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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Monday 25 March 2013

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

The Speaker read the Prayer and acknowledgement of country.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Notices of Motions

General Business Notices of Motions (General Notices) given.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

WESTPAC LIFE SAVER RESCUE HELICOPTER

Mr BRUCE NOTLEY-SMITH (Coogee) [12.05 p.m.]: Today I inform the House about the Westpac Life Saver Rescue Helicopter organisation's fourth annual open day held yesterday at its Sydney home at Cape Banks Base in La Perouse. The Westpac Life Saver Rescue Helicopter is the largest non-profit search and rescue aviation service in New South Wales, on standby to respond to missions 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year with a sole purpose: to save lives. Every March the Westpac Life Saver Rescue Helicopter organisation conducts its open day by inviting the community to tour its facilities and meet crews from emergency services organisations from across New South Wales with which the helicopter service has a strong partnership. Amongst organisations that conducted displays were the NSW Police Force and its agencies—such as the Bomb Squad, Highway Patrol, Public Order and Riot Squad, and Marine Area Command—NSW Rural Fire Service, Marine Rescue NSW, Ambulance Service of NSW, Australian Maritime Safety Authority, NSW State Emergency Service, Australian Federal Police and the Department of Defence.

This year marks the fortieth anniversary of the helicopter service since its inaugural flight on 29 September 1973, when it provided a basic beach surveillance service. During the past 40 years the helicopter has successfully performed 22,500 missions at no cost to the people rescued. Missions included rescuing people involved in boating accidents; locating active emergency distress beacons; rescuing swimmers, divers, kite surfers and kayakers; conducting beach and shark surveillance; and rescuing missing or overdue bushwalkers—as well as assisting the State Emergency Service with flood relief in rural areas. Last year the helicopter spent three weeks in Wagga Wagga and last month was relocated to Port Macquarie to assist with flood rescue operations. The helicopter benefits from community support through donations and fundraising from community organisations. At least half its \$5 million annual running costs are sourced from these donations, while it continues to enjoy longstanding corporate sponsorship from Westpac. Yesterday alone nearly \$7,000 was raised through sales from raffle tickets, a sausage sizzle and merchandise from the more than 1,500 people who turned out for the day.

The open day provided plenty to see and do, including demonstrations of a simulated helicopter winch rescue, the Police Rescue and Bomb Disposal Unit's bomb robot, and the Federal Police Sydney Airport Currency Detection Dogs. This was not my first visit to the base: during the 2011 election campaign I accompanied the Premier to the base to pledge our support for the service. Last year we again attended the base when this Government followed through on its support promise with the allocation of \$1.5 million to assist the rescue helicopter service. The funding enabled the Sydney service to return to 24/7 cover after previously cancelling night-time operations, and to extend the South Coast-Moruya daytime service from three months to a year-round service. The funding ensures also that the service is able to respond to natural disasters anywhere in New South Wales to assist local and regional State Emergency Service units and fire crews. Since receiving the funding from this Government last June the number of rescue missions has increased substantially. Since July more than 260 missions have been carried out—20 in the past 10 days.

I thank the wonderful rescue helicopter team for their incredible work that ensures that the people of New South Wales are protected. The team is constantly on call to respond to emergencies, whether it be unexpected conditions at the beach, a lost bushwalker, or people trying to stay safe amidst flooding around their homes. I particularly acknowledge board member Graham Ford; chairman of the board of directors Jon Donohoe, AM; and the organisation's chief executive officer, Stephen Leahy, who also helps to manage the service on a day-to-day basis. It is an important service for New South Wales. The open day was a huge success and people were queuing for the buses at Heffron Park. I am pleased that the wider community had the opportunity to visit the base and see firsthand the great relationship that our emergency services have with each other. I am convinced that the strong bond between all the organisations provides New South Wales with the best emergency services anywhere in the world. It is my pleasure to endorse in the House the work of these services.

JOHN MACKAY SPORTS CENTRE

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) [12.10 p.m.]: Earlier this month I attended the opening of the John Mackay Sports Centre in Bankstown, which is a magnificent new sporting facility for my community. The John Mackay Sports Centre includes facilities for cricket as well as many other sports. Four cricket nets have been provided for use by the Bankstown District Cricket Club and Bankstown Women's Cricket Club. Other multipurpose facilities can be used for indoor netball and indoor soccer. The campaign for the John Mackay Sports Centre began in 2009. I pay tribute to the Federal member for Banks, Mr Daryl Melham, who was a strong campaigner for this facility and was instrumental in securing the necessary funding from the Federal Labor Government. I acknowledge Mr Jason Clare, the member for Blaxland, who also supported the member for Banks. When I was the mayor of Bankstown I was pleased to offer my support for the facility and its multipurpose nature. Wherever possible community infrastructure should be accessible by all and it is best if it can be used for many purposes.

The John Mackay Sports Centre features a wall displaying the Bankstown Sporting Hall of Fame, which inducted 23 athletes as part of its opening celebrations. The inductees included: swimmer Ian Thorpe, National Rugby League player Hazem el Masri, soccer player Brett Emerton, and swimming coach John Talbot. Other athletes to be inducted into the Bankstown Sporting Hall of Fame were baseball players Brendan Kingman, Gary White, John Stephens and Glenn Williams; Billy "The Kid" Dib for boxing; cricket players Olivia Magno, Michelle Goszko, Sharon Millanta and Therese McGregor; hockey player Toni Cronk; Wal Browning for lawn bowls; John Freedman for rugby union and sailing; Rodney Brown and Jason Van Blerk for soccer; Peter Clout for softball; John Tawadrous for table tennis; Christie Mokotupu for volleyball; and Melissa and Rebecca Rippon for water polo. Former inductees include Steve and Mark Waugh, basketballer Karen Dalton, and Bulldogs legends Steve Mortimer and Terry Lamb.

Bankstown is a community that is well known for its diversity and its vibrant local culture. Bankstown has made an enormous contribution to Australia's sporting culture. The Sporting Hall of Fame is an opportunity to recognise this contribution and pay tribute to the local sportsmen and sportswomen who have made a name for themselves nationally and internationally. Past inductees of the Bankstown Sporting Hall of Fame include cricketers, cyclists, soccer players, swimmers, and rugby league players. The John Mackay Sports Centre was a \$4.2 million project and was primarily funded by the Commonwealth Government, which contributed \$2.7 million. Other contributors included the New South Wales Government, Bankstown City Council, Cricket NSW, Bankstown Sports Club, Revesby Workers Club and Canterbury-Bankstown Rugby League Club.

The facility will be run by the Bankstown District Cricket Club. I acknowledge its President Scott Grant, Secretary Marty Klumpp, Treasurer Erif Dignam, Assistant Secretary Brian Freedman, and Publicity Officer Mick Stephenson for their work to make the project a reality. I serve as patron of the Bankstown Sports Club, which is an integral part of our community. Bankstown Sports Club is an institution not only in Bankstown but throughout south-western Sydney. It funds 40 local sporting organisations and services 8,000 members. Each year the club provides thousands of dollars to community groups and local infrastructure through the ClubGRANTS program and in many other capacities. Since 1985 the Bankstown Sports Club has provided \$60 million in funding to the city of Bankstown. A quarter of this funding has been directed to services for the aged through Bankstown City Aged Care.

The sports centre is named after John Mackay, the former secretary for the Bankstown Sports Club. He was well known for his commitment to sport in Bankstown. John Mackay was instrumental in the construction of the Kevin McCormick Grandstand at Bankstown Cricket Oval. Mr Mackay urged the sports club to finance this facility. In February 2012 I paid tribute to Mr John Mackay, who was an important member of my local

community. Last year he was awarded the Medal of the Order Australia in recognition of more than 30 years of service in Bankstown. I take this opportunity to commend John Mackay for his service to our community. Mr Mackay is both a visionary and a quiet achiever. I acknowledge his wife Janice Mackay, the President of Bankstown Sports Club, Mr John Murray and both the former and current directors. [*Time Expired.*]

ORANGE ELECTORATE AWARD RECIPIENTS

Mr ANDREW GEE (Orange) [12.15 p.m.]: Seniors Week is an opportunity to recognise the outstanding achievements of our seniors across New South Wales. This year the Orange electorate has recognised some outstanding achievers. Mr Robert Ellis of the wonderful town of Molong was named the State winner of the Seniors Week awards in the Lifelong Learning category. Mr Ellis has been a champion of the preservation of local history for many years. He has recently researched the Boer War and has launched a book about the involvement of people in that conflict from Orange and Molong and other towns in the Central West. I was present in Orange last year at the Country Women's Association hall when Robert launched his book that includes his tips and tricks on growing pumpkins. He has been actively involved with the Molong museum to help preserve local history. He is now the chairman of the working party that is planning a spectacular event in 2014 to mark the 150th anniversary of the Molong Show Society, for which he is writing a history of the Molong show. Other committee members include Col Woodhouse and Maureen Kirkwood.

Anthony Gorringer was nominated in the Lifelong Learning category and received a high commendation. Anthony is a former baker, abattoir worker and processing plant employee. Despite being profoundly deaf as a result of meningitis, he changed his career course at aged 50 and successfully completed a TAFE course to become an accountant. He worked for NSW Health in this role and retired at the age of 68. He has also been an administrator for Deaf Lawn Bowls. He plays lawn bowls and is secretary and treasurer for the International Deaf Lawn Bowls Federation and is a current board member of the Deaf Society. He is a worthy nominee for the Lifelong Learning category and is deserving of his high commendation.

Betty McDonald of Lidster was a nominee for the Community Service Award. She is a member of the Nashdale Country Women's Association and has been a Meals on Wheels volunteer in Orange since the service's inception. Each week she volunteers at the Uniting Church's Mustard Tree Café, providing meals for the needy. She is actively involved in the Girl Guides organisation and is a Girl Guides Trefoil Guild member, raising money for girls to go to camps. She mentors the girl guides and their leaders.

Mr Ross Maroney was recognised at the Orange Seniors Week concert, and I presented him with the Community Service Award for his contribution to preserving local history. He came to Orange in 1965 to teach English and French. For six years he wrote a history column titled "Voices From The Past" for the local newspaper, the *Central Western Daily*. He has worked on the interpretative signs that were introduced by Orange City Council and is currently accumulating historical material that can be digitally preserved in the absence of an Orange museum. Mr Maroney also volunteers for the historical society in Orange for two hours every week. Last year Mr Maroney presented the 1927 silent film of Orange that received extensive acclaim. Mr Maroney has been actively involved in the promotion of local history in many ways and means over the years.

I also mention Cudal's favourite daughter, Merle Parrish. Merle won fame on *MasterChef* a couple of seasons ago with her peach blossom cake. Merle has been a fixture at central western community events for many years. In 2008 Merle won the Donna Latter Memorial Trophy for a supreme chocolate cake and received awards in 2007 and 2009 for the most successful competitor at the Royal Easter Show. Merle has published a cookbook, *Merle's Kitchen*, and I am told that a sequel is on its way. She is a treasure of the Central West and has been a mainstay of the Country Women's Association and many community organisations in Cudal and the Central West. Merle is a worthy ambassador for Seniors Week this year. I congratulate all of the 2013 worthy winners in the Central West.

PRIMARY SCHOOL STUDENT SUN PROTECTION

Mr LEE EVANS (Heathcote) [12.20 p.m.]: I address the House today on a matter of utmost importance. That is, sun protection in New South Wales primary schools. Studies indicate that currently two out of three Australians will develop some form of skin cancer before the age of 70. Over 440,000 Australians are treated for skin cancer each year and more than 1,800 people die from skin cancer each year. These figures alone are a national tragedy but they are all the more tragic considering that almost all skin cancers can be prevented with simple sun protection measures. I am sure that all of us in this place know someone who has

been affected—or they have been affected themselves—by this terrible disease. I remember a close family friend who was a builder by trade and who never wore sun protection—he never wore a hat or shirt. His demise from skin cancer was an absolute tragedy of pain and suffering.

Research published in the Medical Journal of Australia in November 2012 reported that the total cost of treating non-melanoma skin cancer in Australia, including diagnostics, treatment and pathology, was \$511 million in 2010. This is estimated to increase to \$703 million by 2015. Thankfully, there is something we can do. Reducing a child's exposure to ultraviolet radiation, especially in the first 15 years of life, significantly reduces the risk of skin cancer later in life. In 2010 more than 1.1 million children were enrolled in New South Wales educational institutions. Those between the ages of five and 12 spend up to seven hours per day 40 weeks per year in the care of a primary school setting. This imposes an enormous responsibility on our schools for the care and protection of our children, but it also provides an enormous opportunity, literally, to save lives. Over the years 42 per cent of schools have seized this opportunity by participating in the voluntary SunSmart program for primary schools. Through this program Cancer Council NSW provides curriculum resources, signage, and assistance in developing a comprehensive sun protection policy.

The reason that these policies are so important is that there is a general lack of understanding about what constitutes adequate sun protection. An online survey of parents of children attending government primary schools in New South Wales found that 49 per cent of children are wearing baseball caps to school, despite the fact that they do not provide adequate protection. The same survey found that 46 per cent of parents wrongly believe that baseball caps do provide adequate protection. We cannot blame parents for this lack of understanding, because there has been a lack of strong guidelines for primary schools. The Department of Education and Communities current "Protection from the sun" guidelines have not been updated since 1997 and include references to "SPF 15" [sun protection factor] sunscreen instead of "SPF 30+" and does not state the necessity for broad-brimmed hats.

However, a national survey of primary schools shows that there is a strong correlation between the presence of a written sun protection policy and levels of awareness and understanding of the need for sun protection among students and parents of students. As encouraging as it is to note that 42 per cent of schools have taken it upon themselves to implement policies, it is staggering to note that 58 per cent of schools do not have a comprehensive sun protection policy. This means that 58 per cent of our students could be exposed to the same danger that ultimately claims 1,800 Australian lives each year. The New South Wales Government, to its credit, is in the process of finalising the "NSW Skin Cancer Prevention Policy 2012-15, Lessening the impact of cancer in NSW", which notes the importance of evidence-based comprehensive sun protection policies. This is a simple, zero-cost reform that could literally save thousands of Australian lives. The Government has the opportunity to implement a policy that can save people's lives and change the present situation where people take no preventive action and when they are aged 50 or 60 realise that they have melanoma. We can and we must turn the tide on this deadly blight.

WOLLONGONG ELECTORATE ST PATRICK'S DAY CELEBRATIONS

Ms NOREEN HAY (Wollongong) [12.25 p.m.]: I am in the House today to place on record my congratulations to the Irish Australian Club (Wollongong) Inc. on another successful St Patrick's Day celebration. The feast of St Patrick is a cultural and religious holiday celebrated annually on 17 March all over the world. It is probably best celebrated by the Irish—with the Australians running a close second. St Patrick's Day is named after the most commonly recognised of the patron saints of Ireland and is always well celebrated in my electorate of Wollongong. I had the pleasure once again of attending the St Patrick's Day festivities at City Diggers Wollongong. I had an enjoyable time singing along with the band Riogh which is steeped in the lively musical traditions of Ireland. Members of the band Alan Morrison, Leigh Piper, Danny Priestly, Lindsay Martin, Johnny Spillane—a well-known whistle player—and Lisa Baraldi were outstanding and the whole auditorium engaged in their Irish tunes.

Mr John Sidoti: The Italian mob.

Ms NOREEN HAY: I know there are a number of ethnicities in this Parliament, including Italian and Greek, who would love to be Irish. We might adopt them one day—when they change their politics. I acknowledge the contribution that the Irish community makes to Wollongong and the entire Illawarra. Special congratulations go to the board of the Irish Australian Club Incorporated, particularly Sandra and Merve Roulston, Cathy McClelland, John Costello, Tony Gleeson, and my husband, Lee Lawler. I give a special mention to Bill Phelan, a longstanding member of the Mount Kembla-Unanderra branch of the Australian Labor

Party. I place on record my acknowledgment of the parliamentary friends of Ireland in the New South Wales Parliament. The Minister in the chair, the Attorney General, has already shown a leaning towards good Irish singing, although I think there could be a little improvement, and I am prepared to give him some guidance.

I acknowledge Caitríona Ingoldsby, Irish Consul General, whom I recently met while attending St Patrick's Day celebrations at Parliament House. For those who may not be aware, both my parents are from Cork, in the south of Ireland. Both of them have passed away now but I try to acknowledge them each year through these speeches. My mother was Nora O'Mahony from Farranree and my father was Tadhg Herlihy from a place called Gurranaברה in Cork city. My mother has one remaining sister, Mary Kenefick, living in Farranree—formerly known as Spangle Hill—Cork. My father is survived by a sister, Bridie Herlihy, living in Killarney, near Cork, and a brother, Christy Herlihy.

St Patrick's Day gives people like me—migrant children of migrant parents—an opportunity to gather together to enjoy all the differences that the multicultural community brings to Australian society. It also gives us an opportunity to remember the contribution that migrants—whether they be Italian, Greek, Macedonian or Irish—have made to this wonderful country, to enjoy a wide range of foods and to hear many different languages spoken. For the benefit of the member for Tamworth, I point out that those migrants have made a great contribution to country music in Australia. Of course, they have also added a great deal to our folk music and participate in the wonderful Illawarra Folk Festival. I thank everybody for making Wollongong such a wonderful place to live.

Mr GREG SMITH (Epping—Attorney General, and Minister for Justice) [12.30 p.m.]: I must respond to the scathing attack on my singing. I celebrated St Patrick's Day by attending a fundraiser for my campaign at the Criterion Hotel.

Mr Greg Piper: Did you declare it?

Mr GREG SMITH: It will be declared. I am pleased to say that it was a successful event. The excellent band The Tokens performed. We sang songs ranging from *The Wild Rover* to *Hail Glorious St Patrick* and *Carrickfergus*.

Ms Noreen Hay: Did you sing well?

Mr GREG SMITH: Yes, we did sing well. People were in tears—and I do not think it was because we sang out of tune. We had an eclectic group of supporters including Koreans, Chinese, Indians and Anglo-Saxons—and even some Irish people. It was a wonderful night. We did two sets of Irish music and some other songs, including a few Johnny Cash classics. I pay tribute to all who attended and, of course, to St Patrick. I thank him for converting the heathen Irish, who have gone on to do great things. I also represented the Hon. Pru Goward representing the Premier at an Aisling Society dinner on Monday night and the Premier and the Federal Leader of the Opposition at a CatholicCare function on Friday night.

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): Order! I point out to the member for Wollongong that it is unwise to criticise the Attorney General's singing ability.

