiji's loss but Liverpool's gain. They bring with them an extraordinary history because the Indians went to Fiji as a result of indentured labour. They were essentially de facto slaves moved by the British to Fiji to run the sugar farms.

Interestingly, the commercial entity that made most money out of what was essentially slavery was an Australian company, Colonial Sugar Refining, and there is a very real connection between Australia and the Fijian Indian community. When indenture was abolished during the First World War, as a result of a campaign by Ghandi to assist the British war effort effectively, the people leading the charge to stop indentured slave labour being abolished were the Australian representatives of Colonial Sugar Refining. It is that history that the Fijian Indians bring to this country. They are part of an extraordinarily diverse and multicultural community in south-east Sydney, particularly in Liverpool. They make a significant contribution to our area and I am delighted to have been able to attend their festivals.

ORANGE ELECTORATE FOOTBALL SEASON

Mr ANDREW GEE (Orange) [6.30 p.m.]: Winter sport in the Orange electorate is played with pride, passion and a great sense of friendly rivalry between the towns and cities of the region. The 2012 football season was no exception. In Blowes Cup Rugby Union the Orange Lions broke a 19-year premiership drought when they accounted for the Dubbo Roos 30-16 in the grand final. The Lions went through the entire 2012 campaign undefeated in what was a great triumph for a team that played the grand final with their captain, Josh Maley, on the sidelines because of injury. Despite the injury, Josh was all smiles when he joined the on-field skipper, Michael Sparkes, for the presentation of the Blowes Clothing Cup. Among the highlights of the game was a great try from Sione Lafo'ou who took a pass from Mesui Lomoto 20 metres from the line and got through five defenders to score. Congratulations to all the players and Orange City coach Steve Hamson. The Lions second grade side downed the Bathurst Bulldogs 20-15 in their grand final, which was a tremendous effort.

As club president Steve Stone said, the club had been working for many years to achieve that result in those divisions. The season was particularly satisfying for Mr Stone because his son plays halfback in the first grade side. Well done, Lions. Also in rugby union, at the northern end of the electorate, rivals the Mudgee Wombats and the Wellington Redbacks played out a grand final that had players, coaches and supporters biting their fingernails at Mudgee's Jubilee Oval. With Wellington making a second-half charge, the home team held on to win 17-12 for the Wombats to record their third premiership in the last four years in the Australian National Field Days Cup northern division. Wombats coach George Hamilton was left speechless after 80 minutes of rugby that tested the stamina of all players and the vocal chords of the two teams' supporters. Wellington captain Peter Graham was disappointed but knows that he has a good nucleus of young players for next season.

On the other hand, after the Wombats' win club stalwart Brett Swords announced his retirement from the game. Except for a few years when he was at boarding school and working away from Mudgee, Mr Swords

has been one of the mainstays of the club both as a player and, over the past 10 years, an administrator, including stints as president. He started in the under 10s, played his way through the grades and colts sides and during the past 10 years has played four winning grand finals in the seniors. The name Swords may not be out of the Wombats for long as the next generation of his family can be expected to come along when his son Aiden, now aged three, will presumably be enticed into the code by his father. Also announcing retirement on grand final day was Wombats captain Rob Thraves and Wellington captain Peter Graham.

At Mudgee, father and son round-ball football enthusiasts Peter and Craig Mitchell had reason to celebrate when the Mudgee Wolves created history by winning the first grade premierships in the Bathurst Soccer Association grand final for the first time since the juniors and seniors merged in 2004. Peter Mitchell has been involved in soccer ever since he arrived in Mudgee in 1995 and for more than 10 years has been president of the Wolves as well as a referee. Craig Mitchell was the captain/coach for the Wolves in a career with the club except when he played in Dubbo and travelled through Europe. Craig's love and passion for the sport and his belief that football is the greatest game of all have been an inspiration to his team-mates for many years and he has now been rewarded with the trophy he so keenly sought for the club since he entered the senior grade.

The Group 10 rugby league season saw Orange CYMS chasing their third successive premiership and, despite being without key playmaker Warick Colley for most of the season and player coach Mick Sullivan late in the season, played their way into the grand final against Lithgow Workies. However, despite the inspiration of Sullivan returning from the bench, CYMS were unable to counter the physical power of the famed Workies outfit. In the reserves the Mudgee Dragons won their first grand final in the division for 26 years, which was a consolation for their premier league side missing out on a grand final spot. Sportsmen and women in country towns and cities are local heroes who bring enormous pride to their communities. I commend the football stars of the Orange electorate for the example they have set for their communities and the entertainment they provide to their supporters. We look forward to another cracking season next year.

BAULKHAM HILLS ELECTORATE EVENTS

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT (Baulkham Hills) [6.35 p.m.]: It is with great pleasure that I update the House on the many exciting developments and events that will happen in The Hills district over the next couple of weeks as we move closer to Christmas and some events that have occurred in recent weeks. The highlight of this year's end-of-year festivities is the Christmas in The Hills event, which is being organised by the member for Castle Hill, the Federal member for Mitchell and me as patrons. Christmas in the Hills is one of The Hills' most cherished functions and is set to become an exceptionally well attended event. I know it is something that many in The Hills are really looking forward to. Carols by Candlelight will occur on 19 December and is being arranged by Mr Gareth McCrae, a prominent former broadcaster and a resident of The Hills. The work he has done to put this event together is both commendable and remarkable. However, Christmas in The Hills is just the beginning. Between now and Christmas Eve 30 Christmas and end-of-year community events will be held across my shire, generously hosted by nearly every community group one could imagine. I am sure each and every one will be a success, and I wish them all the very best.

One of the hallmarks of this time of year is the numerous school presentations held in my electorate of Baulkham Hills. I very much enjoy these presentations as they represent a rare opportunity to recognise the talents and achievements of our young people. I am particularly looking forward to attending the private, Catholic and public school activities. Another event that is happening in The Hills is the construction of the North West Rail Link. As a result of the construction we have been asked as a community to move The Hills War Memorial from Castle Hill shops to Wrights Road Reserve. This is naturally a matter of great importance to the community, in particular our very active 600-member returned services sub-branch. I am happy to report that the dignity of the war memorial has been maintained. It is great news that The Hills will continue to have a memorial showing our deep respect for those who have bravely fought for Australia. In the same vein, I must acknowledge Colonel Don Tait, OAM, not only for his work in charge of the transition of the war memorial but also for his sobering and dignified reflection two Sundays ago on Remembrance Day at the Baulkham Heights Estate War Memorial.