TRIBUTE TO HELEN MANUSU

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) [12.31 p.m.]: I pay tribute to Helen Manus, who has announced that she intends to retire after almost six decades of working on newspapers. Helen is a senior journalist with the *Manning River Times* and Wednesday this week will be her last day of work. Helen's husband, Peter, is also retiring after 23 years at Taree's Speedflow Products. They will both take long service leave until they join the growing band of grey nomads. During her career as a journalist, Helen has worked at the *Great Lakes Advocate*, the *Wingham Chronicle* and the *Manning River Times*. I first met her when I moved to Taree at the beginning of 1981 and when she was working at the *Manning River Times*. Helen has had a wonderful career in journalism.

In 1964, at age 17 and after completing her Leaving Certificate at Taree High School, Helen became the first female cadet journalist at the *Manning River Times*. She was thrust headlong into Taree's community life and covered council meetings, social events, court hearings, sporting events and agricultural shows. In the process Helen developed great relationships with the local police and councillors. I first met her when I took up my duties as a police officer at Taree. We both attended fatal and serious accidents on the Pacific

Highway because she was responsible for reporting those tragic events. I was also a councillor on Greater Taree City Council and Helen often interviewed me and other councillors about what was happening in the local area.

In 1993, while working at the *Great Lakes Advocate*, Helen won the prestigious Prodi Award for news reporting and was named Journalist of the Year for Northern New South Wales for a poignant eye-witness account of a fatal house fire at Black Head. In 1994 she became the first female editor of the *Manning River Times*. During her seven years in that position she won many media awards, including the Spicers Award for Best Country Newspaper in Australia and two E. C. Sommerlad Memorial Awards for Editorial Leadership and Involvement in Local Community Affairs. Helen came into her own as editor and she did a fantastic job. She was honest, she ensured that the newspaper's reporting was balanced and fair, and she lifted its profile. She always put the Manning community first and was a great supporter of local events and achievements.

I was chairman of the local tourism board and she always assisted in promoting the events we organised. In 2006 Helen was also named as one of the inaugural 21 Strong Women of the Manning in celebration of International Women's Day. Helen and Peter are looking forward to spending more time with their three sons and several grandchildren and with their friends at Harrington Waters. They have moved from Lake Head, which is in the electorate of Myall Lakes, to Harrington Waters, which is in the electorate of Port Macquarie. They still have property in Forster, so they have a foot in both camps. I pay tribute to Helen's professionalism and wish her and Peter the very best in their retirement. I told her that she is too young to retire and that former Prime Minister Kevin Rudd said we should work an extra two years so she should stick around, but she and Peter are looking forward to their retirement.

WYEE SEWERAGE INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie) [12.36 p.m.]: Yet again I draw the attention of the House to sewerage services in Wyee. This issue has a long history and it is critical to the local community for a range of reasons. It clearly has an economic impact because Wyee residents must pay high fees for pump-out services or on-site treatment plants. The difference between what they pay and the amount paid by residents of adjoining areas that are fully serviced by Hunter Water Corporation is unacceptable. For three times the amount they receive a much inferior service. Wyee residents are in the low- to medium-income bracket and this situation amounts to social inequity.

The Wyee area is ripe for development and it would be an ideal location for the affordable housing that the State Government says it wants to provide. It is centrally located and the Wyee railway station is an important gateway for commuters. It is also close to the F3, to major centres on the Central Coast and, of course, to the Hunter Valley. Everything stacks up for the area to be considered for future development. Wyee is a complex area because of other issues. The paper subdivision comprising lots 202 to 400 on deposited plan 7506, known as Wyee West, cannot be built on legally. However, about 50 of those lots are occupied with constructions that do not necessarily meet appropriate standards, although they could be approved retrospectively. The area does not have any roads, infrastructure or services and there is a real risk to the health and wellbeing of people living in the area, particular during times of emergency.

I have raised this matter before because nearly all the problems associated with Wyee could be addressed through the provision of sewerage infrastructure. Indeed, the provision of this infrastructure was one of the underlying principles and responsibilities of the Hunter Water Board when the Act was passed in 1938. The Act has been amended further with the rollout of sewer services through programs such as the Priority Sewerage Program—or, as it was known in the Lake Macquarie area, the fringe areas sewerage scheme. It was successfully rolled out in the 1980s from western Lake Macquarie to Morisset, the Morisset peninsula and some of Cooranbong. Sadly, it did not include Wyee.

Since 1991, when I became a councillor on Lake Macquarie City Council, the Hunter Water Corporation has had a number of managing directors—Paul Broad, David Evans, Kevin Young and currently Kim Wood—with whom I have been working closely to try to resolve the matter. The Federal member for Charlton, Mr Greg Combet, has allocated \$6.34 million to Lake Macquarie City Council through the Building Better Regional Communities Program to provide sewerage infrastructure for the area. Approximately 800 lots will be developed under the Wyee Development Fund, but the parties have chosen not to involve Hunter Water because of difficulties in engaging successfully with the corporation.

The decision has been made to use a package treatment plant prepared through the water factory. I believe it is appropriate for the State Government to do this work as it spans the areas of Treasury, the Minister

for Finance and Services, Hunter Water, and the Office of Environment and Heritage, which is involved in approving the 800 lots. The matter must be resolved so that the 800 lots are approved and developed with sewerage and water, and existing areas are not left behind once again and left without those facilities. That would create a situation of haves and have-nots. I call on the Minister and the Government to fix this problem.

POPE FRANCIS

Mr GREG SMITH (Epping—Attorney General, and Minister for Justice) [12.41 p.m.]: My constituents of Epping and those of every other electorate in the State and the nation are delighted at the recent appointment of Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio as Pope Francis. I welcome his election and elevation to that status. He is the first South American to be appointed Pope and, as more than 40 per cent of the world's Catholics come from South America and it is a country of great wealth but also great poverty, it is a most welcome appointment. Notably, Pope Francis has decided to celebrate the Mass of the Last Supper on Holy Thursday in a juvenile prison, where he will wash the feet of 12 young offenders. As the Attorney General, and Minister for Justice and the member for Epping I am heartened by his encouragement of youth and his efforts to turn them away from a life of crime. He has sought to humble himself, as did the founder of Christianity, Jesus Christ, when he washed the feet of 12 people—his Apostles—at the Last Supper.

This is an extraordinary man. He gave up his cardinal's palace to live in a modest apartment. He gave up a chauffeur-driven car and its protection to catch public transport. He worked regularly with the poor in the slums of Argentina—in fact, many of them have been featured in recent times lamenting the fact that he is gone but being thankful for his elevation as Pope. At a time when the world needs a leader with a background of humility and service, it is a great event. The Catholic Church, of which I am a member, has suffered great agony because of the massive breach of trust by some of its clergy over the years, particularly towards children. It is paying for that and for the cover-ups that occurred. The massive problem of child sexual assault breaks the spirit and the soul, and people were trying to address it. Unfortunately, various institutions just moved perpetrators on rather than dealing with the problem either by way of imprisonment or by strict therapy and quarantining perpetrators.

Pope Francis has been attacked, of course. Anybody who attains such a high position in a church will be attacked by those who hate the church or anything to do with God. They claim that he may well have kept quiet during the dictatorial regime in Argentina. But the evidence from liberation theologians does not support this. For example, Leonardo Boff said, "No, he did work." The Jesuit who was punished said, "No, he was working to get me out of trouble and he did." So the liars have been exposed. Pope Francis has suffered his own Calvary just taking on the position. I think the world, certainly the Epping electorate and this House, should be gratified by his appointment. We congratulate him and pray that he has good health and is able to give strong leadership in a world that very much needs it.

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): I endorse those remarks.

CAMDEN SHOW

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON (Camden) [12.45 p.m.]: The 127th annual Camden Show was held last weekend. Once again, the Minister for Fair Trading, the Hon. Anthony Roberts—good Robbo—who is in the Chamber, attended the show with his wife, Alicia, sons, John and Samuel, and his lovely mother. Since 1986 the theme of the Camden Show has been "Still a Country Show." The show is held in the township but surrounded by rich farming land once owned by the Macarthurs. The local schools that have agriculture as part of their curriculums organise exhibits and the students work tirelessly during the year and over the two days of the show, proudly displaying the produce and livestock that they have grown and raised. The schools with this great agricultural tradition are Elderslie High School, Elizabeth Macarthur High School, Camden High School, Macarthur Anglican School, Mount Annan Christian College, Beverly Park Special School, St Gregory's College and Hurlstone Agricultural High School.

The first Camden Show was held in 1886. Mr J. K. Chisholm was the first show president and served until 1908. The 184 show members voted to form the first committee of 25 people. To this day the original Agricultural Horticultural and Industry Hall still houses the exhibits. During World War I committee members who were not overseas serving our country still managed to put the show together in 1915. In 1940 the show was overshadowed by the outbreak of World War II, and the Agricultural Horticultural and Industry Hall was used for voluntary aid detachment for drill training and for Royal Australian Air Force and Army personnel. After the war the show committee was re-formed and has continued successfully ever since.

Saturday's major attraction is the Hennings Jewellers fireworks. Hennings is the quintessential jewellery business in Camden and its support of the show has been ongoing for many years. The show also featured the second annual Farmer of the Year competition, and I acknowledge and congratulate the winners: Farmer of the Year, John Fairley of Camden Valley Milk; Innovative Farmer of the Year, Josh Clinton; and Young Farmer of the Year, Fiona Boardman. All these farmers come from pioneering families in the Camden district and are carrying on the farming tradition. I congratulate also the 2013 Camden Showgirl, Isabel Head. Isabel is currently completing her Bachelor of Education in primary teaching, specialising in rural education, food and health. Winner of the Carmel Foti Encouragement Award was Victoria Scott. Other finalists in the competition were Rachel Dawson, Giorga Gall, Tiffany Robertson, Madeleine Worthington and Sheridan Worthington. I wish them well in their future endeavours.

Shows such as the Camden Show would never be possible without a hardworking committee. I acknowledge all committee members and thank them once again for their time and commitment each year: president David Head; immediate past president Matt Collins; vice-presidents A. Biffin, B. Hayter, J. Sharpe, Hugh Southwell and J. Williams; honourable vice-presidents Paul Bowring, J. Davies, Edgar Downes, J. Eagles, John Hodge, Charles Inglis, R. Inglis, D. McDonald, R. McIntosh, Rowan Moore, OAM, P. Oxford, L. Papi, K. Sharpe, John Southwell, OAM, and Mark Stanham; honourable medical officer Dr Venkatesan; the honourable vets from the University of Sydney; historian John Wrigley; treasurer John Stanham; and the wonderful hardworking secretary, Lindy Cornwell.

The committee members are S. Allingham, A. Anderson, G. Ashton, T. Baumer, B. Bell, F. Boardman, R. Boardman, V. Boardman, P. Buckley, A. Cameron, B. Carmagnola, R. Clifton, N. Clissold, L. Davies, W. Davies, W. Death, M. Dounan, H. Downes, L. Elkins, D. Greentree, B. Hayter, S. Hennings, G. Hilt, T. Hinde, M. Honor, W. Inglis, I. Lane, A. Lo Conte, N. Lowry, L. Micallef, K. Palmer, D. Purtle, P. Rayner, W. Reece, W. Satara, R. Scott, J. Sharpe, S. Sherwood, D. Sidman, L. Smith, S. Strachan, G. Wall, F. Warren, N. Westerhof, C. Williams, H. Wilson, N. Wilson and H. Wilson, and honourable committee members C. Dengate, I. McKenzie and D. Southwell.

Of course, this event would not be possible without the wonderful support of the sponsors such as Camden Council, Hennings Jewellers, Remondis Waste Management, AGL, Camden Hire, Inghams Chickens, Clintons Toyota, Foti Fireworks, the National Australia Bank, the Commonwealth Bank, *The District Reporter*, Oran Park Town, Bunnings, William Inglis and Sons, Camden *Advertiser* and Virbac Health. The Camden Show Society has more than 2,000 members—whom I will not name—and each year this figure grows. The Camden Show is the event of the year in Camden and it continues its highly regarded reputation. I wish the Camden Show Society well for the 2014 show. I commend the show and the wonderful committee, and also the great Minister for Fair Trading for coming to the show. I look forward to the show next year.

AUSCOTT LIMITED FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY

Mr KEVIN HUMPHRIES (Barwon—Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Healthy Lifestyles, and Minister for Western New South Wales) [12.50 p.m.]: This afternoon I congratulate one of the most successful and important businesses in my electorate of Barwon, Auscott Limited, on its fiftieth anniversary of doing business in Australia. The success of Auscott in many ways mirrors the success of the Barwon electorate and the many diverse communities it contains. Barwon is known throughout Australia for its rich agricultural land, which is reflected in its reputation as a breeding ground for a range of industries, particularly in the farming sector. Auscott's first operation was a 2,800-hectare property in the Namoi Valley near Narrabri. Today Auscott Limited operates farming, cotton ginning, marketing, storage and grain businesses in Trangie, Warren, Narrabri and Moree. Its importance as an employer and as a driver of the local economies throughout my electorate cannot be understated.

Fifty years on, it now ranks as one of the State's largest farming operations. I have had quite a lot to do with Auscott over the years because it is one of the largest employers in my electorate. I have always been impressed with the quality of its business model, its contribution to the communities in which it operates and its focus on maintaining a stable and well-trained workforce. With a commitment to research and innovation within the cotton and grains industry, Auscott has been a major player in developing farming systems that have led to the Barwon electorate being considered one of the most progressive farming regions in the world.

Recently I had the pleasure of attending Auscott's fiftieth anniversary celebrations, which were hosted by Jim and Suzanne Boswell, whose farming family in 1963 was responsible for expanding its Californian-based farming operation to irrigated cotton between Narrabri and Wee Waa. The celebrations were a

great success, with representatives from the cotton, banking, research, policy support, community and political sectors on hand to pass on their congratulations to the company. The history of Auscott was outlined in a speech by the chairman of Auscott Limited, Dave Anthony, who said that in the beginning it was a challenge to win over the local Namoi Valley community as that part of the world was traditionally a grazing area. Mr Anthony highlighted to the 300 people in attendance how successful the local cotton industry has been despite facing a number of droughts and other agronomic setbacks by maintaining a tight rein on efficiency and putting an emphasis on research, which has resulted in improved production and investment in the local people and community. I congratulate Auscott on its milestone and wish it every success in the future.

MULGOA ELECTORATE EVENTS

Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa) [12.55 p.m.]: This afternoon I inform the House of three outstanding events held in my electorate in the past week. Last Friday the member for Londonderry and I joined the Minister for Roads and Ports, the Hon. Duncan Gay, to announce that the New South Wales Government has budgeted for New South Wales' share of funding for the construction of stage one of the Werrington Arterial project. It was also announced that the New South Wales Government had made a formal submission to the Commonwealth Government for a 50 per cent share of project funding. The New South Wales Government has allocated funding for half the project cost. It is a serious commitment from New South Wales that shows just how vital this link to the M4 is for western Sydney.

The stage one proposal is for a corridor between the M4 motorway and the Great Western Highway at Claremont Meadows. That stretch of the road is approximately two kilometres long. In addition to upgrading Kent Road and Gipps Street to four lanes, Roads and Maritime Services proposes to undertake the following: east-facing on/off ramps at the M4 motorway and a new intersection with traffic lights at Kent Road; three intersection upgrades with traffic lights at Caddens Road and Sunflower Drive, both north and south; and a new shared pathway for pedestrians and cyclists, including a new shared path bridge over the motorway.

This project does much more than just provide another link to the M4; it helps open access to new housing and employment areas in western Sydney and will facilitate freight transportation that is critical to the growth of the New South Wales economy. On coming to office two years ago our Government immediately started work on this major project and has been working through the planning process, design and consultation. A contract was recently awarded to have the final design completed by the end of this year. At the end of this year we will have our design and we will have our share of the funding budgeted for—it remains to be seen whether the Federal Government will come to the table with matching funding for this vital link.

Despite former Labor Premiers promising to deliver this road corridor, our funding commitment is another example of the New South Wales Government getting on with the job when others have only talked about it. We have put our money on the table and I urge the Federal Government to do the same. I now call on David Bradbury, the member for Lindsay, not just to talk, as he did on 3 June 2008 when he said that the Rudd Government was delivering the first stage of the Werrington Arterial, but to front up with the cold, hard cash to get the job finished. I hope that the Federal Government recognises the value of this project to the people of western Sydney and I hope to see its half of the funding in the upcoming May Commonwealth budget.

The second event in my electorate last week was at the majestic and historic Fernhill estate, where a formal welcome dinner was held for organisers and administrators of the World Rowing Cup event which took place in Penrith last week. This was the first time the event had been held in the Southern Hemisphere. Fernhill's new owners, Simon and Brenda Tripp, together with their events manager, Tommy Lawson, and the Penrith City Council team delivered a magical evening with live orchestral music on the veranda of the homestead, which overlooks the Sydney Basin, a formal welcome in the underground wine cellar and an exquisite dinner.

Fernhill was one of the first land grants issued by Governor Macquarie in 1810 to William Cox. In 1842 Cox built the homestead for his son, Edward. William Cox was the engineer who built the Great Western Road across the Blue Mountains. Fernhill's entrepreneurial spirit goes back to the 1800s, when its wool won prizes in Paris and it bred the 1880 Melbourne Cup winner. I congratulate Simon and Brenda Tripp on their investment in Fernhill, and I welcome them and their family to our wonderful community. Their commitment to continue the entrepreneurial spirit of this grand old lady, Fernhill, is evident in their plans to establish a world-class equestrian centre with Greg McDermott, who competed for Australia at the Seoul Olympics, and his family. Fernhill will have a showjumping school, host signature events, provide an exquisite and unique function centre, and will be opened for community days. Next month Fernhill will host Tough Mudda for elite sports men and women. It is also of great interest that Fernhill's events manager, Tommy Lawson, a singer, has

performed at every Rugby World Cup since 1995 and in 2007 recorded the Rugby World Cup album, which was sold in South Africa and France. He has achieved huge success. His version of *Stand by Me* has been the South African cricket song since 2006.

The third event held in St Marys on Saturday was the massive Easter egg hunt. Facilitated by St Marys Town Centre Management and Vanessa Campbell, hundreds and hundreds of children collected Easter eggs while getting their passports stamped at more than 40 small businesses in the St Marys shopping precinct. There was a roving New Orleans-style band called Hot Potato, fairytale characters and free face painting for children. I congratulate all the volunteers and the small businesses who participated in this successful event for St Marys. It was a wonderful event. I was there with my team for two hours handing out Easter eggs. We ran out of Easter eggs twice because there were so many young people and kids. It is wonderful to see a local community being creative and inventive to get people out to support local small businesses.

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): Order! I remind the member for Drummoyne and the member for Bankstown that the standing orders do not permit members to converse while another member is making his or her contribution.

GRANVILLE ELECTORATE HIGHER SCHOOL CERTIFICATE ACHIEVEMENTS

Mr TONY ISSA (Granville) [1.00 p.m.]: Today I commend all year 12 students in my electorate who sat for the 2012 Higher School Certificate examinations, including students from Cerdon College, Delany College, Granville Boys High School, Granville South Creative and Performing Arts High School, Holroyd High School, Merrylands High School and St Pauls Catholic College. I had the pleasure of attending a number of functions to acknowledge their wonderful achievements. I commend them all for their hard work and diligence in preparing for the Higher School Certificate. In particular, I acknowledge the year 12 students who received awards for academic excellence. I congratulate the principals and teaching staff from those schools on their diligent guidance in preparing the students for the Higher School Certificate. I also thank the parents and families for their support because it would have been very difficult for these students to undertake this rigorous examination without such support.

It is always a pleasure to visit local schools in my electorate. It gives me the opportunity to meet with students and teachers to discuss various issues at a personal level. Recently I was pleased to represent the Premier at the Bayt Al Zakat Australia Muslim High Achiever Awards 2012, held at the Orion Function Centre, Campsie. I think the member for Bankstown was also there. This was a celebration of the achievements of year 12 students from the New South Wales Muslim community. I was pleased also to present an academic award at the Australian Lebanese Association of New South Wales High Achiever Award ceremony. In these ceremonies students had received a ranking of 90 or more in the Higher School Certificate. Finally, last Wednesday night I hosted the Australian Egyptian Council Forum at Parliament House to acknowledge the achievements of year 12 students from the New South Wales Egyptian community.

One cannot understate the importance of educating our youth. Indeed, our greatest asset is our youth and their potential to benefit not only themselves but also our great country. I am pleased to be part of the O'Farrell Government, a government that is investing in the future of our community. Education has always been a top priority in my family, as it is in most families. I look forward to continuing to work hard for the schools in my electorate of Granville. I again wish the students who sat for the 2012 Higher School Certificate the best for their future endeavours and I hope that they realise their dreams.

BLUE MOUNTAINS ELECTORATE EVENTS

Mrs ROZA SAGE (Blue Mountains) [1.04 p.m.]: I began my busy morning last Saturday at the Lapstone netball courts—the home of netball in the Blue Mountains—to celebrate the opening of the 2013 winter competition of the Blue Mountains Netball Association. The association has more than 1,300 players, from beginners to seniors and representative sides. In the winter season only female teams play, but in the twilight competition during the summer months male and mixed teams play. In fact, two of the junior male players have been selected to play for New South Wales. The ceremony began with performers playing the roles of Blaxland, Lawson and Wentworth telling the players, parents and friends about the crossing of the Blue Mountains. Then association president Jenny Walker and Federal member for Macquarie, Louise Markus, addressed us. Carmel Higgins—a life member of the association who still coaches one of St Finbar's teams—Louise Markus and I were given the difficult task of judging the official team march-past, a tradition that the

association continues to hold dear. After much deliberation, Louise and I chose the Blaxland-Warrimoo and St Finbar's netball clubs as joint winners of the perpetual trophy. We then enjoyed a lovely morning tea with members of the executive and life members.

On that beautiful autumn day—although it was more like a summer's day—I then proceeded to the annual Springwood Foundation Day, which was extremely well attended. I was heartened to see that the theme this year was "Foundation Day"; it had not been hijacked by political correctness as it had been in the past. The numerous community and retail stalls made for a colourful day. At the official opening committee member Colleen Kime, a very active community member, announced Barbara Orton as the winner of the Springwood Foundation Day volunteer of the year award. I know Barbara well from her involvement with the Blue Mountains Lantern Club, of which I am a member. Barbara is a tireless community worker and she was a very popular choice for this well-deserved award.

The year 2013 being the bicentenary year of the crossing of the Blue Mountains by explorers Blaxland, Lawson and Wentworth, the street parade had a heavy sprinkling of convicts and settlers amongst its participants, including many schoolchildren. Vintage fire vehicles from the Museum of Fire, Penrith, added extra colour to the parade. The Blue Mountains Blue Wave group, which will undertake an authentic re-enactment of the explorers' crossing, had a stall. In May they will be making the crossing in costume and coincide with the same timetable the crossing took Blaxland, Lawson and Wentworth 200 years ago. Three stages of celebrations showcased local talent, which included bands, dance schools, the Blue Mountains Concert Band and the Blue Mountains Musical Society, to name a few. School captains from St Columba's, Springwood and Winmalee high schools were the respective master of ceremonies at each stage of celebrations.

At the celebrations we also officially farewelled the Springwood Civic Centre, which was opened in 1966. A community morning tea was held, with memorabilia shown that had been collected over many years, and that evening a special farewell variety concert was held at the Civic Centre. The concert highlighted why a new centre was needed—the stage was too small for the orchestra and there was no air-conditioning on that very hot night. However, it was a fantastic concert. The four major musical groups that had used the facility were represented, including the Blue Mountains Orchestra, Blue Mountains Opera Chorus, Blue Mountains Musical Society, Blue Mountains Concert Band and Blue Mountains Youth Band.

The concert was a showcase of the fantastic talent we have in the Blue Mountains. Indeed, many members of these groups have gone on to become professional entertainers and some, who had used the facility as youngsters, returned to entertain us. I was reminded of when members of my family and I had been part of these groups, in particular, the Blue Mountains Orchestra. I had a celebrated career playing the triangle—no-one else would do it—and it was lots of fun. The concert also reminded me that the Springwood Civic Centre was boiling hot in summer and freezing cold in winter. The building of the new centre is expected to commence shortly, with funding from all levels of government. The community is looking forward to it. I will watch the development with great interest to see whether the Federal Government delivers on its promised funding. The vast majority of it has not yet been committed.

FLOWER GROWERS GROUP TENTH ANNIVERSARY

Mr JOHN SIDOTI (Drummoyne) [1.09 p.m.]: It gives me great pleasure to speak about the Flower Growers Group of NSW, which is an association that strives to represent the flower industry to ensure it is given the respect, attention and action required to achieve its goals. Those goals will benefit the flower industry financially and improve and ensure the longevity of all businesses for years to come. I had the pleasure of attending the tenth anniversary celebration of the flower group. It was a prestigious evening during which the contributions of various talented flower organisations across Sydney were recognised and acknowledged. The competition was truly of a high standard. I congratulate Stephanie Cooke of Native Botanical, located in the Young area, on winning the Regional Florist of the Year award and Vincent and Annie Goh, owners of the Flower Avenue at Epping, who won the award for the Best Metropolitan Florist. It was a truly fantastic evening.

As Australians we can be proud of many things, one of which is our multicultural migrant heritage and everything those people have achieved. The flower industry was established by Italian and Greek migrants. From hard work and ingenuity they created an industry that continues to grow and develop across Australia and that now produces almost \$1 billion worth of flowers each year. As a member of State Parliament I know that cultivating small business is at the heart of the New South Wales economy. That is why I am such a strong supporter of the New South Wales flower markets. The flower growing and wholesale industry is made up of small businesses. Many of them are owned and operated by families, and that is a great way for future

generations to be involved in the ongoing development of the industry. I grew up working in the Sydney markets and there I received one of the best educations I could ask for in terms of business skills, customer service and the importance of working hard.

It is great to see that this sort of education in the school of life is still an integral part of the industry. Not only does the flower industry encourage training and development within its own small businesses, but it keeps a close eye on the quality and content of floristry courses available at TAFE. These days TAFE courses are far more focused on the needs of florists and TAFE is responding to the demands of industry in relation to how courses should be run. However, greater emphasis is still needed on successfully encouraging students to understand how to run small businesses more efficiently. By supporting young TAFE students through course development and the annual florist scholarship award, the Flower Growers Group helps nurture talent and artistic and business skills as part of career development.

An industry such as this is only as strong as the people who stand behind it. While it faces many challenges such as the carbon tax and increasing production costs, which impact on consumer demand, the flower growing industry continues to innovate and band together to ensure the longevity of the industry. We can see this through the establishment of the Flower Council that was set up between New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland. In 2013 Sydney Markets continues to operate as Australia's premier public market and provides an enormous amount of fresh produce to Sydney. It is considered by international market organisations to be one of the most sophisticated market operations in the world. Congratulations to the Flower Growers Group of NSW. I wish it many more great years to come.

HOUSING SUPPLY

Mr KEVIN CONOLLY (Riverstone) [1.13 p.m.]: I congratulate the New South Wales Government and welcome its action to deliver more housing for the State, in particular for Sydney's north-west, which I represent. On 16 March I had the pleasure of joining the Premier and the Minister for Planning to announce a raft of measures that will deliver more housing for the State, including almost 40,000 homes in the growth centres of north-west and south-west Sydney. In the north-west growth centre, focused on my electorate of Riverstone, the Government has already rezoned the precincts of Marsden Park Industrial, Schofields, Alex Avenue and Area 20. Further, the Liberal-Nationals Government has released the precinct at Marsden Park and the weekend before last it also released the Riverstone East and Vineyard precincts and the southern part of the West Schofields precinct. That is action on seven precincts just within my electorate and it is indicative of the Government's commitment to deliver more housing after years of delay by the former Labor Government.

The O'Farrell Government is being strategic in its approach to delivering housing by ensuring that it is close to rail lines, employment areas and other key infrastructure. Not only do we have the release of precincts in the identified urban growth centres in Sydney's north-west and south-west but also we have the establishment of urban activation sites. Those came about in collaboration with local government to identify areas that have the potential for further housing capacity in established areas. We also have the station precincts on the planned North West Rail Link, which will provide significant housing opportunities in areas that will be serviced by that important piece of infrastructure. We also have the program of landowner nominated sites, seven of which have been earmarked for immediate action. Those came in response to a call from the Minister for Planning for landowners to identify areas that may have the capacity to help meet the Government's targets and demonstrate the ability to provide infrastructure to support potential developments.

The release of housing precincts in Riverstone East, Vineyard and part of the West Schofields precinct at the weekend before last will see in future another 8,200 houses in my electorate of Riverstone. At the end of the planning process that will mean many more families will be able to fulfil the great Australian dream of finding a home of their own in an affordable setting and enjoying a high-quality standard of living in north-western Sydney. Since March 2011 the Government has rezoned land in the growth centres for 35,700 new homes and provided rezoning that will support 29,000 new jobs. That is a terribly important part of the plan that the O'Farrell Government is rolling out. It is not houses alone; it is houses supported by infrastructure and in close proximity to sources of new jobs.

In the future it will not be necessary for residents of the new precincts to travel into the central business district or halfway across the city to find employment. There will be jobs in their local regions, supported by good planning. That will mean that the gridlock we see across much of Sydney at the moment need not be repeated for future generations. The almost 40,000 homes that will be delivered in the growth centres are only a

part of the Government's massive housing supply program, which will see up to 172,000 new homes in total across Sydney. I am pleased to take part in the ongoing work of the O'Farrell-Stoner Government to deliver housing for the State and to make New South Wales number one again.

FOREST ASSOCIATION FOR CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson) [1.17 p.m.]: The Forest Association for Christian Education Inc., or FACE as it is known, describes itself as the face of Christian churches in the high schools of the Forest. The vision of the organisation is to enable every student in local State high schools to be exposed to the Gospel of Jesus Christ with ongoing opportunities to respond to and be involved in a local church. In doing so, it provides hope and encouragement to many of our young people. The concept of the separation of church and state is appropriately enshrined in the Australian Constitution; however, despite this separation, both should work to strengthen our families and communities, and inspire people to contribute positively to society.

The Forest Association for Christian Education Inc. was established in November 2011 through the cooperative vision and work of local churches in my area. The board of the association is chaired by Reverend Michael Aitken and comprises pastors and members of local churches. It seeks both prayerful and financial support from the churches and individuals throughout the local area. The organisation believes the best, most efficient and most economical way to achieve its vision is to employ suitably qualified and gifted persons to teach special religious education initially at Davidson High School, with future expansion into The Forest High School and Killarney Heights High School.

The local church representatives on the board come together with the common goal of funding a Christian studies teacher in the local high schools. The participating churches include St Stephen's Anglican Church at Belrose, Cityview Church at Forestville, St David's Anglican Church at Forestville, St Paul's Anglican Church at Terry Hills, Ruach Home Church Network Northern Beaches, Belrose Uniting Church, the Forest Alliance Church, Frenchs Forest Anglican Church, and Northgate Ministries of Belrose.

Yesterday I had the pleasure of witnessing the 2013 commissioning of the association's high school special religious education [SRE] teacher, Mr Brad Thornton, at the Forest Memorial Hall. Brad began working at Davidson High School last year for three days a week, and more recently has begun teaching special religious education at The Forest High School one day a week. Brad was previously a teacher of technology and applied studies at Covenant Christian School, Belrose, for about 10 years. He has a passion for seeing young people come to know Christ and grow in faith. He is married to Lynette and they have six children. At yesterday's event I also had the opportunity to hear from Peter Robinson from Genr8 Ministries, which is encouraging and supporting similar initiatives and boards throughout the State.

This morning I travelled from my electorate office and walked up Martin Place where I saw another ministry of sorts, which was representing part of the Easter in the City Festival. In the time remaining I will share one or two aspects of the festival. The Easter in the City Festival is sponsored by a group called Fusion Australia and the City Bible Forum. It involves school students performing in Martin Place. The message is one of sharing faith but also of sacrifice and forgiveness, which are relevant at all times but particularly as we celebrate Easter. I had not heard of Fusion Australia until today. Fusion Australia is a not-for-profit Christian youth and community organisation that has a deep and ongoing commitment to developing resilience in individual lives and the community through local initiatives.

Since starting more than 50 years ago, Fusion has worked to bring young people and their families together with hope. It sends a message of hope and encouragement to young people in our local communities and the broader community. As I said, those messages are particularly relevant at Easter—a time that is important to many people in this place and to a broad section of our community. While I do not advocate bringing faith and religion into politics, it is appropriate to recognise the enormous value of faith organisations and church bodies in our society.

Private members' statements concluded.

[The Assistant-Speaker (Mr Andrew Fraser) left the chair at 1.22 p.m. The House resumed at 2.15 p.m.]

AUSTRALASIAN COUNCIL OF PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEES TWELFTH BIENNIAL CONFERENCE

The SPEAKER: The New South Wales Parliament Public Accounts Committee will be hosting the twelfth biennial conference of Australasian Council of Public Accounts Committees, which will be held at Parliament House from Wednesday 10 April to Friday 12 April 2013. The theme for the conference is "Public Accounts Committees adapting to a changing environment". Speakers and delegates attending the conference include Auditors-General, Public Accounts Committee members and academics from Australian and overseas jurisdictions. The conference will focus on improving transparency and accountability in government. All members are encouraged to attend. Any further information can be obtained from the Chair of the Public Accounts Committee, the member for Davidson.

QUESTION TIME

[Question time commenced at 2.23 p.m.]

OUTLAW MOTORCYCLE GANG LEGISLATION

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: My question is directed to the Attorney General, and Minister for Justice. Given that there have been 210 shootings in just two years and eight fatalities since October, why has his Government still failed to outlaw a single organised criminal gang?

Mr GREG SMITH: I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. I will not thank him for his ongoing interest in this matter because, although from time to time he may hector this House and big-note the *Daily Telegraph* and various other media sources, he did nothing in this regard when he was a member of the former Labor Government. Only the member for Toongabbie tried something but that did not work. We set about to fix it and we have fixed it, so we are ready to go. We followed the High Court's decision. We have more police working on this problem than the previous Labor Government ever had. We have 300 more police officers on the beat and many hundreds of guns have been seized. Last weekend the police were out there watching.

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

Mr GREG SMITH: It is a proactive attitude but the Leader of the Opposition sits there smiling and mocking the police for the great work they are doing.

Mr Barry O'Farrell: He was part of Eddie's outlaw gang.

Mr GREG SMITH: That is true. The first gang we could have declared, on current available evidence, is the Australian Labor Party. Let us face it, the material that is coming forward out of the Independent Commission Against Corruption shows organised criminal activity. Organised crime is established daily in the Independent Commission Against Corruption. It is on the front pages of the papers. It is from the Leader of the Opposition's party, and from a Cabinet that he was part of.

Ms Linda Burney: Point of order: My point of order is under Standing Order 129. The question was about banning gangs, and the Attorney General has gone nowhere near answering it.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Attorney General has been relevant. There is no point of order. The Attorney General has the call.

Mr GREG SMITH: As I said, that group, the Terrigals, and their criminal associates, who patch over into other factions, wear their colours and ride their bikes all round the place. They are the ones who should seriously support the police. The Leader of the Opposition should stop being a prophet of doom and making the community fearful of what might happen and start encouraging them to cooperate with the police. For so long as he keeps putting the police down, witnesses and informers will not come forward, and that makes the task of the police much more difficult. Before a control order is taken out against the Leader of the Opposition and his associates, and before that stops them from raising funds or being in this Parliament, I suggest—

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

Mr GREG SMITH: —that the Leader of the Opposition get his own House in order.

The SPEAKER: Order! Government members will come to order. There is far too much audible conversation the Chamber. I found it difficult to hear what the Attorney General was saying.

TRADE AND INVESTMENT

Mr GLENN BROOKES: My question is addressed to the Premier. How is the New South Wales Government boosting trade and investment?

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: The member for East Hills had extensive experience in small business before coming to this place and he understands the importance of a strong economy. Strong economic growth not only delivers the jobs that people need to pay the bills each week, but also creates revenue for the Government to finance things such as the fine public school whose students are in the gallery today, as well as creating opportunities for people. Before the last State election I was often asked how we would pay for our commitments, in particular our infrastructure commitments. I said we would do so in a number of ways. I said that we would cut waste and divert the dollars saved to the front-line services that are so vital across the State, and I said that we would borrow responsibly within the triple-A credit rating. That is certainly something that the Treasurer keeps us on the straight and narrow about.

We talked about unlocking the value of State assets, like the desalination plant, to ensure that we could use the money within that facility to invest in infrastructure. Perhaps most importantly of all, we said that the way in which any government can seek to pay for its election commitments is to grow the State's economy. As the economy grows, there are more jobs, more investment, and more tax revenue, all of which will deliver those opportunities that particularly young people, whether in year 11 or later, are looking for in their lives. That is why this Government has launched an aggressive push to attract even more investment from international and interstate sources.

This initiative is called NSW NOW and it is about making investors aware of the strengths of the State's economy and the benefits of investing and doing business here. New South Wales is Australia's business headquarters, and I will never apologise—nor should the Deputy Premier ever apologise—for seeking from all corners of the world more business and more investment for the State. Members may remember Victoria's On the Move campaign and Queensland's Smart State campaign. We are saying it is NSW NOW. Now is the right time to invest because it is all happening here in New South Wales. Perhaps the best examples for this are what has taken place in Sydney over the past week, and I thank the Minister for the Arts for reminding me.