One of the great community institutions in The Hills is the Girl Guides. I was greatly privileged last Friday to be a guest at the North Rocks Girl Guides trivia night. The Girl Guides in The Hills and more broadly should be commended for their continued and varied service to our State. The work of the Girl Guides in North Rocks was recently recognised when they were awarded a community infrastructure grant to upgrade their hall at North Rocks. Like the Girl Guides, the Lions Club is yet another great community body that should be universally commended. Where would our communities be without the contribution of the local Lions Club? It

is for this reason that I am really looking forward to this Saturday night's Leos special promotional event. I encourage young people in my electorate to become involved in this wonderful sub-group of the Lions Club. I wish Leos the very best with their recruitment drive and encourage people to get involved and support the organisation.

The Hills will once again be a proud and active supporter of White Ribbon Day, which commences tomorrow morning at the Castle Hill bus stop, where the member for Castle Hill and I will be organising a barbecue followed by breakfast to be hosted by Castle Hill RSL Club on Sunday morning with representatives of our local area command. Next Wednesday morning The Hills Local Area Command will have its annual awards presentation, when members of the NSW Police Force will be recognised at a medal presentation by the local area commander. It is an excellent opportunity for everyone to see our hardworking police officers get the recognition that they so richly deserve. The Hills also was host last Saturday night to the Western Sydney Academy of Sport annual athlete dinner and awards night held at the Castle Hill RSL. We were grateful for the attendance of the Minister for Sport and Recreation at that function.

I am also delighted to report that Baulkham Hills recently became the home of Australia's peak cystic fibrosis organisation, Cystic Fibrosis in Australia. The organisation will commence work next week at the Norwest Business Park. This is all happening in The Hills district. As members can see, The Hills will be a very busy and exciting place to be over the next few weeks, and I for one am looking forward to it

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Gareth Ward): Order! I remind members that it is very off-putting and frustrating when members seated behind the member with the call are talking. This is not the first time this matter has been drawn to the attention of members. I ask members who wish to have private conversations to do so outside the Chamber.

COASTAL PARADISE REVEALED PROJECT

Mr CHRIS SPENCE (The Entrance) [6.40 p.m.]: The Central Coast is widely known to be a region of great beauty. With stretching coastlines, national parks, iconic sites and spectacular waterways, our region draws thousands of tourists each year. This iconic beauty, known so well by renowned photographer Ken Duncan, inspired a project to showcase the Central Coast in all her splendour. In Ken's own words:

If you can't take a great photo here, you should possibly give up photography.

Project *Coastal Paradise Revealed* saw photographers from all over Australia, and even internationally, along with local photographers, submit their photos of the Central Coast to be a part of the publication. Ken's vision and dream was to show off the Central Coast to the world, to bring a renewed message of hope, pride and excitement in the region, and to draw visitors to the area. All entries, from amateur to professional photographers, were considered for a range of prizes. But perhaps the most coveted was to be published alongside those of master of photography, Ken Duncan, and other local photographers in the new book. The final photographs were selected by Ken and another prominent photographer, and Minister for the Central Coast, Chris Hartcher.

With an overwhelming response, and a quality that exceeded expectation, the project resulted in seven leading photographers and award-winning entrants showcasing the majesty of the Central Coast. Launched on 17 August in Ken's gallery at Erina Heights, the *Coastal Paradise Revealed* book and exhibition were an enormous success. The beautiful book is selling like wildfire. Locals love it and have been purchasing quantities to send to friends and families overseas to show them the stunning area in which we live. The book brings together remarkable images—from local wildlife to spectacular beaches and rock platforms, and tucked away rural areas, from Somersby Falls to the serene waters of Long Jetty, and from horse mustering in Glenworth Valley to early morning surfers.

The amazing diversity of the Central Coast is captured in the pages. The book incorporates photography tips from some well-known professional photographers who contributed their own works for those inspired to pick up a camera and start snapping. *Coastal Paradise Revealed* is not just about photographers publishing photographs; it is about showcasing the heart of the Central Coast, capturing her charm, grace and elegance that we often take for granted in the rush of our busy lives. This project is a refreshing, new appreciation for our great region. Oliver Philpot, the then chief executive officer of Central Coast Tourism, captured it perfectly in writing the book's foreword:

To understand its allure, one must come prepared to peel back the layers. Take the time. Find the moments. Here, for your pleasure, some of Central Coast's most amazing moments to delight you, excite you and motivate you, and give you a sense as to what it's like to live the life of a true 'Coastie'.

Ken's passion and excitement for his home State and country is catching, in spite of his being widely travelled and having seen and photographed places all around the world. I support his vision to see the project grow to encapsulate the heart and soul of other regions throughout New South Wales and Australia. He pays homage to his own beginnings and created this opportunity for aspiring photographers to be involved and publish their work. He is excited to see the project duplicated and reveal the hidden talents of other budding photographers and the true identity and beauty of individual regions through the eyes of those who know them best—the locals. I congratulate Ken Duncan on the magnificent success of *Coastal Paradise Revealed* and hope to see the same project outworked in other iconic regions across New South Wales and Australia.

WYONG DISTRICT CRICKET CLUB CENTENARY

Mr DARREN WEBBER (Wyang) [6.45 p.m.]: It is appropriate for me to inform the House about Wyong District Cricket Club's centenary celebration moments after the mighty Michael Clarke became the first Australian cricket player to score four double centuries in a calendar year, after this morning's woeful start. Last Saturday night I was privileged to attend the Wyong District Cricket Club's dinner celebrating 100 years. This magnificent showcase of achievements of this great club was attended by over 300 guests packed into the Wyong Rugby League Club. It was fitting to hold the event at the rugby league club as it celebrated its centenary a few years back. Both clubs share the green and gold club colours and the kangaroo as club mascot. For any community or organisation, 100 years is a fantastic achievement. The Wyong District Cricket Club has been and continues to be one of the strongest Central Coast cricket clubs. I take this opportunity to highlight its contribution to local sport and the local community over the past 100 years.

The club dates back to September 1912 when the Wyong District Cricket Association was formed—the first association on the Central Coast. This association was the culmination of several attempts to get a cricket competition underway. Today the club remembers its inaugural secretary, Mr Frederick Gershom Baker, after whom its hallowed home turf at Baker Park is named. On the celebratory evening club members recalled tales from years past. Proudly in the 1930s the club received several visits from Australia's greatest ever cricketer, Sir Donald Bradman. The Don visited Wyong on a cricket trip and entertained the locals on the piano at the Grand Hotel in Wyong's main street. Bradman liked the town so much that he visited again in 1931—both times playing cricket at the showground. The 100 Years of Wyong District Cricket Club booklet was presented to us on the night, with special thanks to Wyong Shire Council for funding its compilation. The booklet contains the story "Allan Border comes to Wyong".

The story is along the lines, "Australian cricket captain Allan Border had Wyong junior cricketers as the backdrop for his Tetley All Rounder Tea Bags advertisement filmed at the picturesque primary club ground Dooralong in 1991. With Border talking to the cameras the juniors played a game of cricket in the background. As reported in the *Advocate* the game continued for five hours as the film crew sought perfection, with Border taking time out to watch the game, talk to the players and sign autographs. The players involved in the game were not named in the article and it has been a challenge to identify them all." The story continues and is accompanied by a photo of Allan Border with the players.

I do not recall seeing the advertisement on television—I was only 10 years old in 1991. The story demonstrates the calibre of Wyong cricket club and the celebrities from the cricket fraternity who visited the district over the years. Today the club continues to cater for children of all ages as they embark on their dreams of one day wearing the baggy green through to the more senior players who play just for enjoyment and the social aspects of the great game of cricket. Wyong District Cricket Club President, Mr Doug Trigg, whom I first met when I handed over a cheque for \$32,670 under the Community Building Partnership Program last year to upgrade the Wyong cricket practice nets—appropriately in its centenary year—said:

Thus we are here to celebrate—be it 134 years since the match against Blue Gum Flat, 115 years since the birth of Wyong Albion, 100 years since the formation of the Wyong District Cricket Association and 44 years since the amalgamation of Wyong and Tuggerah Cricket Clubs to form the current Wyong District Cricket Club.

Mr Trigg was alluding to the fact that the cultural heritage and significance of the club spans further back than 100 years. I have paid credit previously to the role of volunteers in making sporting groups successful. Once again I highlight the important role played by mums, dads, grandparents and friends who contribute time and money to ensure the ongoing success of sporting groups. Through these means sporting organisations are able to give back so much to their community. I congratulate Wyong District Cricket Club and pay tribute to it in its centenary year. I thank all former and current club members for their contribution to their team and club, also to the Wyong township and entire shire. I am humbled and proud to have two great clubs in my electorate—the

Wyong Rugby League Club and the Wyong District Cricket Club—both celebrating their centenary years within a couple of years of each other. It is great for the local area, and we will continue to hold celebrations for the rest of the season.

CESSNOCK CITY COUNCIL

Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) [6.50 p.m.]: It is incredibly unfortunate that, with a heavy heart and genuine reluctance, today I speak about the appalling state of Cessnock City Council. Cessnock council covers 70 per cent of the Cessnock electorate I have the honour to serve. However, having been lobbied strongly by people from all backgrounds since being elected to this place, the time finally has arrived for me to speak up. The "rot" of Cessnock council is first and foremost led by the current general manager, Ms Lea Rosser. She was not reinstated to any of her previous four contracts with local or State government departments, either having either failed to fulfil her five-year term of agreement or having been moved on as soon as she completed her term.

As of today, with two years of hindsight and costs in excess of \$1 million, the good ratepayers of the Cessnock Local Government Association continue to be punished for their recruitment choice of Ms Rosser at a measurable wage cost of \$1,000 per day and an immeasurable cost of a council forced to navel gaze and protect its back while being bullied and harassed by the executive. In February this year, with extreme, evidence-based concerns about performance and inadequacies, the Cessnock councillors of all political persuasions—Labor, Liberal, National, Independent and Greens—resolved to sack the general manager.

The general manager was not present at that meeting and the acting general manager ruled that the action was inappropriate and would have to wait for a further two weeks. What happened in the next two weeks? The general manager miraculously returned from two months of long illness. She submitted a report of corrupt conduct to the Division of Local Government, the Ombudsman and the Independent Commission Against Corruption. This meant that she could invoke the whistleblowers protection Act. I state on record that I have total respect for the whistleblowers protection Act which gives people an opportunity to disclose information about corruption, but the whistleblowers protection Act was not designed to protect incompetence.

It is crucial to note the important point that the Cessnock councillors were not seeking to sack Ms Rosser over a report of allegations to the Independent Commission Against Corruption. At that time they had no knowledge of the Independent Commission Against Corruption report. The councillors were seeking to sack Ms Rosser because of ongoing performance issues, which have been raised by councillors of all political persuasions over the past couple of years. An example of their concern includes Ms Rosser's inability to attend work and Cessnock Local Government Association meetings. Ms Rosser resides in Sydney and councillors have told me that it is uncommon for her to spend a full five days in Cessnock. Other examples of performance issues include an inability to communicate with councillors, an inability to meet with the community and community groups, an inability to include agenda items on the papers as requested by councillors and/or communicate with them about the reason an agenda item had not been included, and an inability to address and implement resolutions of council.

Ms Rosser also exhibited an inability to address bullying and harassment activities of some of her executive, which, apart from subtle and behind-the-scenes actions that led to three motions of no confidence in her by staff, included Acting General Manager Mike Brady on two occasions standing up in council meetings acting out of control, screaming, yelling and pointing at councillors. Ms Rosser has failed to address three motions of no confidence in her moved by staff; she has allowed a staff culture that is highlighted by people covering their back and say nothing; and she has failed on a number of occasions to provide honest and accurate information to councillors about expenses. For example, the general manager moved from a purpose-built office upstairs and constructed a new downstairs area at a cost of just \$500. If Ms Rosser can build an office for \$500, she could rebuild the State with a couple of thousand dollars.

Ms Rosser has failed to address allegations that she has improperly recruited persons based on their religious belief, in a form of positive discrimination. It has been suggested that people of the same religious belief as her have been given unnecessary and preferential treatment in their recruitment. Three of the four current directors share her religion, which is a minority religion. It is a staggering statistic of 33 million to one that that would happen in a single council. No-one should lose sight of the fact that the general manager convinced the former mayor to take a case to the Supreme Court involving the council against the councillors at a cost of approximately \$1 million to date.

The general manager is protected by the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act and the whistleblowers protection Act. This leaves the Cessnock council lame and impotent because it does not have the ability to performance manage the general manager. The community of Cessnock loses every single day. To use an entirely noble and worthy piece of legislation to protect one's position, despite the failures of personal performance, is nothing other than an abuse. It is a treacherous and morally corrupt act. A person of true courage and integrity would face reality and simply resign.

MR ROBERT MITREVSKI LEGAL FEES

Mr ANDREW CORNWELL (Charlestown) [6.55 p.m.]: I inform the House of the continuing saga endured by my constituent Mr Robert Mitrevski. In early 2009 a writ was placed over a property belonging to my constituent at 33 Janet St, Jesmond, by a Mr and Mrs George and Vera Bakovski from Rockdale, Sydney, in relation to a civil debt claim. The debt owed to the Bakovskis was by a person of the same name, but it was not my constituent. When Mr Mitrevski became aware of the writ, he engaged the services of Wayne Condon of Condon Legal, Kogarah. Mr Condon communicated the error to the Bakovskis' solicitor, Mr Bruce Macdonald, of Bruce Macdonald Lawyers. Despite this communication, the plaintiffs refused to remove the writ. The matter was heard in the Supreme Court on 11 May 2009. Mr Mitrevski then signed handwritten consent orders. These orders stated that:

1. That the first and second defendants Mr George Barkovski and Mrs Vera Barkovski agree to remove the Supreme Court writ dealing with AE 595366 against folio 6/19749 owed by Mr Robert Mitrevski.
2. That the removal of writ AE 595366 be lodged with the Department of Lands within 24 hours as of the date of these orders.
3. That there is no application for costs.