On Thursday night last we had the premiere of *War Horse*; on Friday night we had the premiere of *Carmen*, the Handa Opera on Sydney Harbour; on Saturday night we had *The Addams Family* musical, and that was not about those opposite; and, of course, on the weekend we had the Sydney International Rowing Regatta at Penrith Lakes. All of that is important because as people come to this city for those sorts of events they jump into taxis and pay dollars, they stay overnight in hotels, they go into restaurants to eat and into shops to buy. All such transactions produce revenue to government to enable us to provide the police, teachers, nurses and all those critical services across this State. I was pleased to see the Leader of the Opposition enjoying the opera on Saturday night. However, I heard on Sunday night that the Leader of the Opposition in the upper House criticised the opera. So we have another conflict among those opposite. The Leader of the Opposition in the upper House is trying to take the plebeian approach to the leadership.

Dr Andrew McDonald: Point of order: My point of order is related to relevance under Standing Order 129. The question was about trade and investment, not the opera.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: If the truth be known, I would have preferred to have watched the Tigers beat the Eels, but that is okay.

Mr George Souris: Tell us the truth.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: One has to be honest in this place. It was fantastic to see the Leader of the Opposition and the former member for Monaro, what's-his-name, at the opera. As people arrive at our airports

they will see a poster stating "NSW NOW—Welcome to the new state of business." As people come to New South Wales from Victoria they will see on the Albury sign a similar billboard. As they come across the border from Queensland they will see much the same thing. The campaign will involve advertisements in a number of airports around this country and in major financial journals, such as the *Financial Times* and the *Economist*. Unashamedly, I say that this is about trumpeting the benefits on offer in New South Wales and the turnaround that has occurred over the past two years. No longer is this State the basket case that those opposite presided over. Two years ago we were virtually running dead in every major economic indices in the country. That has changed. Under Labor, our State had the second-slowest job growth rate of any State over the past decade. Now we are the strongest State, with more jobs created here than in the resource-rich States of Queensland and Western Australia. [*Extension of time granted.*]

The slowest job growth rate was under those opposite. The fastest job growth rate, with more jobs created since April 2011—almost 100,000 jobs—has happened under this side of government. Our commitment was to create 100,000 jobs in our first term and I think tomorrow marks the halfway mark. On economic growth we were last under those opposite. Now we have the second-strongest growth—

[*Interruption*]

Thanks largely to no effort by the member for Canterbury. Again, under Labor we were running dead last across the nation in retail trade; now we are the nation's second-strongest State. We are committed to making New South Wales number one. That is exactly the job we are all getting on and doing. Whether it is the Treasurer or the Minister for Trade and Investment, and Minister for Regional Infrastructure and Services, all of us want the other States, the nation and overseas to know that we are getting back to the job of turning this State around. We welcome business to New South Wales. Since March 2011 the Government has facilitated projects that will create \$3.3 billion in new investment and support more than 13,000 jobs across New South Wales.

That is in addition to the \$61.8 billion we are spending on infrastructure, including the country's two largest transport projects—the North West Rail Link, which will be subject to a debate later today, and WestConnex. Underway—and this is very apposite for those opposite—is the South West Rail Link, the M5 West widening, the Erskine Park Link Road, upgrades to the Pacific and Princes highways, and major hospital rebuilds at so many places that time does not permit me to run through them. But Jillian the builder is on the case. This side of politics is determined to deliver economic growth. This side of politics is determined to attract more trade and investment to New South Wales because people in year 11 need opportunities when they leave school.

FORMER MEMBER FOR CLARENCE

Mr PAUL LYNCH: My question without notice is directed to the Attorney General. Given that on 12 March the Attorney General said that advice from retired Supreme Court judge Greg James concerning the former member for Clarence, Steve Cansdell, should be referred to the Director of Public Prosecutions, and that the Director of Public Prosecutions has written to me saying that the Attorney General's office must refer the advice, will the Attorney General now ask the Director of Public Prosecutions to consider Mr James' advice as he is empowered to do under section 25 of the Director of Public Prosecutions Act?

The SPEAKER: Order! I am finding it difficult to hear the questions. I need to hear the questions. The Attorney General has the call.

Mr GREG SMITH: I thank the member for Liverpool for his question. I have not received a copy of Mr James' advice. If the member for Liverpool has it, I am happy to receive it.

Mr Paul Lynch: The DPP has it.

Mr GREG SMITH: The Director of Public Prosecutions may have. He has not advised me of any change of mind. He is an independent statutory officer, as the member knows. If he feels there is merit in what Mr James says, then he will reconsider it.

Mr Michael Daley: No, it has to come through your office.

The SPEAKER: Order! This is question time, not a two-way discussion. The member for Liverpool asked a question and the Attorney General is answering it. There will be no interjections.

Mr GREG SMITH: The fact is that the Director of Public Prosecutions has all the powers necessary to commence a prosecution against Mr Cansdell if there is a case against him. The Director of Public Prosecutions concluded previously that there was insufficient evidence. If the member investigated this matter more deeply, he would see that the problem is that the earlier advice to me was that no-one can prosecute this matter because of the flaw in the statutory declaration form that his Government used for many years. That statutory declaration refers to a Commonwealth Act instead of the Oaths Act. Mr Lynch shows his ignorance of the law because both the Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions and the State Director of Public Prosecutions—

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Liverpool may debate this later, but not now. The Attorney General is answering the question.

Mr GREG SMITH: I have great respect for Mr James. I have appeared before him in court and against him as a barrister. I know him well and he is a competent man. But like all barristers, he has an opinion and, like all opinions, there are opposing opinions. The opinions of two senior law officers of the State and Commonwealth have disagreed with him, and I am willing to stick by them until advised otherwise.

DARLING HARBOUR REVITALISATION

Mr JOHN FLOWERS: My question is addressed to the Deputy Premier. What is the New South Wales Government doing to revitalise Darling Harbour.

Mr ANDREW STONER: I thank the member for Rockdale for his question. As the Premier outlined earlier, the New South Wales Government is determined to attract more business and drive additional investment in New South Wales. Since this Government came to office we have created nearly 100,000 jobs. We have the second-lowest unemployment rate in Australia, and my department, the Department of Trade and Investment, Regional Infrastructure and Services, is currently facilitating more than \$3 billion worth of additional investment in this State. Another proactive economic measure undertaken by this Government is the redevelopment of the western and southern parts of Darling Harbour, a project that is one of the biggest, most exciting and most important for Sydney and New South Wales for many years. We know that Darling Harbour already is one of the most popular destinations in Australia, attracting around 25 million locals and visitors a year.

Our vision is to make it even better. Not only are we making the facilities better but also we are determined to revitalise and enhance the entire precinct through the redevelopment of 20 hectares from Haymarket through to the water's edge at Cockle Bay. This involves building Australia's largest convention, exhibition and entertainment facilities plus a new hotel of up to 900 rooms by late 2016, and creating a new and vibrant city neighbourhood on the site of the existing Sydney Entertainment Centre. We are also making Tumbalong Park bigger, improving the forecourt in front of the Chinese Gardens, creating a strong boulevard north to south from Quay Street to the water's edge and providing five additional east-west connections to improve access for people living in Ultimo and Pyrmont. Altogether, this will generate around \$5 billion in economic benefit for New South Wales, with jobs for 1,600 people during construction and ongoing jobs for 4,000 people across the precinct.

When the new precinct is finished it will encourage more business delegates to come to Sydney who, on average, spend as much as six times more than the average visitor. It will encourage these tourists to explore our State's great regional areas such as the Hunter, Illawarra, Central West and the North Coast. On Friday the Sydney International Convention, Exhibition and Entertainment Precinct reached an important milestone, with contracts signed with private sector consortium Darling Harbour Live. This is the first public-private partnership in New South Wales since 2008 and is a clear demonstration that this Government has created the right environment for investment conditions and confidence in this State. It is a stunning turnaround from the dark days of Labor, when sadly the term "sovereign risk" became associated with New South Wales in the minds of investors around the world. I am pleased to say that Infrastructure NSW, another important reform by this Government, have been working with the consortium to engage with the community, including precinct neighbours, businesses, chambers of commerce, and business groups.

[Interruption]

Listen to them. They do not like good news, do they? Harp, harp, whinge, whinge, whine—they hate it. There will be 1,600 construction jobs, 4,000 ongoing jobs and \$5 billion in ongoing economic benefit to the State, but those opposite just whinge and whine. Shame on them. This is something those opposite should have done during those 16 long years—

The SPEAKER: Order! Opposition members will come to order. The member for Wollongong, the member for Bankstown, the member for Cabramatta and the member for Cessnock will come to order.

Mr ANDREW STONER: This Government is consulting with the community and major stakeholders including Sydney TAFE, the University of Sydney, the City of Sydney and others.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Bankstown and the member for Cessnock will stop shouting across the table.

Mr ANDREW STONER: It is genuine community and stakeholder consultation. Ongoing consultation includes a 1300 telephone number, a website, models of the redevelopment, information updates for more than 300 stakeholders, newsletters for more than 10,000 addresses in Haymarket, Pyrmont and Ultimo, an online forum, seven community forums in Ultimo, Pyrmont and Haymarket, roundtable sessions with peak bodies and others involving the City of Sydney, one-on-one briefings with precinct representatives and agencies, and meetings with executive committees of nearby residential buildings. This Government will ensure those meaningful conversations continue in the best interests of the success of this great project. In closing, this is not only an exciting project for Sydney and New South Wales and a major part of the transformation of the central business district's western fringe, but also another plank in the economic reform agenda undertaken by the Liberal-Nationals Government.

SERIOUS SEX OFFENDER LEGISLATION

Ms LINDA BURNEY: My question is directed to the Attorney General.

[Interruption]

It is a serious question about a serious subject.

The SPEAKER: Order! I am sure it is a serious subject. I would like to hear the question. Government members will come to order. The member for Kiama will come to order.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: My question is directed to the Attorney General. Will the Attorney General apply for a guideline judgement so that criminals found guilty of serious sex crimes against children are punished appropriately and in line with community expectations?

The SPEAKER: Order! The Attorney General has the call. The member for Canterbury will resume her seat. Government members will come to order.

Mr GREG SMITH: I thank the member for Canterbury for her question. The Government will consider it and, if the evidence supports an application for a guideline judgement, I will apply for it. Sexual offences committed against children are abhorrent and deserve the strongest condemnation by the community. However, the comparisons made in today's media coverage are misleading, selective and do not stand up to scrutiny. It is impossible and invalid to cherry-pick sentences handed down for a range of different and unrelated crimes and compare them when one has no knowledge of the circumstance of the offender or the offence. The Government acknowledges that sentencing is a complex task and one that is not easily understood. The NSW Law Reform Commission is currently examining sentencing law in New South Wales with a view to simplifying the law whilst providing a framework that ensures transparency and consistency.

As part of this review, guideline judgements will be examined. Today's dealt with offences that have been punished in the past 10 years. We have been in government for two years, so for eight out of those 10 years it was the responsibility of the former Labor Government. There was no guideline application made by the former Labor Government. A guideline application is not something you can just click your fingers and go off to court with. I have run guideline applications such as in the case of *R v Whyte* (2002) 55 NSWLR 252 regarding dangerous driving, which was a reconsideration of guideline judgements after the High Court ruled that there was a problem with the judgements. On behalf of the Department of Public Prosecutions I dealt with section 10, dismissal of charges and conditional discharge of offender, in the guideline judgement associated with drunk driving and matters of that sort. It takes an enormous amount of material to formulate a guideline judgement.

Sentencing of child sexual assault offenders is difficult because often the offence is historical and occurred at a time when the penalties for the offence were low. The courts cannot jack-up those penalties; they

have to follow the sentencing regime that was applied at the time. Often offences against children are, let us say, pleaded down because the children either cannot give evidence or do not want to give evidence. A plea is accepted to a lesser offence, which means that the penalties are lesser than they might otherwise have been. I will do my utmost to find a way of having the penalties increased because paedophiles and child sexual offenders are the worst of the worst in this community. I will not leave any stone unturned to ensure they are prosecuted.

STATE INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr JOHN BARILARO: My question is addressed to the Treasurer, and Minister for Industrial Relations. How is the New South Wales Government ensuring that taxpayers get value for money on public infrastructure?

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I thank the member for his question and his incredible work in the Monaro community. It is great to have a member in Monaro who is actually listening to and acting for his community. The O'Farrell Government continues to get on with the job simply and consistently. The O'Farrell Government is driving the economy, it is improving services and building the infrastructure this State desperately needs. Both the Deputy Premier and the Premier stated in this Chamber today that there are more jobs and there is greater growth in this State under the O'Farrell-Stoner Government than there was under those opposite. The Government is doing everything possible to ensure that every dollar invested in infrastructure delivers value for the people of New South Wales.

It is an important principle to note that the O'Farrell Government is making decisions first and foremost in the interests of the taxpayers of this State. That is how this Government will be judged: Is the O'Farrell Government making decisions in the interests of the community of New South Wales? Unlike the Federal Government in Canberra, which is making union demands its primary focus and placing the unions first rather than taxpayers, this Government is making decisions in the interests of taxpayers. Last Friday the O'Farrell Government was proud to announce new construction guidelines for New South Wales that will come into effect on 1 July this year. During the consultation process the industry made it clear that it wanted a transition stage, which is what the Government has done. The industry asked for it to apply to all projects across the State when the Government is involved with that counterpart, which will include the private and public sector.

This Government needs to ensure value for money for the \$61.8 million it will invest in infrastructure over the next four years and that increasing pressure is not put on employees to sign agreements that raise costs without any productivity benefit. That is not something this Government will stand by and watch. When the Australian Building and Construction Commissioner was introduced we saw a 2 per cent to 11 per cent reduction in the cost of delivering infrastructure. If you apply that to the infrastructure program for the next four years that is a potential loss of up to \$800 million for no productivity gain at all. That is \$800 million that could be put into more infrastructure and additional services—

The SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition will come to order. There is too much audible conversation in the Chamber.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: That is exactly what we want to do. If there were a 2 per cent increase in wages, modelling suggests that would mean 8,000 fewer jobs in the economy. It is very simple—and it should be very simple for the Leader of the Opposition. In the consultation some case studies came forward. What is business telling us it is seeing? This is the reason that we need to take action. One of them, a construction company, said this:

We were approached to sign a union agreement. As the proposed agreement would have increased our costs without any improvement in productivity, the approach was rejected. The union then threatened the client with stoppages due to safety issues.

That is what is going on out there at the coalface. We have a clear difference: Those on this side stand up for the taxpayers, and those on the other side stand up for their union mates. For the benefit of the Leader of the Opposition, who is looking for an opportunity to separate himself from the union movement, I say that opportunity has arrived; this is his moment to say, "I am going to put the taxpayers of this State first and support the code that the New South Wales Government has brought in." If he does not do that, it will be very clear who is pulling his chain. We will know from the actions that he and his party take whether they are supporting the taxpayers.

The same issue arises for the Federal Minister. Under the guise of a Federal election announcement, he announced a code to try to override what the New South Wales Government is doing. We say to the Federal

Minister: We will stand up for the taxpayers of New South Wales, and we will do that every day of the week. While the New South Wales code is being supported by industry groups across this State, it is just business as usual for the O'Farrell-Stoner Government: Taxpayers first, value in the infrastructure we are delivering, improved services, and driving the economy. That is exactly what we are about, whereas those opposite are looking after their union mates.

CRIMES SENTENCING PROCEDURE REVIEW

Ms SONIA HORNERY: My question is to the Attorney General. Given community concerns at the level of sentences for child sex offenders, why has he not publicly released the report on the review of the State's sentencing laws, which the Attorney General originally promised would be completed by October last year?

Mr GREG SMITH: I thank the member for her question. Of course, to an extent I answered that in the answer concerning the guideline judgement. In that, I said:

The Law Reform Commission is currently examining sentencing law in New South Wales with a view to simplifying the law, whilst providing a framework that ensures transparency and consistency.

That report has been delayed because the Law Reform Commission has a lot of work on its plate and also because this is a matter on which it has consulted widely. It is an important report in that a number of sentencing problems have arisen in recent times, particularly from the decision of the High Court in *Muldrock v The Queen*, which deals with the standard non-parole period, which seemed to be a better way of sentencing for all sorts of common offences than guideline judgements; and there has not been a guideline judgement sought, as I recall, since the standard non-parole periods came in in about 2002. It was a decision of the Court of Criminal Appeal shortly after the standard non-parole periods came in *Regina v Way*, which was considered to be like a guideline and was followed extensively by the courts until the Muldrock decision in late 2011.

The Court of Criminal Appeal decision in *Way* set out a way of dealing with this matter; and when standard non-parole periods were listed in the Crimes (Sentencing Procedure) Act, it seemed to be that the first test that one applied was what the standard non-parole period was, and the sentence was worked out according to whether it was more serious or less serious than that test suggested. That was the guidance given by the Court of Criminal Appeal. Interestingly, at the time of *Way*, there was an application for special leave to appeal to the High Court, and that was refused. Yet, eight or nine years later, the High Court, as is its way, had another look at that *Way* method of dealing with matters, and decided that the *Way* matter was wrongly decided.

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order: This is all very interesting, but the member for Wallsend wants to know when the report on the review, which was promised in October last year, will be released.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Attorney General was being relevant to the question asked and was explaining his answer.

Mr GREG SMITH: I hope the member for Wallsend pays attention. She has not been paying attention, but I concede that others are. Until we rectify the standard non-parole period problem—hopefully, with advice from the Law Reform Commission, because we are asking for further advice on that issue, and it will be part of the commission's report—you could not really go for a guideline judgement because if you did you would be depending on a lot of decisions that have error in them. With guideline judgements you rely on previous decisions to show a pattern. In this case it would be a pattern of inadequacy. If we were to rely on erroneous decisions of the Court of Criminal Appeal and lower courts, then we would be foolish. Therefore I think it has been prudent to wait. I have not pushed the Law Reform Commission too quickly on this matter, because I want to get the system right. I think the people of this system deserve our getting it right and our acting professionally, rather than doing things by knee-jerk reaction.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT INITIATIVES

Mr BRUCE NOTLEY-SMITH: My question is directed to the Minister for Transport. What progress is the New South Wales Government making with the rollout of Opal electronic ticketing and other customer initiatives?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I thank the member for Coogee for his question and for his interest in public transport. I know that he is looking forward to the rollout of the Opal card to Bondi Junction customers

when the trial begins on trains later this year. Over the past two years this Government has led a fundamental shift in how the government in New South Wales thinks about public transport. We know that for 16 long years this State was governed by the Labor Party, which was more focussed on itself rather than on customers. Under Labor, the Government kept chopping and changing its public transport policies on a whim. When the polls changed, when the Premier changed, when a Minister changed, their public transport policies changed. In their time in government, unfortunately they failed to deliver any major public transport infrastructure; they kept announcing and cancelling things. When the Liberals and The Nationals came to government we set about determining our public transport infrastructure priorities and the public can have confidence that when we say we are building the south-west and the north-west rail links, we will do it.