If Mr Mitrevski had not signed these consent orders, particularly item 3 regarding costs, I am led to believe that he would have been entitled to seek costs from the Bakovskis. Signing these consent orders removed that option. Mr Mitrevski claims that his solicitor informed him that he would be able to seek compensation from government because it was a "government error." I wrote about this matter to LawCover, which replied:

Neither Mr Condon nor I understand the basis upon which Mr Mitrevski can believe that his own personal legal costs could be reimbursed by the Government.

Mr Mitrevski's view was based upon the advice of his solicitor and confirmed in a letter dated 23 September 2009, which states:

... it is our opinion that the State Government is responsible.

The letter is signed by Wayne Condon from Condon Legal Pty Ltd. Furthermore, Mr Mitrevski was in no fit state to sign a handwritten document waiving his rights to apply for costs as he was undergoing treatment for depression at the time. His psychologist has confirmed this, stating:

Please find this a letter of evidence that Mr Robert Mitrevski has been attending counselling sessions since February 2008, being referred by his treating General Practitioner ...

Initially Robert's diagnosis was that of an Adjustment Disorder with Mixed Anxiety and Depression, however due to ongoing pain symptoms associated with a back injury, along with a mistaken identity issue, his disorder has developed into a Major Depression. I noticed a significant drop in Mr Robert Mitrevski's mental health in April/May 2009, when he began to suffer from a Major Depressive Disorder.

Mr Mitrevski now has to go back to the courts, despite the fact that he has suffered considerable financial and emotional loss through no fault of his own. I wrote to LawCover and they would not countenance an ex gratia payment. Therefore, Mr Mitrevski will be subjected to the same stress and anxiety that coincided with his emotional state in 2009. I urge LawCover and the legal profession to look closely at Mr Mitrevski's case and to assist him to correct the situation in which he has found himself. This case has been ongoing for some time. Through his own diligence, Robert Mitrevski has pursued every potential avenue available to him. I wrote to LawCover to see if they would consider the case and allow him the opportunity to apply for an ex gratia payment rather than having to go back to court. However, this was denied. LawCover claims that Mr Mitrevski's solicitor said he could not understand why Mr Mitrevski would have the impression that he could claim compensation from the State Government. A letter signed by Wayne Condon of Condon Legal states:

... it is our opinion that the State Government is responsible.

This has been a longstanding issue of injustice. It has placed a terrible strain upon my constituent and it is now incumbent upon the legal profession to correct it. Mr Mitrevski has consistently received bad advice and his trust in the legal profession needs to be restored. The legal profession needs to help him.

LIFESTART NEPEAN GALA DINNER

DON BOSCO YOUTH AND RECREATION CENTRE

Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa) [7.00 p.m.]: I inform the House of two important events that I attended in my electorate in October 2012. I was honoured to attend the Lifestart Nepean Gala Dinner on Saturday 6 October 2012. The Gala night was the 10-year anniversary celebration of Lifestart Nepean, which supports children living with a disability and their families. Lifestart is a program for children with disabilities or delays in development. The program is designed for early childhood intervention and is also available for school-age children. It was founded in 1996 in Turrumurra as the vision of eight families. There are now seven branches operating across Sydney, providing support to over 700 children and their families.

The Nepean branch, which is located in St Marys, was opened in 2002. Since opening, Lifestart Nepean has supported more than 50 children and their families every single year. The current manager, Deborah Emelhain, has been with the Nepean branch for 8½ of the past 10 years. What became clear through all the moving stories I heard on the gala night was the care and passion of Deb and all the staff for the children and families they help. I cannot better explain the value of the service that Lifestart provides than to quote Amanda, who is the mother of a little boy named Daniel. Daniel was diagnosed with moderate global development delay and then a moderate to severe intellectual disability. She states:

I don't know what I would have done without a centre like Lifestart to attend. The staff are wonderful. We are always greeted with a warm, welcoming smile by Annette who brightens up the centre. When the day comes for Daniel to go to school and we need to say goodbye, that's going to be a very sad day. After all the help and support they have given us I want to become an ambassador and a volunteer to assist the staff to help other parents just like me.

I take this opportunity to acknowledge all the dedicated staff and volunteers at Lifestart Nepean and thank them for the opportunity to be involved in their celebrations. We raised a significant sum of money at the gala night. I was pleased to be able to bid in an auction for a very beautiful handcrafted quilt that was made with great care and love by a grandmother. Two of her grandchildren are young people in Lifestart Nepean's care and even though she was quite ill at the time she fashioned this quilt because that was her way of giving back to Lifestart Nepean. I was honoured and proud to be the successful bidder for that quilt.

I also inform the House about a different service in my electorate called the John Bosco Youth and Recreation Centre. John Bosco was born on 16 August 1815 in northern Italy to a poor farming family. His father died when John was two years old. The story of John's remarkable life often begins with an anecdote from his youth. When John was a young boy of nine, he was walking along a dirt road with his mother when he saw the parish priest approaching. His face broke into a big smile and he said clearly, "Hello Father." The priest gravely bowed his head and passed by. "Mum, he didn't even see me", John said. His mum replied, "Priests are busy son." John said, "But our Lord always had time for children. Mum, when I become a priest, I'll always have time for children."

Despite struggling with poverty, he learnt to read and write and became a priest. He was then called Don "Father" Bosco. He dedicated his life to engaging young people in ways that were interesting to them and instilled in them faith and a new way of living. Don "Father" Bosco overcame many challenges during his life. He set up a new religious order in the 1850s called the Salesian Society while an anti-church Italian government was in power. The Salesian Society's mission was and still is to spend their lives in the service of Jesus Christ as friends, ministers and educators to young people. The society grew quickly and came to Australia in 1954. The Don Bosco Youth and Recreation Centre in St Marys is a living example of the Salesian mission.

The purpose of the centre is to engage with the young people who attend, particularly those most in need, and help them become responsible and happy people. The centre provides a safe, fun environment and the opportunity for young people to use their leisure time in creative and positive ways. The facilities include a basketball court, pit trampolines, billiard tables, table tennis tables, a canteen and meeting areas for groups. The courts are used for basketball, netball, volleyball, cricket and soccer. The centre is open to all young people and is free to use six days a week. I would like to place on the record the New South Wales Parliament's great thanks to the sisters and fathers who dedicate their life to serving the young people in the community.