We are also making sure that we are doing everything in the interests of the customer. Under the O'Farrell-Stoner Government, every decision we take in public transport is about the customer, as it should be. I am pleased to say that the rollout of the Opal system is one example. The Opal card will transform the way people get around, making public transport more convenient and much easier. We know that those opposite failed when it came to this project; and failed abysmally. In fact, they first promised electronic ticketing for Sydney in 1997, and it was supposed to be ready for the 2000 Olympic Games. It was promised to be rolled out and implemented by no less than two Premiers and four different transport ministers. We heard about Labor's Tcard proposal for 10 years; unfortunately, those opposite wasted up to about \$100 million on that failed project. Not only that, but when I became Minister for Transport it was this side of the House that had to settle the court action that the former Labor Government left us in relation to the failed Tcard system.

But let us focus on the positive. The Opal card customer trial at Neutral Bay resulted in more than 550 customers using the card, which exceeded our expectations. I was pleased to announce today that Opal will be available on the iconic Manly ferry service from 8 April as the trial rolls out. Come 2015 more than 300 train stations and more than 5,000 buses and light rail in Sydney, the Hunter, the Central Coast, the Illawarra, the Southern Highlands and the Blue Mountains will have Opal equipment operating. As part of our improvements to customers not only are we rolling out Opal but, as I like to remind all members in this House, especially those opposite who cut services, we have introduced more than 3,000 services already and we will continue to introduce more.

Not only are we rolling out Opal and introducing additional services, but we are also providing a better travelling experience for customers through better use of technology, whether it is mobile reception in the central business district underground for the Western and North Shore lines, Google maps now on our public transport services, or real-time bus apps, which have had 900,000 downloads already. We are also working with developers to create real-time train apps for train customers. Real-time information on buses and trains, combined with the rollout of Opal and the 3,000 extra services means that we are revolutionising the way we provide transport services to our customers. That is in stark contrast to those opposite, who failed to deliver projects and who cut services. This side of the House is all about the customer; the customer has to be at the heart of everything we do in public transport.

JUDICIAL OFFICER RETIREMENTS

Mrs BARBARA PERRY: My question is directed to the Attorney General.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will come to order.

Mrs BARBARA PERRY: Will the Attorney General give a guarantee that his decision to delay replacing retiring judicial officers will not result in victims of crime and their families waiting even longer to obtain justice?

Mr GREG SMITH: Would the member repeat the question?

The SPEAKER: Order! Would the member for Auburn like to repeat the question? Members will listen to the question in silence.

Mrs BARBARA PERRY: Will the Attorney General give a guarantee that his decision to delay replacing retiring judicial officers will not result in victims of crime and their families waiting even longer to obtain justice?

Mr GREG SMITH: I thank the member for her question, but there has been very little delay in replacing judicial officers. I have appointed numerous officers to the Court of Appeal and there are a significant

number of acting judges in the Supreme Court, the District Court and the Magistrates Court, who step in to hear cases that are not being heard. There are plenty of judges in the courts. We have had to delay to some extent because of a lack of money, thanks to the state of the economy when we inherited the black hole—

Mr John Robertson: Point of order: My point of order goes to relevance under Standing Order 129. There was no black hole.

The SPEAKER: Order! That is not a point of order. The Leader of the Opposition will resume his seat. There was no breach of standing orders, because the Attorney General was being relevant.

Mr GREG SMITH: Perhaps it was a quarry or perhaps it was a gulf—

Mr Barry O'Farrell: A coalmine.

Mr GREG SMITH: Maybe it was a coalmine. There was a big, deep gap in money. The solar bonus benefits that Labor had introduced—

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

Mr GREG SMITH: —the death and disability scheme, which Labor had allowed to run out into the hundreds of millions of dollars; the Workers Compensation Scheme, which Labor had allowed to run out to a great deficit, the Victims Compensation Scheme; which has run out to \$300 million in back payments—

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

Mr GREG SMITH: —all because Labor cannot properly handle an economy. We are seeing that in Canberra currently—the country is broke and we are borrowing hundreds of millions of dollars—and we saw it here in New South Wales. This Government cares about balancing budgets and we care about our triple-A credit rating; had we not, we would have fallen into a morass.

Mr Ryan Park: Point of order: My point of order goes to relevance under Standing Order 129. I do not know what Canberra has got to do with judicial officers in New South Wales.

The SPEAKER: Order! I am finding it very difficult to hear the Attorney General, but for the most part he has been entirely relevant to the question he was asked. There is far too much audible conversation in the Chamber, which is making it difficult to hear the Attorney General.

Mr GREG SMITH: Perhaps I will just concentrate on New South Wales. What did we get under Labor after 16 years? We got a lot of days older and deeper in debt. St Peter, don't you call me 'cause I can't go; I owe my soul to Eddie and Joe.

PUBLIC HOUSING TENANCY SUCCESSION

Mr JAI ROWELL: My question is directed to my very good friend the Minister for Family and Community Services, and Minister for Women. What is the Government doing to make public housing fairer and more transparent to improve services for and the lives of the people of New South Wales?

Ms PRU GOWARD: I thank the member for his question, and in the spirit in which the question was asked I congratulate the member for Wollondilly on his continued pursuit of the interests of those people in the public housing system in his electorate. We have adjacent electorates and I frequently meet his constituents in my area. The electorate got rid of a very popular Labor Minister and they are very pleased with the change and celebrate the contributions he makes. This question goes to improvements to services and lives, and ensuring that public housing tenants do the right thing and pay the correct amount of rent. Tenants need to tell Housing NSW how many people are living in their home because that determines the amount of rent they should pay. In January this year I announced a two-month amnesty to give public housing tenants who have admitted doing the wrong thing the chance to do the right thing. If tenants came forward during the amnesty and admitted to their freeloading they were protected from having to pay hundreds or thousands of dollars in back rent.

Ms Linda Burney: They're poor.

Ms PRU GOWARD: The member for Canterbury may defend people who do the wrong thing, but I do not think the taxpayers of this State would agree with her; nor would the thousands of people on the public housing waiting list. The rents of tenants who came forward during the amnesty have been adjusted so that they now pay the correct amount—the fair and honest amount. This Government believes in personal and community responsibility. We also encourage community members to report freeloading occupants in other taxpayer-subsidised housing. We have the results.

The amnesty period ended on 17 March and, so far, more than 2,660 tenants have declared 3,370 additional occupants, and concerned neighbours have reported more than 2,490 suspected additional occupants across 1,450 public housing properties. Housing NSW is now looking into those cases. We anticipate the generation of an additional \$6.5 million annually in rent revenue as a result of these initiatives, which all go to making the system fairer and better financially supported so that it is more sustainable for the thousands of people on the waiting list.

As of today, new rules apply to household members who want to take over or inherit a public housing tenancy from a person who has left his or her home. Under the policy inherited by this Government members of a tenant's household only had to establish that they had a general housing need in order to inherit a tenancy. That effectively meant that they jumped the queue ahead of people waiting anxiously for priority housing assistance. What an outrage. Encouraging inheritance for people without priority need was just another way in which Labor embedded intergenerational welfare dependency. Members opposite should be ashamed of that.

Under the Liberal-Nationals Government inheritance changes that take effect today mean that from now household members will have to demonstrate—like everyone else—that they meet the criteria for priority housing assistance. They will have to prove to Housing NSW that they cannot meet their housing need in the private rental market, because people who can meet their housing need in the private market should not be coaxed into welfare dependency for life by any government. The exception for this is of course spouses in particular circumstances. Only through real reform and working better and more intelligently can we improve services and the lives of our citizens. I congratulate hardworking Government members who have championed these reforms with me to ensure that— [*Extension of time granted.*]

It is important to ensure that our taxpayer-funded public housing system is fair and transparent. People need to have confidence in government systems, and fairness and transparency are fundamental to that. I remind the House that it goes beyond this. We have already published waiting lists by area. It is no longer a secret. Public housing applicants need no longer come into public housing offices month in and month out to ask when it will be their turn for a house when those behind the desk knew all along that the wait might be 15 or 16 years. Those people are now told that. As members opposite will attest, the letters I write when they write on behalf of prospective tenants make that clear. This is all about transparency. As we on this side of the House know, transparency drives reform and reform makes lives better for the citizens of New South Wales.

Question time concluded at 3.12 p.m.

LEGISLATION REVIEW COMMITTEE

Report

Mr Stephen Bromhead, as Chair, tabled the report of the Legislation Review Committee entitled, "Legislation Review Digest No. 34/55", dated 25 March 2013, together with the minutes of the committee meeting regarding Legislation Review Digest No. 33/55, dated 19 March 2013.

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

PETITIONS

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

Albion Park Aeromedical Services

Petition requesting the retention of aeromedical services at Albion Park, received from **Mr Gareth Ward**.

Sydney Electorate Public High School

Petition requesting the establishment of a public high school in the Sydney electorate, received from **Mr Alex Greenwich**.

Rooty Hill Railway Station Access

Petition requesting the installation of elevators at Rooty Hill railway station, received from **Mr Richard Amery**.

Walsh Bay Precinct Public Transport

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

Inner-City Social Housing

Petition requesting the retention and proper maintenance of inner-city public housing stock, received from **Mr Alex Greenwich**.

Pet Shops

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

Duck Hunting

Petition requesting retention of the longstanding ban on duck hunting, received from **Mr Alex Greenwich**.

Container Deposit Levy

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

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

The Hon. Adrian Piccoli—Lake Heights Public School security fence—lodged 21 February 2013 (Ms Noreen Hay)

The Hon. Adrian Piccoli—Education Funding—lodged 21 February 2013 (Ms Noreen Hay)

CONSIDERATION OF MOTIONS TO BE ACCORDED PRIORITY**North West Rail Link**

Mr KEVIN CONOLLY (Riverstone) [3.15 p.m.]: My motion states that this House supports the North West Rail Link. As I stand here it is 15 years since members opposite first promised to construct the North West Rail Link. We have been reminded once or twice about the chequered history of this project while Labor was in government, but I think it bears repeating once more to remind people how important it is that we get a commitment from those opposite, particularly from the member for Blacktown, on this important project. In 1988 it was promised with a due date for completion of 2010, a 12-year time frame. In 2005 the project was delayed until 2017. In February 2008 the project was axed. One month later, in March 2008, it was re-announced with a due date of 2017. In October 2008 it was axed again. In October 2010 it was re-announced to start in 2017 and be completed by 2024, a full 26 years after the first announcement. The importance of this motion was brought home to me by the words of constituents who recently answered one of my surveys in which I asked what issues were important to them.

The SPEAKER: Order! I am sure the member for Keira would like to be heard in silence when he speaks. The member for Riverstone has the call and will be heard in silence. I will extend his time if there is any further noise.

Mr KEVIN CONOLLY: A Parklea resident said:

Peak hour traffic congestion from the north west and the city and back is unbearable. As a parent I seem to spend more time in the car than with my children. Buses are always full and late.

That is why the Government committed to building a project such as this in the interests of the long-suffering people of the north-west, many of whom moved to those suburbs on the back of a promise made by members opposite all those years ago to construct this rail link. We are acting in the public interest to deliver the public transport that the people of this region deserve, just as we are moving in other parts of the State to provide the infrastructure and services that those people deserve. The north-west is no isolated patch. It is an identified growth centre that members on the opposite side of the House identified years ago for thousands of new homes and hundreds of thousands of new people. The North West Growth Centre contains 16 precincts comprising 10,000 hectares, with an estimated 70,000 new dwellings for 200,000 people. That is in addition to the recently constructed suburbs of Bella Vista, Beaumont Hills, Glenwood, Stanhope Gardens, Kellyville Ridge and The Ponds. Those people deserve the backing of this House to provide the rail link they need.

Roads Funding

Mr RYAN PARK (Keira) [3.18 p.m.]: My motion is particularly important. I would have thought there would have been some other members out there who also wanted to see the Government honour its road commitments. For example, the member for Fairfield will remember two years ago, in March 2011, then shadow Minister for Roads Andrew Stoner said:

I am delighted to commit an O'Farrell Government to delivering \$3 million towards the [Polding Street and Cumberland Highway] intersection upgrade.

He said that two years ago. Two years later have preliminary roadworks been done? Have we spotted workers preparing the site? No. Do we have detailed costings related to when the project will commence? No. We have none of that. I would have thought the member for Fairfield would have supported this motion.

Ms Gladys Berejiklian: The member for Fairfield is an Opposition member.

Mr RYAN PARK: I would have thought the member for Smithfield would have supported the motion because the roadworks will benefit his electorate.

[Interruption]

The SPEAKER: Order! It was a rare slip of the tongue. We all know who the member for Keira meant. The member for Keira has the call.

Mr RYAN PARK: More than two years ago the member for East Hills stated that widening of Henry Lawson Drive and Canterbury Road was a priority and a commitment, but no funding was allocated in the budget. It is a fantastic and great commitment, but it is just unfortunate that the Treasurer does not support it. Let us examine roadworks for the Kings Highway, which is a road with which the member for Monaro would be very familiar. The Government recognised the need for the upgrade and estimated the cost to be approximately \$20 million. Tragically, no funds have been allocated to the project. There has been a lot of talk of commitment and a lot of promises have been made but, unfortunately, when it comes to extracting funding from Treasury Government members are not so good. I would have thought the member for Smithfield and the member for East Hills would support the motion to at least get the projects under way. *[Time expired.]*

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

The House divided.

Ayes, 62

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

Pairs

Mr David Elliott	Ms Cherie Burton
Mrs Leslie Williams	Mr Robert Furolo

Question resolved in the affirmative.

NORTH WEST RAIL LINK**Motion Accorded Priority**

Mr KEVIN CONOLLY (Riverstone) [3.29 p.m.]: I move:

That this House supports the North West Rail Link.

The motion addresses the issue exemplified by a constituent who spends more time in his car than he is able to spend with his children. The Government is responding to the needs of the people of north-western Sydney by ensuring the provision of infrastructure that should have been provided years ago. The North West Rail Link is a very large project. The second of two environmental impact statements highlighted the number of vehicles that will be taken off the road as a result of construction of the North West Rail Link. It is expected that in a full year after completion of the project 14 million fewer vehicles will be travelling on our roads during peak hours. Approximately 12,000 fewer vehicles will use our roads during an average morning peak period as a result of passengers instead travelling by train. For people who have the option of using public transport, the North West Rail Link will be a wonderful boon. It will make life much simpler.

For people who need to be on the road because of the nature of their work and travel, life will be better owing to the absence of 12,000 other vehicles in each morning peak period. The Government is committed to meeting the infrastructure needs of people of north-western Sydney in a manner that the Labor Government clearly was not. I reiterate the history of the on again, off again North West Rail Link. The repeated delays created the impression that the project was in the land of the never-never, that the project was a mirage, and that, under the previous Government, it would never become a reality. This Government has done far more in two years than the previous Government did in 16 years towards completion of the project. The previous Government did nothing. It had some glossy brochures, some websites and lots of announcements were made, but what was actually done?

Government members: Nothing.

Mr KEVIN CONOLLY: Nothing at all was done, and that is why the Coalition Government has had to take control of the situation. It is important to obtain a clear indication of the Opposition's position, in particular from the Leader of the Opposition and member for Blacktown. Does he support this project or not? Will he vote in favour of construction of the North West Rail Link? Will he support the project in any way whatsoever, or is everything Labor promised in relation to this project just hollow sentiment or pretence? Did Labor never intend to support the project?

In the two years since this Government's election 23 tenders have been let and 44 contracts have been issued for the project. Major worldwide companies have expressed interest in participating in the project. On 15 February this year tenders closed for two very significant contracts—twin billion-dollar tunnels 15 kilometres in length between Bella Vista and Epping, which will be the longest rail tunnels ever built in Australia. The tenders are being processed and contracts will be awarded later this year. We are on track to have the tunnel boring machines in the ground and doing their job in 2014, as promised. The work is underway. Also on 15 February, three consortia officially lodged their interest in a separate contract to operate the rail link. This includes supplying Sydney's new generation single-deck trains and building the eight new railway stations. The three consortia are made up of 17 organisations from Australia and around the world.

These are significant developments. It is a very large project. It has taken an enormous amount of work to move it as quickly as we have to the point we are now at. Rather than the North West Rail Link being delivered at some far-off date such as 2024, trains will be running well and truly before that date, because this Government has got on with the job and delivered on its promise. As part of the work we will have new railway stations beyond even those initially considered, right through to Cudgegong Road in my electorate of Riverstone. That is a very important development. The rail link will reach the new suburbs of development, reach across Old Windsor Road and Windsor Road into the Blacktown council area where new suburbs are developing as we speak.

Mr Bryan Doyle: Much-needed.

Mr KEVIN CONOLLY: This project gives much-needed support to those people, and a huge boost to the transport network of the region. The stations will include 4,000 car parking spaces along the line so that people can drive to a station, park there and take the train to work. This Government is getting on with the job. This Government is doing the right thing by the people of the north-west. Let us see whether those opposite are prepared to back the project. [*Time expired.*]

Mr RYAN PARK (Keira) [3.34 p.m.]: It gives me pleasure to speak on this issue. For the benefit of the children in the gallery today I would like to address something the member for Riverstone said earlier. He said the project is about making sure that families spend more time with their loved ones. As someone who commutes nearly every day, and have done for a long time, I could not agree more. The only problem is that the Government's proposal is not going to do that. Tragically, the reality for those on the Government side is that the trip is now around 83 minutes; the new trip, 82 minutes. That shows an incredible benefit-cost analysis in anyone's books. Let us not talk about what we say about it but what transport expert David Hensher said about it on 2 September 2012, remembering that the Government's focus is getting people more time with their families. David Hensher said:

We've done some calculations from just about everywhere where someone would begin the trip to the city, and except for the Cherrybrook people, there would be a significant saving in time by sticking with the bus.

It is for that reason that the Opposition will move an amendment to the motion. I want to be clear: those children in the gallery would reasonably expect that when a government makes an announcement or a

decision it could tell your mum and dad when it will start—reasonable; how much it will cost—reasonable; when the construction will be complete—reasonable. That is why the Opposition moves the following amendment:

That the motion be amended by adding the following words:

"and calls on the Government to release detailed costings and time lines for its construction and completion."

Mr Nathan Rees: Not unreasonable.

Mr RYAN PARK: Not unreasonable to those people out in the north-west. Certainly not unreasonable, I would have thought, to the people in the Castle Hill electorate. It is certainly not unreasonable to the Baulkham Hills electorate. It is certainly not unreasonable to any of the electorates along that line for the Government simply to say how much it will cost, when it is going to start and when it will be completed. That is a perfectly reasonable thing that I would have thought the Government would expect. I draw the House's attention to that wonderful publication the *Northern District Times*. This is what the *Northern District Times* said about it:

... why would anyone spend up to \$8.5 billion building Australia's longest and deepest rail tunnels too small for the double deck carriages running on the rest of the CityRail network?

The Government is now building infrastructure that does not relate in any way to the rest of the CityRail network. The joy for those in the north-west is that they get to save one minute on their trip. So it is an extra minute they have with their families. The joy for those in the north-west is that the Government has no idea how much it is going to cost, when it is going to start and when it will be completed. Most importantly, it has no idea how it links with the rest of the CityRail network, because the tunnels it is planning to build are too small, designed for single-deck carriages. Already we have seen a \$35 million blowout in costings in the budget and we have not laid a metre of track. That is good going in anyone's books! That is up there with the Regional Relocation Grant. I suggest the Government come clean with the people of New South Wales and those in the north-west, announce the costings, announce the budget and announce when the project will be completed. [*Time expired.*]

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby) [3.39 p.m.]: I am delighted to respond to the very interesting piece of fiction from the member for Keira. For the benefit of the students from Saint Aloysius College and Monte Sant Angelo Mercy College, the member for Keira was previously the Deputy Director General of the Department of Transport under whose watch the previous Government failed to deliver a viable public transport solution to the people of north-west Sydney.

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

Mr MATT KEAN: The member for Keira has moved an amendment to the motion because he does not want to talk about his record. He wants to talk about our record. Let us talk about his record. He made some reasonable points. He asked: When is the North West Rail Link going to start? When the member for Keira was the deputy director general the Labor Government named 1998 as the commencement date of construction on the North West Rail Link. It also named 2010 as the completion date. The start and end dates named by the former deputy director general, the member for Keira, have come and gone. The former deputy director general also was concerned about budget blowouts for transport projects. I remember one great transport project budget blowout—the Rozelle metro. When the member for Keira was the department's deputy director general \$500 million was spent and not a centimetre of track laid for the Rozelle metro.

This motion is important to the people of the north-west. With a population of over 300,000 it is bigger than Canberra. The member for Keira says it does not matter; he should tell that to the working families of north-west Sydney who sit in traffic every day for hours on end. He should try telling that to the businesses of north-western Sydney—the businesses in my electorate and in Dural and Cherrybrook. They are doing it tough paying extra freight and taxes because the previous Labor Government failed to deliver basic services that the rest of the community expects. Why? Because we were victims of our own geography: they punished us because of the way our communities voted, not because it was good government. This Opposition has no soul and is run by hollow men whose only principle is retaining power.

Mr MICHAEL DALEY (Maroubra) [3.42 p.m.]: Sadly, since the last State election in respect to the North West Rail Link in this place history repeats. The member for Hornsby and the member for Riverstone had an opportunity in their contributions to do something that no-one in the O'Farrell Government has been able to do to date, that is, provide even the most scant detail about the North West Rail Link, as the member for Keira clearly spelled out. When will it be finished? How much it will cost? But they said nothing. The talk continues. This Government has made more announcements about the North West Rail Link than there will be sleepers to support the rail when it is finally built. The first part of the motion calls on members in this place to support the North West Rail Link. I put up my hand. I support the North West Rail Link, but I do not believe as shadow Treasurer of this State that it should be the number one infrastructure priority for this State. One or two people of prominence agree with me. A fellow called Nick Greiner, OAM, agrees with me. In the *Daily Telegraph* last year Andrew Clennell reported:

The North West Rail Link was about fulfilling a political promise and easing lifestyle pressures rather than being value for money, Infrastructure NSW chair Nick Greiner said yesterday.

The member for Keira referred to three small letters of the alphabet. Diminutive though they might be, they speak volumes about the need for this project: BCR. Andrew Clennell continued:

He—

Mr Greiner—

Said the \$9 billion line had a low "cost-benefit ratio" but denied he and Infrastructure NSW were against building the line.

"The northwest rail line ... is unequivocally happening ... it hasn't got the highest cost benefit ratio in NSW ..."

But ... Infrastructure NSW wanted to ensure it was "very clear to the government and the public ... the costs of political commitments."

This line will cost in excess of \$10 billion. I would have thought that for this Government, which pays lip-service to improving the State's economy and is ruining the budget, one plank for improvement is productivity. An examination of the surrounds of Port Botany, the airport and the thousands of people using the M5 and M5 East each day reveals unequivocally that the number one priority project that should be fast-tracked by this Government is the duplication of the M5 tunnel. This Government has no solution, which is clearly demonstrated by it selling Port Botany and lifting the cap on containers in and out of the port, which grows 8 per cent each year. That should be the number one priority, not the North West Rail Link or the Chatswood shuttle service or whatever it is called.

Mr KEVIN CONOLLY (Riverstone) [3.45 p.m.], in reply: I thank the members representing the electorates of Keira, Hornsby and Maroubra for their contributions, as interesting as they were. This Government actually is doing something about the North West Rail Link. The member for Keira asked, "When is the start date? When is the end date? What is the budget?" Those opposite gave us a start date and then an end date, but they did nothing in between—nothing for 16 years. I do not need to announce a start date because it has passed. We have already begun. The details the member for Keira wants will emerge as part of the tender process, about which I have already talked. Tenders closed on 15 February. We will learn more detail about how those contracts will work when they are awarded.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! The member for Riverstone will be heard in silence.

Mr KEVIN CONOLLY: It is a great pleasure to be part of a Government that actually delivers on what it said it would.

Mr Richard Amery: You haven't delivered anything yet.

Mr KEVIN CONOLLY: For the information of the member for Mount Druitt, we have delivered a great deal in geotechnical work and the issuing of a contract. The preparatory work about which the member for Keira spoke regarding other projects is well and truly underway with this project. Far more has been done for this project than those opposite did in 16 years, despite the announcements, reannouncements, axings, delays, repositionings and more reannouncements. Production of the North West Rail Link which will serve hundreds of thousands of people across the north-west is underway. Among many other things, we are delivering on and

meeting our commitments—bricks and mortar, concrete and steel—for the people of New South Wales because they chose a Government that acts, delivers and does not just make promises, issue glossy brochures, put things on websites and reannounce projects for time immemorial and deliver nothing.

This significant rail project commenced within days of our election. The first expressions of interest and tenders were called within months of the election. Since March 2011 this Government has been pursuing at breakneck speed everything that can be done to make sure the North West Rail Link is built for the people of New South Wales. They need this infrastructure delivered. It is not wishful thinking. The Leader of the Opposition will have to take a stand: Does he think it is a dud project, as he called it in September 2011, or will he vote for it today?

Question—That the amendment be agreed to—put.

The House divided.

Ayes, 21

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

Noes, 62

Mr Anderson	Mr Flowers	Mr Perrottet
Mr Annesley	Mr Fraser	Mr Provest
Mr Aplin	Mr Gee	Mr Roberts
Mr Ayres	Ms Gibbons	Mr Rohan
Mr Baird	Ms Goward	Mr Rowell
Mr Barilaro	Mr Gulaptis	Mrs Sage
Mr Bassett	Mr Hartcher	Mr Sidoti
Mr Baumann	Mr Hazzard	Mrs Skinner
Ms Berejiklian	Ms Hodgkinson	Mr Smith
Mr Bromhead	Mr Holstein	Mr Souris
Mr Brookes	Mr Humphries	Mr Speakman
Mr Casuscelli	Mr Issa	Mr Spence
Mr Conolly	Mr Kean	Mr Stokes
Mr Constance	Dr Lee	Mr Toole
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	<i>Tellers,</i>
Mr Edwards	Ms Parker	Mr Maguire
Mr Evans	Mr Patterson	Mr J. D. Williams

Pairs

Ms Burton	Mr Elliott
Mr Furolo	Mrs Williams

Question resolved in the negative.

Amendment negatived.

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

Motion agreed to.

PUBLIC INTEREST DISCLOSURES AMENDMENT BILL 2013**Second Reading****Debate resumed from 20 March 2013.**

Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool) [3.58 p.m.]: I lead for the Opposition on the Public Interest Disclosures Amendment Bill 2013. The Opposition does not oppose the bill, although it does not think it goes far enough. The object of the bill is to amend the Public Interest Disclosures Act 1994 in a number of aspects. The Government presents the bill as being proposed by the Public Interest Disclosures Steering Committee. The committee consists of the Ombudsman, the Auditor-General, the Independent Commission Against Corruption Commissioner, the Commissioner for the Police Integrity Commission, the General Counsel of the Department of Premier and Cabinet, the Commissioner of Police, the Information Commissioner and the Chief Executive, Division of Local Government, Department of Premier and Cabinet. The proposals from the steering committee are unobjectionable but do not go as far as they should.

The bill provides for expansion of the definition of "public official", who thus gets the protection of the principal Act. It is made clear that any employee or officer of a corporation that is engaged by a public authority under a contract to provide services to or on behalf of a public authority who provides or is to provide those services is a public official for the purposes of the Act. This is considerably more expansive than the present Act. Subsection (2) of proposed new section 4A also includes a number of specific people and positions who will be regarded as a public official. These are a volunteer rural firefighter in a rural fire brigade, a State Emergency Service unit volunteer, an RSPCA inspector, an employee of a privately owned correctional centre, and an accredited certifier under the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act.

The need to specify these positions and tweak the "public official" definition is a result of the drafting decision to refer to "public official". Once that occurs, the position description has to be constantly reviewed to ensure it is comprehensive enough. For example, I am not entirely sure whether there are some other categories of volunteers that should be added as well. An alternative way to deal with the issue is to adopt the model used in some other jurisdictions and say that anyone can make a protected disclosure. That very neatly avoids the definitional imbroglio and its need for constant amendment. The criticism of that approach is that it detracts attention from public officials who should be the focus of the whistleblower legislation. I understand the force of that argument, but I much prefer the approach that avoids unnecessary definitional complexity and uncertainty.

The bill also removes the requirement that a public interest disclosure be made voluntarily. In practical terms, this alters the current situation where a public official who makes a disclosure because of a statutory obligation is not protected against reprisals under the Act. The bill also extends the time in which prosecutions for reprisal actions can be taken from two years to three years. The bill includes the Public Service Commissioner on the Public Interest Disclosures Steering Committee. The bill also proposes to amend section 6D of the principal Act. The effect of this is to except public authorities from the requirement that their public interest disclosure policy requires an acknowledgement of receipt of a disclosure and a copy of the policy to be provided to the public official making the disclosure, in relation to any disclosures made by public officials in performing their day-to-day functions. This does not seem to have been dealt with in the Attorney's second reading speech. However, I do not think anything turns on it and I certainly do not oppose the provision.

The Opposition does not oppose any of these provisions. They should all be supported in this legislation. I think, however, more fundamental changes are desirable. The current benchmarks in Australia in this space are the Dreyfus report and the Australian Capital Territory model. In comparison, the New South Wales model is by now a bit moth eaten. A good starting point might be to rewrite the Act in plain English. The adding of amendments—referred to by the Attorney in the opening of his second reading speech—has produced a current Act in need of tidying and rewriting. In addition, there should be some further substantive changes.

Those should include: broadening the type of activity justifying a disclosure to include danger to the environment, public health and safety, and scientific misconduct; extending the protection to anonymous complaints; providing that a disclosure should be able to be made directly to a member of Parliament or journalist in limited and carefully defined circumstances and without having to go to an investigative authority where that would be unreasonable; and providing that the detrimental actions offence would be made if a disclosure were a contributing factor to reprisal, rather than detrimental action substantially in reprisal for disclosures, as it currently is. Those initiatives were announced earlier this year by the Leader of the Opposition. I think that is the direction in which this debate should be heading. The Opposition does not oppose the bill.

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla) [4.02 p.m.]: The great American jurist Louie Brandeis said in 1913 that sunlight was the best disinfectant. When considering issues of privacy, he thought about the wickedness of people shielding wrongdoers and passing them off as honest men. His proposed remedy was that if the broad light of day could be let in upon men's actions it would purify them as the sun disinfects. The public interest disclosures legislation is part of the range of legislative disinfectant tools in New South Wales to out wrongdoing in the public sector. The bill before the House today strengthens the protections for public officials who make public interest disclosures and thereby enhances the public interest disclosures regime in New South Wales. The principal Act encourages and facilitates the disclosure of wrongdoing in the public sector in the public interest by protecting those public officials; it makes it a criminal offence to take detrimental action against the public official in reprisal for making a public interest disclosure.

The Act has been amended a number of times since 2010, and in 2011 the Public Interest Disclosures Steering Committee was established. Its members are the Ombudsman, the General Counsel of the Department of Premier and Cabinet, the Auditor-General, the Commissioner of the Independent Commission Against Corruption, the Commissioner for the Police Integrity Commission, the Chief Executive, Local Government in the Department of Premier and Cabinet, the Commissioner of Police and the Information Commissioner. The committee's functions include providing advice to the Premier on the operation of the Public Interest Disclosures Act and recommendations for reform. The bill before the House makes the first changes to the Act recommended by the committee since its establishment. The committee has been consulted on and supports the bill.

The first set of amendments to the Act is in item [1] of schedule 1 to the bill. Those amendments will change the definition of "public official". Item [1] clarifies that "public official" extends to employees and officers of a corporation that is so engaged by a public authority who provide or are to provide the contracted services or any part of them. The item also inserts a provision containing particular examples of public officials. To have the protection of the Public Interest Disclosures Act, a disclosure must be made by a public official, as defined. The employees that the amendments clarify as public officials for this purpose include volunteer rural firefighters and RSPCA inspectors.

The second set of amendments appears in item [2] of schedule 1. Those amendments provide for the inclusion of the Public Service Commissioner as a member of the Public Interest Disclosures Steering Committee, established by the principal Act. The Public Service Commissioner's principal objectives include promoting and maintaining the highest levels of integrity, impartiality, accountability and leadership across the public sector. The proposal to include the Public Service Commissioner as a member of the committee is supported by the commissioner. The third set of amendments appears in item [4] of schedule 1. Those amendments will except public authorities from the requirement that their public interest disclosure policy require an acknowledgement of receipt of a disclosure and a copy of the policy to be provided to the public official making the disclosure, in relation to any disclosures made by public officials in performing their day-to-day functions as such public officials or under a legal obligation.

The fourth set of amendments, proposed by schedule 1 [5], removes the requirement that a disclosure must be made voluntarily in order for the public official who made it to be protected under the Public Interest Disclosures Act. At the moment, the Act requires disclosures to be made voluntarily in order for the public official to be protected under the Act. Section 9 provides that a disclosure is not made voluntarily if it is made by a public official in the exercise of a duty imposed on that official by legislation. That means that a public official who makes a disclosure of wrongdoing in the public sector under a statutory obligation is not protected against reprisals for that disclosure by the Act. The steering committee's recommendation was to remove the requirement in order to broaden the protection provided by the Act, and the Government supports that recommendation. Just as public officials who report wrongdoing under a statutory obligation can also face the risk of reprisals, they too should also be protected by the Act.

A fifth amendment is proposed by item [6] to schedule 1. It extends from two years to three years the time for instituting proceedings for the offence of taking detrimental action against a person substantially in reprisal for the person making a public interest disclosure. This was recommended by the steering committee, and the Government supports the recommendation. The reason for the recommendation was that the steering committee advised that allegations of reprisal action can be made some time after the action is alleged to have occurred. As I have said, the bill contains the first sets of amendments to the Public Interest Disclosures Act that have been recommended by the steering committee. We have consulted the steering committee on these amendments, and the steering committee supports the bill. This is a suite of sensible legislative changes that will increase openness, transparency and honesty in the public administration of New South Wales. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) [4.08 p.m.]: I speak on the Public Interest Disclosures Amendment Bill 2013. I note that the bill seeks to amend the Public Interest Disclosures Act 1994 to provide better protection for public sector whistleblowers. The substance of these amendments of the Public Interest Disclosures Act comes from the recommendations of the Public Interest Disclosures Steering Committee, which was formed in 2011. Committee members consist of the New South Wales Ombudsman, the Auditor-General, the General Counsel of the Department of Premier and Cabinet, the Commissioner of the Independent Commission Against Corruption, the Commissioner of Police, the Commissioner of the Police Integrity Commission, the Chief Executive for Local Government in the Department of Premier and Cabinet and the Information Commissioner.

The commission had been tasked with the responsibility of reviewing the operation of the Public Interest Disclosures Act and identifying possible areas for reform. I congratulate the committee on its fine work, as evidenced by the general substance of this bill. I now turn to the provisions in this bill. Schedule 1 to the bill makes it clear as to who falls within the ambit of the Public Interest Disclosures Act and is given the protection conferred by the Act. Clause 4A replaces the same section in the Act and identifies the persons who are deemed to be public officials for the purposes of the Act.

This includes persons employed under the Public Sector Employment and Management Act 2002, members of Parliament, persons employed by either the President of the Legislative Council or the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, persons with official public functions or acting in a public official capacity whose conduct and activities may come under the scrutiny of an investigating authority, and persons acting in the service of the Crown. The bill also clarifies those individuals who are contracted by a public authority, including a private corporation, to provide services to or on behalf of the public authority. Volunteer rural firefighters, SES unit volunteers and an inspector of the RSPCA are deemed public officials and they are given the protections afforded by the Public Interest Disclosures Act.

The Public Interest Disclosures Act was first implemented to encourage public officials to identify wrongdoing in the public sector. The Act was designed to facilitate such disclosures by offering protections to recognised public officials who choose to make disclosures of wrongdoing. This includes making it a criminal offence to take action that is detrimental in nature against a public official who has made a disclosure, primarily in reprisal for making a disclosure. The most significant amendment contained in this bill is the removal of the requirement that such disclosure be made voluntarily. Currently, the Public Interest Disclosures Act requires disclosures to be made voluntarily for public officials to gain the protection of the Act. Unfortunately, this meant that if a public official had a statutory duty to disclose certain information then that public official was not protected by the Public Interest Disclosures Act; that is, in the performance of his or her duties a public official is not given protection from reprisal if it is within his or her job description to disclose certain dealings, actions or activities.

As it stands, the Public Interest Disclosures Act limits the ability of the Act to perform its function to assist individuals who want to come forth and report a wrongdoing. Just because disclosures are within the scope of a public official's duties does not mean they will not be subject to reprisals. As such, the repeal of section 9 of the Public Interest Disclosures Act by schedule 1[5] to this bill is an important amendment. It is a step in the right direction in promoting government accountability, which is implicit in an Act that allows public officials to voice any wrongdoing by the government of the day and its agents. The bill also makes cosmetic changes to the Public Interest Disclosures Act.