BANKSTOWN DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SUPPORT SERVICES

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) [7.05 p.m.]: Earlier this month I met with representatives from key organisations and community leaders in Bankstown to discuss strategies to address domestic violence in our community. I take this opportunity to draw this issue to the attention of the House and highlight the outcomes of this meeting. I stress also that while this is obviously a highly emotional issue, it is one I have sought to approach in an apolitical matter. I genuinely believe that both sides of the House have much in common on this issue and it is in the interest of the whole community for us to work together on this matter.

Recent developments, such as the announcement of the Federal royal commission into sexual abuse in Australian institutions, have proved that bipartisanship is not dead and that every now and then political differences can be put aside in order to do the right thing. Domestic violence is an area that would benefit from this approach. One of the conclusions that became apparent as a result of the roundtable discussion was that there is a gap in domestic violence services in the greater Bankstown area. Several providers have been inundated with requests for assistance and are unable to cope with the workload.

That being said, there are a number of excellent services in the Bankstown area for women who experience domestic violence. Bankstown Women's Health Centre assists women who are experiencing domestic violence. The centre works to identify potential victims of domestic violence who might present with a physical injury or emotional distress. I acknowledge Kristina Brenner and all the staff at the Bankstown Women's Health Centre for the great work they do for women in my community. Mary's Place provides support accommodation and assistance programs for women and their children who are experiencing domestic violence. I commend Monica Yani, Ola Obolo and the staff at Mary's Place.

St Jude's Refuge assists men, some of whom are victims of domestic violence. I acknowledge Sue Pennell who contributed to the roundtable discussion and was able to provide a unique perspective on domestic violence affecting men and the assistance programs run by St Jude's. The Muslim Women's Association also provides services for women experiencing domestic violence. I acknowledge Wafa Zaim and Maha Abdo for the great work they do and the unique perspective they brought to the roundtable. They have supported women for many years in the Bankstown area. I also acknowledge Jenny Ashwood of the Sydney Women's Counselling Service, who was able to offer her expertise and experience with women suffering from domestic violence.

I acknowledge Bernadette Fleeton, who is the Family and Domestic Violence Director for the South West Area Health. Ms Fleeton outlined her work with Bankstown police and the Staying Home Leaving Violence program. This program provides women who experience domestic violence with the opportunity to remain at home and have their partner removed from the premises. I understand there may be potential for this program to commence in Bankstown in the new year. I hope that this service will soon be available in my community. Vivian Fallah of the Benevolent Society outlined the Brighter Futures program, which provides choices for women and children experiencing domestic violence, whether or not they leave the home. The focus of the Benevolent Society is on the protection of children and ensuring that children do not fall victim to domestic violence.

Louna Heloi of the Chester Hill Neighbourhood Centre works with the Benevolent Society taking referrals from the Brighter Futures program. The centre provides a large number of programs, including crisis assistance and community participation programs. I would like to thank all of the participants in the roundtable discussion. There was truly a staggering body of knowledge and experience present at the discussion and we all benefited from the collective wisdom. It is our goal to have all the service providers come together and to outline how Bankstown can best support women in domestic violence circumstances. We hope to identify the services that are missing from Bankstown that we need to assist victims of domestic violence. I will be the member of Parliament representative at the roundtable.

Approximately eight years ago crisis accommodation was closed, following reforms within the industry and proposals of other options. It is now timely to review the accommodation provided to women in these circumstances, whether it is short term crisis accommodation or longer or medium-term opportunities for housing; where they are housed; and the protection they are provided when they are experiencing domestic violence. I thank all the participants in the roundtable discussion and I look forward to working with the service providers in the future to assist women who are directly impacted by domestic violence.

NORTH RAMSGATE AMATEUR SWIMMING CLUB

Mr JOHN FLOWERS (Rockdale) [7.10 p.m.]: The North Ramsgate Amateur Swimming Club, which is in my electorate, is entering its eightieth season. Before providing members with more detail about the club,

I make special mention of Mr Phil Dean, the president of the club, who is passionate about not only the continuation of the club's fine and proud history but also the continuation of this local institution for years to come. The story of the North Ramsgate Amateur Swimming Club begins in the home of Mr R. Evans in Hillview Street, Ramsgate in September 1932. An enthusiastic group of young men decided to form a club that would promote social activity and local swimming events. The club's name was decided upon to distinguish it from the Ramsgate Surf Life Saving and Swimming Club. The club commenced activities at Pemberton Ramsgate Baths. For the locals, Ramsgate Baths was more than a place to exercise; it was a hub of social activity. It was a place to meet with friends and to enjoy the company of others. In 2012 the site of the old Ramsgate Baths is now occupied by a Coles supermarket.

Mr Evans became the first president of the club and Wally Kirsop was the first secretary, and they were assisted by a board of officials comprising B. Sear, H. Fleming, B. Watson, W. Corbett, H. Donegan and J. Mallroy. After the club's junior team won the New South Wales five by 110 yards junior relay, breaking the State's swimming record, the members knew its future was bright. Another club member, Doug Black, went on to swim 55 yards in 27 seconds, defeating Australian Olympian Bill Kendall. That was a remarkable accomplishment and Doug was the first Australian to achieve that feat.

The list of success stories goes on: Garth Cooper won the 100 yards freestyle championship and Bruce Bourke was the first Australian to swim 110 yards in under a minute. It could be said that Bruce set the bar high for Australian swimming. To this day, a long list of renowned Australian swimmers has led from the front in the international arena. Many other successful Australian swimmers have emerged from the club, including Garry Chapman, Neville Hayes and Alan Wood. These remarkable achievements are testament to the culture of this club over many years. With great sadness, the club mourned the loss of Pop Pemberton, the owner of the club, in 1968. The Pemberton family is synonymous with the Ramsgate community. His legacy remains intact at Pemberton Reserve.

Over the course of time, the North Ramsgate Amateur Swimming Club relocated. In 1970, following the closure of Ramsgate Baths, the club found its new home at the Sans Souci Olympic Pool. In October 2001 the club moved to Carss Park Olympic Pool, where it still continues to hold training sessions every Sunday morning from 7.30 a.m. to 9.00 a.m. during the summer swimming season. As one of the oldest swimming clubs in New South Wales, with a longstanding and proud tradition of being family-oriented and suitable for those of all ages and abilities, I strongly encourage anyone who was looking to get fit or simply to have a fun time with friends in the pool to get involved with the North Ramsgate Amateur Swimming Club. For 80 years this club has been a shining example of why grassroots, community groups that have energetic and passionate local members are so successful. This club speaks volumes about the best attributes of the Rockdale community, and I am pleased to be able to acknowledge its good work in this place today.

MENAI BUSINESS AWARDS

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Menai) [7.15 p.m.]: I draw the attention of the House to the recent winners of the Menai Business Awards, which were held last Tuesday. This year marks the twelfth Menai District Business Awards, which were proudly sponsored again by the Commonwealth Bank. Owning a small business is never an easy job, but our communities rely on the services provided by our hairdressers, childcare centres, clothing stores, gift shops, restaurants and I must not forget our favourite coffee spots. Each year I have the pleasure of seeing local business owners acknowledged for their hard work and for the service they provide to the area.