Schedule 1 [2] to the bill seeks to include the Public Service Commissioner as a member of the Public Interest Disclosures Steering Committee—a common-sense inclusion considering the main object of the Act is to protect public officials, the majority of whom would belong to the New South Wales public service. Item 6 of the same schedule increases from two to three years the time in which an action can be taken against an official who has taken detrimental action against a person substantially in reprisal for making a disclosure. Whilst this instrument is a step in the right direction, I urge the Government and the Public Interest Disclosures Steering Committee to go further. I encourage the steering committee and the Government to take a serious look at the reforms suggested by the Leader of the Opposition, John Robertson, in tightening public disclosure requirements.

Mr Robertson's new standards blueprint, announced in February of this year, includes some important provisions to provide greater accountability of government and, in particular, from members of Parliament. Mr Robertson suggested that members of Parliament should not be allowed to moonlight in second jobs. Mr Robertson suggested that Ministers be required to disclose contact with lobbyists and private companies.

Mr Robertson also suggested that an inspector-general be appointed with powers to investigate members of Parliament who do not adhere to parliamentary standards. However, despite the relevance of the recommendations of the Leader of the Opposition, they are amendments that are left for consideration for another day. I support the legislation. I also encourage the Government and the steering committee to take into serious consideration Mr Robertson's recommendations as they provide better accountability to the community for the decisions made by the Parliament and the government of the day.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! I remind the member for Fairfield that members should be referred to by their correct titles.

Mr NICK LALICH (Cabramatta) [4.15 p.m.]: The aim of the Public Interest Disclosures Amendment Bill 2013 is to amend the Public Interest Disclosures Act 1994 to increase protections for public officials who wish to make public interest disclosures and who are also known as whistleblowers. The bill contains a number of provisions proposed by the Public Interest Disclosures Steering Committee, which had been tasked to review the operation of the Public Interest Disclosures Act to identify possible areas for reform. The committee has proposed a number of changes, which are contained in this bill, to increase protections for whistleblowers.

The proposed changes include the following: to make it clear that an employee or officer of a corporation that is engaged by a public authority under a contract to provide services to or on behalf of a public authority, who provides or is to provide those services, is a public official for the purposes of the principal Act; to provide for particular examples of persons who are public officials for the purposes of the principal Act; to include the Public Service Commissioner on the Public Interest Disclosures Steering Committee; to except public authorities from certain procedural requirements relating to public interest disclosures they receive, in relation to disclosures by public officials in performing their day-to-day functions as such public officials or under a legal obligation; to remove the requirement that a public interest disclosure be made voluntarily; and to extend from two years to three years the time for instituting proceedings for the offence of reprisal for a public interest disclosure.

Changes outlined within this bill seek to grant protection to an individual and to clarify who is a "public official". These changes seek to reassure and facilitate the disclosure of any wrongdoing in the public sector by making it a criminal offence to take any detrimental action against a whistleblower in retaliation for coming forth with a public interest disclosure. Amendments in the bill will ensure that a public official will still be protected under this Act, even if the disclosure has not been made voluntarily. Further amendments made within the bill will also ensure that the period of time in which proceedings may commence is within three years after the offence is alleged to have been committed, for any reprisal action against a person who made a public interest disclosure.

Amendments have also been made to clarify the scope of the definition of "public official" by amending the legislation to include certain employees or officers of a corporation who are engaged by a public authority that provides services to or on behalf of a public authority. The individuals who will be protected under these changes include volunteer firefighters or an RSPCA inspector. I believe it is important to protect the brave individuals who take a stand and speak up about any wrongdoings within our public sector and I commend the steering committee for its ongoing contributions. I hope to receive further recommendations from the committee on any further amendments that should be considered. I commend this bill to the House.

Mr GREG SMITH (Epping—Attorney General, and Minister for Justice) [4.18 p.m.], in reply: I thank the member for Liverpool, the member for Cronulla, the member for Fairfield and the member for Cabramatta for their contributions to debate on the Public Interest Disclosures Amendment Bill 2013, which further enhances the protections for whistleblowers in New South Wales. Members may be aware that after this bill was introduced, the Commonwealth Government introduced a bill on 21 March to establish a legislative scheme to protect Commonwealth public sector whistleblowers. If the Commonwealth bill is enacted, the Public Interest Disclosures Steering Committee will be required under the New South Wales Public Interest Disclosures Act 1994 to review the Commonwealth legislation within six months of the enactment. The committee will provide a report to the Premier on the review and any recommendations for reform of the New South Wales Act.

The Government looks forward to such a review and will consider any recommendations made by the steering committee for any further enhancements that can be made to the New South Wales Act. The possibility that recommendations for further reform may be made by the steering committee in the future should of course not delay the passage of the current bill. The amendments proposed in this bill are minor and straightforward,

but they provide important clarity to whistleblowers in this State. The bill strengthens the protections for New South Wales public officials who make public interest disclosures and enhances the New South Wales public interest disclosures regime. I commend the bill to the House.

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

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Third Reading

Motion by Mr Greg Smith agreed to:

That this bill be now read a third time.

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

CRIMES (CRIMINAL ORGANISATIONS CONTROL) AMENDMENT BILL 2013

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

ROAD TRANSPORT BILL 2013

Consideration in Detail

Consideration of the Legislative Council amendments.

Schedule of the amendments referred to in message of 21 March 2013

- No. 1 Page 18, clause 9 (2), line 19. Omit "found guilty". Insert instead "convicted".
- No. 2 Page 18, clause 9 (2) (a), line 23. Omit "found guilty". Insert instead "convicted".
- No. 3 Page 19, clause 9 (5) (a), line 9. Insert "53 (3) or" before "54 (3)".
- No. 4 Page 19, clause 9 (5) (b), line 12. Insert "53 (3) or" before "54 (1)".
- No. 5 Page 19, clause 9 (5) (c), line 15. Insert "53 (3) or" before "54 (1)".
- No. 6 Page 19, clause 9 (9), line 37. Omit "found guilty". Insert instead "convicted".
- No. 7 Page 112, clause 141 (1), line 35. Omit "157". Insert instead "164".
- No. 8 Page 176, clause 237. Insert after line 19:
 - (3) For the purposes of this Part:
 - (a) a reference to an offence against a provision of this Part (however expressed) includes a reference to an offence in respect of which the charge is found proven, or a person is found guilty, (but without proceeding to a conviction) under section 10 of the *Crimes (Sentencing Procedure) Act 1999*, and
 - (b) section 9 (Determination of "first offence" and "second or subsequent offence") is taken to apply to the provisions of this Part as if that section extended to findings referred to in paragraph (a) as well as to convictions for offences.
- No. 9 Page 181, clause 243 (6), lines 25-28. Omit all words on those lines.
- No. 10 Page 183, clause 246 (1), line 27. Omit "245 (2)". Insert instead "245 (1) or (2)".

Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst—Parliamentary Secretary) [4.21 p.m.], on behalf of Ms Gladys Berejiklian: I move:

That the House agree to the Legislative Council amendments.

Mr RICHARD AMERY (Mount Druitt) [4.21 p.m.]: As indicated earlier in the upper House, the Opposition will support the legislation and the Government's amendments, which we understand are intended to clear up some unintended consequences in the original drafting.

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

Motion agreed to.

Legislative Council amendments agreed to.

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

ELECTION FUNDING, EXPENDITURE AND DISCLOSURES AMENDMENT (ADMINISTRATIVE FUNDING) BILL 2013

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 14 March 2013.

Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed—Parliamentary Secretary) [4.22 p.m.]: The Election Funding, Expenditure and Disclosures Amendment (Administrative Funding) Bill 2013 aims to implement recommendations made by the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters following its inquiry into administrative funding for minor parties. The bill proposes amendments to the Election Funding, Expenditure and Disclosures Act 1981 as advised by the committee. Amendments have been made to the Act in recent years, including caps on the value of political donations a party or elected member can receive from particular donors, including this Government's ban on political donations from corporations and other entities. That was all done in pursuit of transparency in relation to election campaign funding. As an offshoot of these amendments to the process there has been a significant increase in record keeping, and the compliance burden facing parties and members in order to meet the highest possible level of transparency for the public.

The Administration Fund was established in 2010 to aid parties and independent members in complying with the new rules and offsetting some of the administrative expenses. Despite best efforts to ensure equality within this process, it came to the attention of this Government from the select committee on the Election Funding Bill 2011 that donation reforms may be having a disproportionate financial impact on smaller political parties. The subsequent inquiry and report found that smaller parties can no longer rely solely on volunteers and that there was an increased administrative burden on minor parties, resulting in higher administrative costs to them.

The amendments put forth in this bill are based on those findings and aim to make the reimbursement process of the Administration Fund more efficient and frequent. It also adjusts the maximum annual amount to which parties and independent members are entitled. Therefore this bill proposes that reimbursements are to be paid quarterly in arrears and be subject to annual audit. The bill also requires the authority to make payments from the Administration Fund within six weeks. However, due to concerns raised during consultation with the Election Funding Authority, the bill imposes a six-week deadline with respect to the payment of claims for administrative funding. The increased maximum annual amount to which parties and independent members are entitled comes with a new formula as outlined in the bill.

The new entitlements are: \$200,000 for the first elected member of a party and independent elected members; \$150,000 for the second elected member of a party; \$100,000 for the third elected member of a party; and \$83,000 for each elected member thereafter, up to a cap of 25 elected members. That equals approximately \$2.3 million. The newly increased payments and formula will be applied retrospectively from 1 January 2012. Overall this bill provides for the long-term viability of minor parties and independent members whose contribution to the depth and excellence of our democracy cannot be overlooked. The Government is sending a clear message that it is concerned about true democracy working correctly. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) [4.27 p.m.]: I support the Election Funding, Expenditure and Disclosures Amendment (Administrative Funding) Bill 2013. The bill implements the recommendations made by the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters late last year following its inquiry into administrative funding for minor parties in New South Wales. The inquiry was prompted by concerns that changes to the Election Funding, Expenditure and Disclosures Act 1981 in 2010 had placed a higher

administrative burden and, as such, a disproportionate financial impact on smaller parties. One of the changes that emerged from the 2010 reforms was the establishment of the Administration Fund, designed to help offset the cost of complying with new rules and to make up for the loss of revenue available to parties and independent members to meet their administrative expenses as a result of caps on political donations. This bill substantially affects payments made out of that fund, as well as the time in which a payment must be made following consultations with the Election Funding Authority.

The Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters unanimously recommended a number of amendments to the Act following its inquiry into administrative funding for minor parties. The amendments include that reimbursements be paid quarterly in arrears and subject to an annual audit commencing in 2013, with the reimbursements to be paid within one month of receiving receipts for administration-related expenditure. Another recommendation was that the Government introduce a new formula for administration of fund entitlements in the following amounts: \$200,000 for the first elected member of a party and independent elected members; \$150,000 for the second elected member of a party; \$100,000 for the third elected member of a party; and \$83,000 for each elected member thereafter, up to a cap of 25 elected members.

The new formula will apply to administrative expenditure accrued from 1 January 2012. The object of the bill is to amend the Election Funding, Expenditure and Disclosures Act 1981 to increase the amounts for which registered parties with elected members of State Parliament, and elected members of State Parliament who are not members of registered parties, are eligible to be paid by the Election Funding Authority for administrative expenditure incurred. The bill also will enable quarterly payments of those amounts and requires payments from the Administration Fund or the Policy Development Fund for expenditure incurred to be made by the authority within six weeks after a claim is made.

Schedule 1 item [1] will increase the amount of annual payment for which a registered party, whose members are elected members of State Parliament, is eligible for administrative expenses that have been incurred. The amount is determined on a sliding scale according to the number of elected members who are members of the party. For expenditure incurred in the year 2012, the scale is \$200,000 for parties with one elected member, \$350,000 for parties with two elected members, \$450,000 for parties with three elected members and \$450,000 for parties with more than three elected members, plus an additional \$83,000 for each member in excess of three but capped at 22 members in excess of three. Those amounts are to be adjusted for inflation for each year after 2012. Schedule 1 item [2] will increase the amount of annual payment for which an elected member of State Parliament, who is not a member of a registered party, is eligible for administrative expenses that have been incurred. The amount for 2012 is \$200,000 and is adjusted each subsequent year for inflation.

It is only fair that payments be adjusted in line with the Consumer Price Index, which was 1.6 per cent during the last quarter. The Government's public sector wages policy, which caps increases to a minimum of 2.5 per cent, is demonstrably fair by reference to the Consumer Price Index. It is only right that payments authorised by the bill will be adjusted in accordance with the Consumer Price Index. Schedule 1 item [3] provides that parties and elected members who are eligible for annual payments for administrative expenses incurred during a calendar year may receive quarterly payments in respect of the first three quarters of the year. The quarterly payments must be in respect of actual administrative expenses already incurred, and will be capped at a percentage of the applicable annual amount. Any such payment to a party or elected member is to be deducted from the annual amount to which the party or elected member is entitled. Quarterly payments in excess of that annual amount are to be repaid to the authority. The authority may demand repayment of quarterly payments from a party or elected member, if the party or elected member has become ineligible for an annual payment.

Schedule 1 items [4] to [6] make a number of consequential amendments to the provisions relating to the making of claims. Schedule 1 item [7] requires the authority to make a payment from the Administration Fund for administrative expenditure incurred, or from the Policy Development Fund for policy development expenditure incurred, within six weeks after receiving a properly made claim with supporting documentation and information. Reimbursement will be made for fees incurred after money has been expended. The claim form must be accompanied by supporting documentation to prove that the amounts have been incurred and paid. This is part of the policies of good governance and accountability that the Government has introduced in New South Wales. The authority is also empowered to deduct from any payment to be made to a party or elected member under part 6A of the Act any amount that the authority may recover under that part from the party or elected member as a debt. Schedule 1 item [8] makes an amendment to the provisions relating to the adjustment of amounts for inflation. I have already stated that it is only fair for amounts to be adjusted in line with the Consumer Price Index.

Schedule 1 items [9] to [11] contain provisions of a savings or transitional nature consequent upon the enactment of the legislation. Schedule 2 makes consequential amendments to the Election Funding, Expenditure and Disclosures (Adjustable Amounts) Notice. The bill was examined carefully by the Legislation Review Committee, particularly in relation to changes proposed to be made to the Election Funding, Expenditure and Disclosures Act 1981, to ascertain whether the bill presented any trespass to individual rights or to the rights of political parties or groups. The committee, which is the hardest-working committee in this Parliament as I am sure the member for Mount Druitt would agree, found that the legislation would not impact or trespass on the rights of individuals, parties or groups. The committee made no comment in respect of issues set out in section 8A of the Legislation Review Act 1987. The bill requires the authority to make payments from the Administration Fund to meet the costs of administration of minor parties and independents, who bring so much to this House and who contribute so much to democracy in New South Wales. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON (Blacktown—Leader of the Opposition) [4.37 p.m.]: On behalf of the New South Wales Opposition, I indicate the Opposition's support for the Election Funding, Expenditure and Disclosures Amendment (Administrative Funding) Bill 2013. The bill was developed in line with a report of the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters. Under part 6A of the current Act, the function of the Administration Fund is to make payments that contribute towards meeting the costs of managing the day-to-day activities of political parties and independent members of Parliament. The Government referred the operation of the current provisions to the joint standing committee and empowered it to inquire into and report upon matters relating to the administrative funding for minor parties, specifically the annual amount to be distributed from the Administration Fund to eligible minor parties.

The committee heard evidence from a wide range of stakeholders and published its report in November 2012. The committee recommended changes to administrative funding for political parties and independents. The committee's major recommendation is that instead of a flat rate of administrative funding for each member of a political party, funds would be awarded on a sliding scale. Under this bill the new rates, which will be adjusted annually for inflation, will be \$200,000 for the first elected member of a party, \$150,000 for the second elected member, \$100,000 for the third elected member and \$83,000 for each member thereafter, but capped at 25 members. In addition to setting new rates, the bill makes several other minor amendments to increase the frequency with which payments will be made from the Administration Fund by the Election Funding Authority.

The committee recommended that parties and independent members should be compensated four times a year and within one month of a claim being lodged for payment. The changes in the bill to the process for making claims and receiving payments from the fund have attracted widespread support. Currently there is a significant lag in reimbursements being made to political parties for administrative purposes, which works to the disadvantage particularly of minor parties and independents, who face a record-keeping and compliance burden that is disproportionate to their abilities to raise resources. I also note the Premier's speech from two weeks ago in setting out the other features of the bill. I look forward in coming years to the continuing views of the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters on how the arrangements before us can be improved. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON (Camden) [4.39 p.m.]: I support the Election Funding, Expenditure and Disclosures Amendment (Administrative Funding) Bill 2013. These amendments are in response to the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters inquiry recommendations. I am joined in the House today by the chair of the committee—and I think he will be speaking next—the member for Wollondilly, the diamond of the south-west. The committee members have done a great job: the chair, as I said, the member for Wollondilly, his lower House colleagues the members for Kiama, Coffs Harbour, Liverpool and Wagga Wagga, and our upper House colleagues who have contributed to the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters inquiry. Important work is being done within this committee.

The bill aims to implement the committee's recommendations. Last year the Premier referred to the committee matters relating to the administrative funding of smaller parties. This was after concerns were raised by the Select Committee on the Election Funding Bill 2011 that donation reforms may be lopsided and have a financial impact on smaller political parties. Evidence was provided to the inquiry from stakeholders. The committee was provided with evidence that for smaller parties to meet their disclosure and administrative obligations under the Act volunteers can no longer be relied upon and professional staff need to be employed. The committee found that there is "an increased administrative burden on minor parties, resulting in higher administrative costs" and that minor parties had been impacted by administrative costs involved in complying with the Act.

Currently part 6A of the Act establishes an Administration Fund to be managed by the Election Funding Authority. This is to assist with the day-to-day activities of political parties and Independent elected members. Election campaign costs are not covered. Parties and Independent elected members are entitled to receive a single annual payment from an Administration Fund to cover their actual administrative and operating costs. This fund was established in 2010 amendments. Amendments made over the past four years have substantially improved transparency when it comes to election campaign funding. Caps were introduced in that same year on the value of political donations receivable from particular donors. The Government most recently banned political donations from corporations and other entities. This was a shot in the arm to our communities, who have been calling for greater transparency from political parties.

Record keeping and compliance by political parties and Independent elected members have increased as amendments to the Act have helped it to evolve into an Act that the people of New South Wales can trust to maintain transparency. As I have said before in the House, the Government is all about transparency and accountability. The bill before us today will help in both those fields. Complying with the Act's new rules costs money, and the caps on political donations have reduced the revenue available to parties and to Independent elected members to meet administrative expenses. Late last year the committee recommended improvement in the timeliness and frequency of payments from the Administration Fund so as to not disadvantage minor parties or Independent members.