This year the field was full of deserving finalists and I am sure that the judging panel had a hard time selecting the winning businesses. I was told that they received more than 4,200 nominations, on behalf of 66 businesses, which is testament to the many deserving businesses in the Menai area. The finalists were separated into 14 categories: animal services; automotive services; beauty services; cafe and takeaway; education; fashion; fitness; training and recreation; fresh produce; general retail; health care; home and trade services; hospitality; professional services; and real estate services.

One of the first winners on the night was Carter Road Animal Practice, which has been serving the area for 23 years. Menai had a much smaller population when the practice first opened. The Menai High School was opened only a year earlier. Members can imagine how much the practice has changed over the years. My cat, Sabrina, has been seeing Kelvin Clarke, the vet, for the past eight years. Each time I take her to the practice Kelvin shows me a new piece of equipment or tells me a success story about a pet he has helped. He and his team are very hard working and I know he was humbled to win. He paid special tribute to finalists Allison Crescent Veterinary Hospital and Heavenly Hounds Dog Grooming.

I was thrilled that two of my favourite cafes were honoured with an award. The winner, Sandra, from Cheryl's Patisserie and Bakery, was unable to attend the award ceremony, but I can assure members that she makes fabulous goodies that I often enjoy after my Illawong street stall. While I am at my Bangor street stall, I always get a coffee at Much More Than Coffee which really does sell much more than coffee. I have been known to walk in for a coffee and to walk out with a present for a friend or, on occasion, a new handbag or something for me. I congratulate Paula and the ladies that work there on their special highly commended award. Another place I tend to go to after my street stalls is Studio Nine Boutique. Somehow I always seem to spend money there too. We have great stores in my electorate and I congratulate the boutique on being a finalist.

A special moment was seeing Bangor's ABC Schoolwear and Embroidery's mum and daughter team win their category. They work long hours and give that little bit extra and it was nice to see that recognised. An extra special award was presented to Illawong's Colin's Butchery for winning the fresh produce category an extraordinary five years in a row. That is no mean feat when it went up against Steve Roche of Bangor Gourmet Meats who recently won the award for best sausage in traditional Australian category at the recent Australian Meat Industry Council Awards. Steve, who has been in the game for 35 years, will now compete against other State winners at the national championships in Perth next February.

Novak's News Post at Illawong won its category and also won Sutherland Shire Council's Sutherland Shire Hub for Economic Development [SSHED] Outstanding Business Award. I extend my congratulations to it and to some of the winners who were not there on the night: Ultra Tune, in the tough automotive services section and No-Trub Constructions. The awards were collected by Brian Cloney, who really should be known as Mr Menai because of all the hard work he puts into our area. One of my favourite dining picks, Rocksalt Restaurant and Lounge Bar, took home the award in the hospitality category. Owners Willi Ehrmann and Alfons Maurer were unable to attend the awards ceremony because they were busy working. Other winners included: Menai Metro Cuts and Colour Stylists, Play 'N' Around Early Learning Centre, Pilates Insync, Bangor Community Pharmacy, Saxby Cunningham and my former employers, Century 21. I congratulate all the winners.

I do not envy the task of picking the winners each year, but I make special mention of and thank the judging panel: Dennis Briggs, Melinda Allen, Mal Young, Daryl Chipperfield, Trevor Chipperfield, Vic Costi, Lee Crane and Louise Greenup. I must also mention Zoe and her team at Menai Floral Creations for the on-stage and table arrangements on the night. As always, they were exquisite. The new catering team at the club, Miriam and Richard from Moorebank Sports Club—which is on the other side of my electorate—did not disappoint. Last but not least, Club Menai has been undergoing an extensive \$12-million refurbishment. I can only imagine how chaotic it has been over the past few months. It now looks amazing and it was definitely worth any disruption caused. The awards ceremony was the first function held in the refurbished club and work was still being done within moments of the function. Club Menai Chief Executive Officer Mike Walker and Marketing Manager Gina Skinner and team put on another incredible night, and I thank them for a fantastic celebration of local achievements. I also thank the sponsors.

COAL SEAM GAS EXPLORATION

Mr JAI ROWELL (Wollondilly) [7.20 p.m.]: Coal seam gas has become a topical conversation not only for politicians and media commentators but also for the average resident who would like to stay informed about an issue that affects us all. This is why I speak today to try to correct some of the mistruths spread by those opposite, the scare tactics disseminated by certain groups and the unbridled politicising of some in this place. But I also wish to outline my current stance on the matter. This is not the first time I have spoken in the House on this topic. Previously I have called for caution—caution about the potential environmental impacts and the need to ensure we do not repeat mistakes such as those seen overseas.

But I have also spoken of caution in equal parts not to derail an industry that is employing hundreds of thousands of people, an industry that is supplying the energy needs of this State, and caution that we should examine the potential risk and benefits to this State as determined by those who specialise in the subject, not the vocal pundits who simply yell the loudest. I speak again, this time because I cannot stand by when a potential application to extend the right to explore or extract gas is being discussed, because last time the former Labor Government was mute and went missing; the community only found out many years later. It is important that members of my community know that their local member stands by them in opposition to it in Oakdale.

I have no desire to be labelled a dissenter simply for the sake of it; I want to know that the work we are doing in the Sydney catchment areas and in Oakdale is not harming the prospects of future generations by

damaging our water supply. I drink this water, my wife and kids drink this water, and many in the House drink this water. It is, in many respects, our most valuable resource. I represent an electorate that houses a large proportion of Sydney's drinking water; in fact, close to 80 per cent. For this reason we must be able to determine the impacts, or lack thereof. I could never understand why Labor handed out exploration licences like lollipops without the full facts at hand. This includes the work done at Oakdale, which has been operating under an exploration licence issued by the former Labor Government. I will stand up for the people of Wollondilly and not support an extension to the application by the company in question until I am satisfied that the work conducted is safe and that appropriate measures are in place to ensure that the work is carried out properly and with due precaution.

I was elected to this place to be the voice of the people without fear or favour, to determine the best course of action based on the information available and to act accordingly. I am but one voice among many in this place but I have heard my electorate loud and clear; it does not want this proposal in Oakdale to proceed any further and nor do I. I do not take this stance idly. I have lobbied the Government to invest the time and resources to obtain further information about the potential impacts to water catchment areas within Wollondilly. This complements some of the policies the Government has produced recently such as the Aquifer Interference Policy, a policy against which any new drilling will be measured.

Furthermore, as part of the Strategic Regional Land Use Policy, strategic regional land use plans have been developed for parts of the State and I have lobbied for the inclusion of the Wollondilly and the Southern Highlands to be mapped as well. I am pleased to note that preliminary work for this has already begun. This work will help to identify significant strategic land within the Wollondilly region to aid in the decision making for future land usage. I strongly support this process and strongly believe that the potential impacts of coal seam gas mining in water catchment lands should be considered as an important part of the process. What amazes me is why this has taken so long. Those opposite seem content to have handed out the licenses without due diligence, without doing the work. These plans are great news for Wollondilly I am glad to be part of a Government that is undertaking the work and getting on with the job. Once the plans are completed, I have every intention of bringing this information to the attention of my community to discuss the best way forward together.

This is not the first improvement we have made in this industry. Despite what is often circulated by some in this place looking for political capital, we have already brought in a raft of new measures. We put a moratorium on fracking when we first came into office; we have banned the use of benzene, toluene, ethylbenzene and xylene, or BTEX chemicals; we have introduced at least 12 new conditions that must be adhered to; and we have increased the rate of monitoring to ensure these regulations are applied. We now have the most stringent system in Australia. Coal seam gas is an important issue and it requires lengthy discussion. I am committed to continuing this discussion, and I am committed to standing side by side with the residents of Wollondilly. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Wollondilly locals such as Greg Seisun, Will Darcy and Brett Cottee, among others, who have tirelessly championed the cause. They wear their hearts on their sleeves and have ensured that this issue remains front and centre. I thank them for their hard work; they are our local heroes.

BARANGAROO DEVELOPMENT

Mr JAMIE PARKER (Balmain) [7.25 p.m.]: I address yet another opaque step in the shonky process that has defined the so-called Barangaroo development process. I have spoken in this House on how the value derived from the Barangaroo deal has deprived the New South Wales Treasury, and thus the people of this State, of up to \$1 billion. I have spoken about the original award-winning Hill Thalys design, which had widespread community support but was destroyed by the avarice of developers and the capitulation of government. And now? Yes, it gets worse: a second casino, without a tender, without a competitive process, backed by the Government; and thanks to Crown Casino engaging former Australian Labor Party secretaries Bitar and Arbib, the Australian Labor Party has now backed the second casino.

The Australian Labor Party seems to have been bought by the claim that the casino will not have poker machines. That was said in Adelaide when the Adelaide casino was built and two years after it was established poker machines were installed. Now there are hundreds and hundreds of poker machines in that casino. We know that Echo Entertainment paid \$100 million for its monopoly licence, but the Premier has hinted that this proposal may not require payment of the same type of licensing fee. We have seen the removal of tendering requirements from the New South Wales Government's unsolicited proposal process—essentially a huge gift to

James Packer and Crown's bid for a second casino. Crown's Barangaroo proposal would have failed the "no viable competition" test, and under the old rules would have been forced to compete against other casino developers.

Under the new rules, the people of New South Wales will never know whether they are getting value for money. There is now no way of knowing whether another operator with a different location may have paid more. New South Wales has been denied the right to test the social costs against the supposed economic benefits. The unsolicited proposals process in my view is deeply anticompetitive and creates at least the perception of deals for mates. I know that is something that we would all be concerned about and not support. We know that every casino creates corruption risks; and one which is approved behind closed doors in an uncompetitive process is starting out under a major cloud.

As we know, the *Sydney Morning Herald* revealed that the requirement for "independent evaluations" of a project to justify not going to tender were removed only two weeks before the proposal by Mr Packer's Crown Ltd was formally lodged with the State Government on 6 September. The change was made on 17 August, a week after the Premier met Mr Packer to discuss the proposal. I agree with the Salvation Army that the last thing we need is another casino. Sydney needs childcare, schools, public transport and light rail—not another casino.

It is ironic that this waterside site which belongs to the people of New South Wales is being appropriated by the Packer empire to build an unnecessary second casino, which will generate huge profits while serving little or no public good. We hear Mr Keating calling for Mr Packer's casino to be built over the water, after the community and this Government resoundingly rejected previous proposals for a hotel over the water. It is very disappointing that both the Labor and Liberal parties are supporting Mr Packer's proposal for a second casino—despite no tender, despite no consultation and despite reports of no casino licence fee. Apparently the rules do not apply when one is a billionaire.

Recently development applications for a central area of Barangaroo have also been released. But when it comes to open space the proposal fails on the proposal for genuine open space for Sydneysiders, with Barangaroo looking more like an exclusive enclave reserved for high rollers and penthouse apartments. The so-called open space is monstered by multistorey developments and seems to be aimed primarily at adding amenity to private residential and retail properties. Why should one billionaire be able to change irrevocably the face of such an iconic harbourside site? Where is the opportunity for Sydneysiders to have their say? Where is the consultation? Where is the competitive tension in the granting of this development? Why is there no opportunity for the people of Sydney to participate in an open process, not only to allow for a tender for this process but also to allow the residents of Sydney to participate?

If Sydney is to have a second casino, plenty of operators could provide high-roller gaming tables or build hotels that would be designed to attract the market. No unique intellectual property brought to the table could justify a closed-door, uncompetitive process. While we continue to oppose the creation of a second casino licence, at the very least the Government should ensure that this State gets the maximum return from this licence. Only The Greens are standing up for the community against this abuse of power, money and influence. The last thing that Sydney needs is another casino, regardless of the location. We call on this Government to ensure a competitive outcome, to ensure that tenders are submitted using a clear and transparent process, and to ensure that the people of Sydney have the maximum return on what have been, at least until now, public assets.

KIAMA ELECTORATE SCHOOLS

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) [7.30 p.m.]: I compliment and commend the hardworking principals, teachers and staff at our public schools right across New South Wales. In fact, in this speech I will highlight the importance of public education to New South Wales and to the New South Wales community. I see public education as not a cost to government but a great investment in the future of New South Wales. I think of former members for Kiama—for example, Henry Parkes, who held the seat from 1862 to 1868 and who was one of the greatest pioneers and advocates for public education in New South Wales. I am proud to follow in his footsteps and also to support the same principles. Public education plays an important role in investing in the future of local communities, and my community is certainly no different. I will refer to some of the investments that I have seen made in public schools throughout my electorate in the past few months.

Recently I attended Kiama Public School, where I witnessed not just the opening but also the progression of an outdoor classroom. Students and teachers, as well as the parents and citizens association, have

invested in this outdoor classroom as a new experience for students. It is unlike others that I have seen around the State. The students have been responsible for taking care of the garden, and investing in and understanding sustainability and ecology in agriculture. I am pleased that the teachers, particularly Marie Elson, have ensured that students have such a broad and outstanding education in this area. The students gave me a tour of the garden, where I looked at all the plant life, which included a considerable bush tucker component. The students showed me the work they have done and what they have learnt. I was interested to see how deep their understanding was of everything in their garden, which also provided space to reflect as well as to engage in other artistic and cultural activities.

I visited the school to announce a government grant of \$2,500 from the Environmental Trust Fund to assist with the development of that project. I had attended its opening a few months earlier—and I acknowledge Kiama council's support for the project. I also attended the opening of the living classroom at Mt Terry Public School, and I commend its principal and teachers as well as volunteers for the development of that garden. In and around my electorate I cannot go past my old high school, Bombaderry High School, which I have been doing my utmost to support. Only a few months ago I took part in the opening of a new school hall to house its new gymnasium facilities. I am very pleased about that. A few weeks ago I announced that a new science laboratory will be built at Bombaderry High School. I am pleased to know that some of the Bunsen burner stains that I left there when I was student will be repaired.

As the local member I was able to assist with the upgrade of the school's garden by providing a grant from the Community Building Partnership program. In a few weeks I will be handing over a cheque from the Premier of New South Wales for iPads to assist students with disabilities. Since my election to this place I have opened a new gymnasium at Kiama High School. During the parliamentary sitting week I sought leave to attend the Student Leaders Forum, and was impressed with how the school invited students from primary schools around the district to meet with school leaders and talk about what leadership meant to them. I also successfully sought funding from the Minister for Education for upgrades to the home economics classrooms at Kiama High School. I am delighted with that investment. I also obtained passive heating and cooling grants for the school.

Burrawang Public School in my electorate has also been the beneficiary of money from the Community Building Partnership program for new playground equipment. The Department of Education required it to remove its old copper log playground equipment but did not provide funding for a replacement. I was delighted to partner with the parents and citizens association and support the installation of new playground equipment. I commend Phil Lavers for his extraordinary efforts to make sure that students at the school have the playground equipment they need.

Coming through the public school system, I experienced first-hand the need to support students with disabilities. Having a visual impairment, I was able to see literally first-hand the difficulties confronted by students with disabilities in the public education system. I will continue to make sure that those who are part of our school system, regardless of whether they have a disability, receive the support they need in order to compete on a level playing field. I feel very strongly about that. I am pleased that this Government had made major investments in supporting students with disabilities. Sir Claus Moser said, "Education costs money, but then so does ignorance", and I certainly believe that. We must support public education; it gives so much more back to the State than we have ever given it. I hope we continue to ensure that our teachers, our principals and their staff have the resources they need to provide a quality public education system in the State of New South Wales.

NARRABEEN SPORTS HIGH SCHOOL

Mr ROB STOKES (Pittwater—Parliamentary Secretary) [7.35 p.m.]: Like my colleague and friend the member for Kiama, I want to emphasise the importance of schools in my community. Schools are important not just as places for children to receive information—in fact, that is peripheral to their real value—but as venues for community. If a meaning of life is the sum of the people we meet and how these interactions affect us all, then schools are a crucial venue for building our character and our shared humanity. Our schools are becoming more important as so many other venues for communities, such as service clubs, churches, youth groups and community associations, have endured long-term decline. That is a phenomenon researched by Harvard Professor of Public Policy Robert Putnam in his seminal work on social decline in the United States, "Bowling Alone". School is important because in a society increasingly marked by social cleavage, schools, particularly public schools and Catholic parish schools, provide a venue for shared experience, despite household income, ethnicity or family structure. As Dr Charles Murray noted at the Centre for Independent Studies John Bonython lecture in Sydney earlier this week:

In a society often separated between the haves and the have-nots, shared experience and the empathy it generates will become a more and more important social objective, and empathy a more vital virtue.

Pittwater is blessed with wonderful schools and wonderful teachers. Tonight I refer to one school that is currently undergoing transformative change, developing as a forum for community and learning and reasserting its role as the heart of its local community. This school is Narrabeen Sports High School, a school with a proud heritage first as a separate girls and then boys high school, and later as a specialist sports high school. Narrabeen Sports High School has produced some extraordinary leaders. In academia, it has produced people like Bruce Kercher, Chair of the Academic Senate and Emeritus Professor of Law at Macquarie University; and Peter Gillies, Professor of Business Law at Macquarie University. In governance, there is Marlene Jeffrey, the spouse of former Governor-General Michael Jeffrey; Jim Longley, a former Liberal Government Minister and member for Pittwater; Cherie Burton, the member for Kogarah and a former Labor Minister; Phillip Smiles, also a former Minister and member for North Shore; and John Alexander, the tennis great and current member for Bennelong in the Federal Parliament.

Jill Dubois, my electorate officer in Pittwater, is also a Narrabeen old girl. In film, there are people like Baz Luhrmann. In sport, there is an incredible array of names: surfers like Simon Anderson and Nat Young; footballers like Steve Menzies, Mark Gerrard and Daniel Gartner; and Olympians like Scott Miller and Rod van Buizen, and so many more. Yet it is fair to say that in recent years this proud school has struggled. In 2012 Principal Barry Miller arrived from Byron High School with high praise from the local member, the member for Ballina, Don Page, to a school that faced a declining enrolment and some ageing facilities. Yet, under the leadership of Mr Miller and an energised staff, Narrabeen High is being transformed to build on its strengths and its history, and to meet the needs and aspirations of its students. In this light, I am reminded of a quote from Plato that I learnt:

Do not train a child to learn by force or harshness; but direct them to it by what amuses their minds, so that you may be better able to discover with accuracy the peculiar bent of the genius of each.

That is exactly what Narrabeen Sports High School has sought to do through the new Northern Sydney Scholastic and Sports Academy, which is providing a wonderful new educational offering to elite and emerging athletes, blending sporting and academic excellence with incredible new facilities provided in a partnership with the New South Wales Government, Pittwater Council and the Australia Football League as well as local sports coaches. It builds on the incredible sports resources of the adjacent Pittwater Sports Centre, operated by the Forrest family, the Northern Beaches Indoor Sports Centre on the other side of the school, and the Sydney Academy of Sport just down the road, which is operated by NSW Sport and Recreation.

I congratulate everyone involved—Principal Barry Miller, Deputy Principal Lisa Peacock, the wonderful staff and parents, and Vicky Smith of the parents and citizens association. I also congratulate my brother, Peter Stokes, the Director of Sports Development at the school. He has been crucial in delivering the vision for a stronger public high school to serve our community and is a passionate advocate, along with all the staff, for public education. Pete, I am proud to be your little brother. I also thank Anthony Brooks from the Australian Football League and particularly Pittwater Council staff: General Manager Mark Ferguson, Les Munn, Steve Lawler and the councillors, including retired mayor Harvey Rose, who ensured that this project received council funding. I congratulate Narrabeen Sports High School, a school with a great past and a bright future. It is a wonderful venue to build our community and the character of our people.

Private members' statements concluded.

**The House adjourned, pursuant to standing and sessional orders, at 7.39 p.m. until
Tuesday 19 February 2013 at 12 noon.**