Increases to the maximum annual amounts available from the Administration Fund were also recommended, with the increase to be determined on a sliding scale according to the number of elected members endorsed by the party. The funding formula recommended is \$200,000 for the first elected member of a party and the same for Independent elected members; \$150,000 for the second elected member of a party; \$100,000 for the third elected member of a party; and \$83,000 for each elected member thereafter, capped at 25 elected members. The committee recommended that these amounts should apply to the upcoming round of claims relating to expenses incurred in the 2012 calendar year and that parties and Independent members be reimbursed from the Administration Fund on a quarterly basis and within one month of lodging a claim for payment with the Election Funding Authority. The Election Funding Authority raised concerns about the one-month deadline for the processing of administrative claims, so the bill imposes a six-week deadline. I am not sure I have taken the time to commend the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters and its outstanding chair.

Mr Nick Lalich: You have.

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON: I have done that? I am happy to do it again because it is been an extremely hardworking committee led by an extremely hardworking chair. Just to recap on a couple of other points: As I said, and make clear, the main purpose of this proposal is to amend the Election Funding, Expenditure and Disclosures Act 1981 to increase the frequency and maximum annual amount of payments from the Administration Fund. In summary, the content of this bill will require the authority to make payments from the Administration Fund within six weeks of receiving a claim for payment in compliance with the Act. The claim has to be supported by documentation and information from the authority.

Parties and Independent elected members may submit claims for quarterly payment from the Administration Fund for administrative expenditure incurred, subject to appropriate limits to minimise the risk of the sum of the quarterly payments exceeding the maximum annual entitlements of the party or elected member. Finally, the bill provides that all claims in respect of the 2012 calendar year are to be determined in accordance with the new maximum annual entitlements: that is, the increased payments will be retrospective. A lot of work has been put into this issue by the joint standing committee. I commend its members for their efforts and commend the bill to the House.

Mr RICHARD AMERY (Mount Druitt) [4.49 p.m.]: I repeat the remarks of the Leader of the Opposition: the Opposition will support the Election Funding, Expenditure and Disclosures Amendment (Administrative Funding) Bill 2013. I shall refrain from thanking the select committee because the last speaker did so nine times—enough for us all. Of course, we all appreciate the committee's work. The bill is supported by all sides of the Parliament, which is refreshing. In this modern era all political parties and crossbench members support the principle of election funding. Such a situation did not exist when the Act was introduced in 1981. The overview of the bill states:

The object of this Bill is to amend the *Election Funding, Expenditure and Disclosures Act 1981*:

The bold principle of using public funding for election campaigning was a great reform of the Wran Labor Government. I am pleased to acknowledge that particular reform in this House today so many years after its introduction. That reform was not supported by all sides of the Parliament at the time. I recall that it was strongly resisted by the then Opposition, as noted in the media. Interestingly, some people now ask: What is the difference? We know that historically the taxpayer paid for the administration of any election: for the staff to run the election, prepare all the documentation involved with issuing writs, generic advertising of an election, how-to-vote advertisements in newspapers, on television and radio, hiring halls for polling booths, printing the various ballot papers et cetera.

The aim of the 1981 legislation was to expand public funding—taxpayer money—into the election campaign. It was not to be restricted to the cost of the ballot paper handed to a voter by the poll clerk; it was to include how-to-vote cards handed out by volunteer booth workers outside the polling booth on election day. In 1981 this was a radical change to how elections were funded administratively and in political campaigning by various parties. This radical and quite innovative change did not receive the universal support it now does throughout the State and country. I refute the claims of the member for Myall Lakes that in introducing this bill the Government is all about scrutiny and transparency. That is not the case; this bill is a routine administrative bill that changes a radical principal Act introduced to this Parliament in 1981.

I am familiar with the 1981 legislation because my predecessor A. V. P. Johnson—Tony Johnson—was the member for Mount Druitt and Riverstone. In the 1981 election campaign I was his campaign director and registered agent, as we were called then. In that election for the first time we provided the election funding authority not only with details of our expenditure, but also examples of leaflets distributed to letterboxes, how-to-vote cards, banners, car stickers, badges worn by volunteer workers, and newspaper or radio advertising. All those things were collated by the local campaign committee and submitted to a government department. It was a radical situation attracting all the push and shove of the old political debates when the Labor Party said that big business was secretly funding the Coalition and the Coalition said that trade unions and even Moscow, as some right-wing enthusiasts would proclaim, were funding the Labor Party.

This bill is quite a dramatic change and results from the excellent work of the committee. For example, the bill makes annual payments for administrative expenses on a sliding scale from \$200,000 for parties with one elected member to \$450,000 for parties with three elected members, and includes consumer price index adjustments and other administrative changes. The bill, rightly, is supported by all sides of the Parliament. It is another amending bill in the evolution of changes to how we fund elections in this State and country. As I indicated earlier, and as the explanatory note of this bill explains, this process started in 1981 with the great reform of the Wran Labor Government.

Mr JAI ROWELL (Wollondilly) [4.55 p.m.]: It is great to hear other members, particularly the member for Mount Druitt, congratulating the hard work not just of mine but of every member of the committee, which is made up from a broad cross-section of the political divide. The Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters is a hardworking committee and I note that its recommendations were unanimous. That shows what can be achieved when focusing on the task. As committee chair I take this opportunity to support the Election Funding, Expenditure and Disclosures Amendment (Administrative Funding) Bill 2013, which resulted from a report I tabled recently entitled "Inquiry into Administrative funding for minor parties". The committee was established on 14 May 2004 and re-established on 22 June 2011. I have been proud to chair that committee for just under a year. The committee inquires into and reports on matters referred by either House of Parliament or a Minister relating to administration and practices under the Parliamentary Electorates and Elections Act 1912 other than part 2 of 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, wrote to the then chair of the committee, the Hon. Trevor Khan, asking that the committee inquire into matters relating to administrative funding for minor parties. I take this opportunity to thank the Hon. Trevor Khan for his hard work as the former chair and for his continued valuable advice. Specifically, the Premier referred to section 97E of the Election Funding, Expenditure and Disclosures Act relating to public funding of eligible parties for administrative expenditure. The Premier asked the committee to inquire into and report on whether the annual amount to be distributed from the Administrative Fund to any such eligible parties remains appropriate.

The O'Farrell Government is a reforming Government and this committee certainly is a reforming committee, of which election system reforms are evidence. One significant reform limited political donations to be from individuals only. The Government recognised the impact of this reform on the administration and

operation of political parties and, therefore, made available reimbursements through the Administration Fund. The committee's inquiry sought to confirm whether those funds are sufficient. The committee heard evidence of parties struggling to afford the administration costs involved in maintaining a political party and that following the prohibition on donations from organisations new and significant administrative costs were incurred by parties with fewer donations to cover them. The committee heard evidence that increasing the amounts of funds available for reimbursement through the Administration Fund would be appropriate.

Regardless of political persuasion, we all agree on the importance of a level playing field when contesting elections to ensure community awareness of debate and that we can represent our communities to the best of our ability. As the Administration Fund operates on a reimbursement model, the committee also heard evidence of hardship that parties experienced in waiting for funds to be reimbursed after receipts had been provided to the Election Funding Authority. The committee further recommended that the Government review the frequency and timeliness of the reimbursement payments. In particular the committee recommended that reimbursements be paid quarterly upon provision of receipts to the Electoral Funding Authority. The committee heard evidence of the onerous impact of the 2012 amendments, particularly on minor parties in New South Wales, and the negative impact that caps on political donations had.

The committee recommended the following: a new funding formula for payments under the administrative fund to 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 the twenty-fifth member of a political party allowed for reimbursement 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 as soon as practicable.

As I said previously, the committee was unanimous in its recommendations and it hopes the work it has done on this inquiry will go some way towards ensuring the diversity of the New South Wales Parliament is protected. We have evidence of that because here we are today debating the bill with support from all sides of the Chamber. We have heard about the hardworking chairman but I could not have got to that point without the hardworking members of the committee, and I mean all of them. I thank the members of the committee secretariat who worked on the report and the inquiry including Carly Maxwell, Rachel Simpson, Jonathan Elliott, Emma Matthews, Rohan Tyler and Jenny Whight. I 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 preparation of the report. You would be surprised how long some of those meetings run with a committee that large but we get through the work in a timely and efficient manner.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Gareth Ward): Very quickly.

Mr JAI ROWELL: I note that the Acting-Speaker, the member for Kiama, is a member of that committee. I thank all of the committee members for their hard work. I commend the Premier on introducing this legislation and place on the record that the department had consultations with the Electoral Funding Authority to seek its views concerning the proposals put forward by the committee. The advice from the department was listened to and there was one slight amendment with regard to the proposed one-month deadline for the processing and payment of administrative funding claims.

The bill now reflects that advice with a change from four weeks to six weeks to allow the Electoral Funding Authority to adequately process all payments. That is an appropriate change and there was no opposition to that change from committee members. The committee has a number of inquiries occurring at the moment, including looking at the State's electoral legislation. The committee is also looking at a review of the local government elections that have recently occurred. This committee is getting on with the job. I thank all members for their hard work and I look forward to reporting to the House in the future.

Ms GABRIELLE UPTON (Vaucluse—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.03 p.m.], on behalf of Mr Barry O'Farrell, in reply: In summing up and concluding the debate for the Government on the Election Funding, Expenditure and Disclosure Amendment (Administrative Funding) Bill I recognise the contributions of the members of this Chamber: Mr Geoff Provest, the member for Tweed; Mr Stephen Bromhead, the member for Myall Lakes; Mr Jai Rowell, the member for Wollondilly, chair of the committee; the Hon. Trevor Khan of the

upper House; Mr Chris Patterson, the member for Camden; Mr John Robertson, the Leader of the Opposition; and Mr Richard Amery, the member for Mount Druitt. I note the strong support of the Opposition in relation to the bill before the House.

The Election Funding, Expenditure and Disclosure Amendment (Administrative Funding) Bill 2013 implements the recommendations of the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters that were delivered last November following the committee's extensive inquiry into administrative funding for minor parties in New South Wales. This bill increases the frequency, maximum amounts and the way in which those amounts are paid from the Administrative Fund. I too acknowledge the members of the joint standing committee, which has a diverse and broad membership. I notice there was unanimous support by the members, which was acknowledged by the chair of the committee, the member for Wollondilly.

The bill helps to ensure that small parties have access to administrative resources needed to comply with this State's campaign finance regimen. It is one of the most advanced and onerous of its kind in the world. It means that in this democracy here in New South Wales, part of a broader national democracy, minor parties are able to compete with major parties in the contest of policies and ideas, which is what the community sees as central to our role in Parliament. Minor parties and Independent members contribute to the quality and the diversity of our democracy and their long-term viability should be supported in the best interests of our democracy.

Part 6A of the current Act establishes the Administrative Fund managed by the Electoral Funding Authority. The funding is designed to assist with the costs of managing day-to-day activities of political parties and independently elected members. I note committee recommendation number 2, which is an important one. It goes to the unanimity between the Opposition and members of the Government on this bill. It says that ongoing access to the Administrative Fund should be maintained to ensure the strength of the democratic process in New South Wales. That has led to the bill before the House today being supported by the Opposition. Under the current Act Independent elected members and parties are entitled to receive an annual payment from the fund to cover their administrative and operating expenses. The maximum amount is the lesser of \$80,000 per elected member or \$2 million.

I acknowledge that, as the Opposition stated, over the past four years there have been amendments to improve transparency in relation to this Act and campaign funding. Although the member for Mount Druitt characterised this bill as an evolution, it should be recognised that the reality is that this Government has revolutionised electoral donation law. That is demonstrated in a number of changes that have stepped up the accountability and transparency of electoral donation law in New South Wales. Caps have been imposed on the value of political donations that parties and elected members can receive from particular donors. Another recent protection is the amendment to campaign funding that realises a long-term commitment to ban political donations from corporations and other entities. It will end the shameful "decisions for donations" culture that developed under the Labor Government.

I do not see how the member for Mount Druitt can characterise all the changes in electoral donation laws as evolutionary. It may be that this bill is. The Government has the unanimous support of the committee. This side of the House is taking major steps to revolutionise electoral funding donation laws. That is as it should be. It was a major campaign commitment to the public in March 2011. There is no doubt that reform to the Act over the years to meet that growing expectation of transparency has increased the record-keeping and compliance burden faced by parties and members. To reflect on a little bit of history, which is important in this summing-up address, the Premier referred matters relating to the administrative funding of smaller parties to the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters to inquire into and report on.

The reference was made following concerns raised by the Legislative Council Select Committee on the provisions of the Election Funding, Expenditure and Disclosures Amendment Bill 2011 that donation reforms were having a disproportionate financial impact on smaller political parties. A worthy concern led to consideration by the committee. The committee during its inquiry heard evidence from a range of stakeholders, including representatives from smaller parties. It heard evidence that a disproportionate administrative burden is placed on small parties, which can no longer rely solely on volunteers but have to employ staff with professional skills in order to meet their disclosure and administrative obligations under the Act.

The Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters released its report in November. The recommendations reflected in the bill today are primarily aimed at improving the timeliness of those payments, the amounts and the frequency of those payments from the Administrative Fund to address that issue that the

Independent members and parties have. We do not want them to be unnecessarily disadvantaged by undue delays in the payments or amounts of payments, as shown by the bill before the House today. Recommendations from the committee were embodied in the bill: an increase in the maximum amount payable from the Administrative Fund; an adjustment for inflation; the amount of funding to be determined by a sliding scale according to the number of members endorsed by the parties; funding figures in the bill to apply to the upcoming round of claims for administrative expenses for the 2012 calendar year; and parties and independent members to be reimbursed from the Administrative Fund on a quarterly basis and within one month of lodging claims for payment with the authority.

I should note, in relation to the fourth recommendation of the committee, the department had consulted with the Election Funding Authority and that during that consultation the authority raised some concerns with respect to the proposed one-month deadline for processing the payment of administrative fund claims. To address those legitimate, and practical, operating concerns, the bill now provides a six-week deadline for the authority with respect to claims for administrative funding. So we have listened to the authority; that is because we want a practical solution coming from the passage of this bill. In summary, the bill seeks to implement the recommendations of the committee with respect to administrative funding. Minor parties and Independent members, I emphasise again, are a very important and quality part of the diversity of our democracy in New South Wales.

We really should support their long-term viability; they should not be burdened by administrative red tape and regulatory provisions. That is in the interests of this House and the people in the communities that we represent. Therefore, we have in this Chamber unanimous support for this bill. The Government will continue to clean up election campaign funding. It was tainted by Labor. The reforms that this Government is leading are not revolutionary; and there will be more to come. This is about transparency, accountability and fairness; and that is what the community expects of us as a new Government that has a landslide majority in the lower House. In that respect, the Government and the Premier look forward to hearing the views of the Joint Select Committee on Electoral Matters on how the Act might be further improved when it reports on its review of the State's electoral legislation. That is part of this Government's commitment to continuous improvement of electoral campaign funding laws. I commend the bill to the House.

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

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Third Reading

Motion by Ms Gabrielle Upton, on behalf of Mr Barry O'Farrell, agreed to:

That this bill be now read a third time.

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

RACING LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2013

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 20 March 2013.

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth) [5.10 p.m.]: I return to my contribution to the debate on the Racing Legislation Amendment Bill 2013. I would particularly like to enlarge on the role that the Tamworth Jockey Club plays in the Hunter and North West Racing Association. This great club recently held barrier trials and basically a shake-down in preparation for its opening of the \$3 million redevelopment on Sunday 28 April 2013 with the Tamworth Gold Cup meeting. The autumn racing carnival has kicked off for the Tamworth Jockey Club, the capital of country racing. I would highlight a number of its events. On Tuesday 2 April it holds a TAB race meeting; and on Tuesday 9 April is another TAB race meeting, in the lead-up to that sensational Tamworth Gold Cup meeting on Sunday 28 April.

I invite all my colleagues and their families and friends to come along and enjoy what will be a sensational day. The historic Tamworth Jockey Club provides the perfect backdrop for any event with its picturesque grandstand, racetracks, stables and finishing post, with manicured lawns and rose gardens completing the setting for the perfect event and providing magic photo opportunities. With redevelopment well underway and set to open very shortly, this is the perfect venue for Christmas parties, weddings, seminars, corporate functions, birthday parties and special occasions. I encourage all members to become a member of the Tamworth Jockey Club, the capital of country racing, for only \$50 a season—great value indeed. They will have a fantastic time. The president of the jockey club, Tim Coates, is doing a sensational job.

Tamworth Jockey Club is part of the Hunter and North West Racing Association, whose clubs include Armidale Jockey Club; the Barraba Jockey Club; the Bingara District Jockey Club; the Bundarra Jockey Club; the Deepwater Jockey Club; the Glen Innes Jockey Club; Gunnedah Jockey Club; Inverell Jockey Club; the Inverell Picnic Race Club; the Mallowa Amateur Picnic Race Club; the Merriwa Race Club; the Moree Picnic Race Club; the Moree Race Club; the Mungindi Jockey Club; the Muswellbrook Race Club; the Narrabri Jockey Club; the Quirindi Jockey Club, which recently held its cup meeting; the Scone Race Club; the Talmoi Amateur Picnic Race Club; and the Walcha Jockey Club, under the control of Kevin Ferrier, who does a great job; the Wallabadah Jockey Club, which holds its annual New Year's Day Cup meeting on that fantastic bush track; the Wialda Jockey Club; the Wean Amateur Picnic Race Club, which is a sensational day, so contact John Shaw if you would like some more information on that; and the Wine Country Race Club, which holds its meetings at Cessnock.

Tamworth has some significant facts associated with it. There are 187 registered trainers, who train approximately 1,000 horses. Included is one of Australia's most successful ever jockeys in Australia's Robert Thompson, who has ridden more than 3,800 winners. He is in our area, and we are very proud of him. The Hunter and North West Racing Association is the only association outside the metropolitan area that conducts a metropolitan race; and that is at the two-day Scone Cup Carnival, with Saturday being a stand-alone metropolitan meeting. Over those two days the association distributes \$1.8 million in prize money. So this is a significant day. Scone is certainly the place to be, with attractive marquees, for those who can get there.

The controlling body of thoroughbred racing in this State, Racing NSW, could never be described as reticent when it comes to issues regarding the viability of the New South Wales racing industry. The evidence of this is the lengthy legal battle in which Racing NSW and this State engaged to defend the racing industry's right to earn an income from wagering operators who use New South Wales race fields as a wagering platform. The High Court in March last year vindicated the stance taken by New South Wales; now, all three codes of racing have an additional revenue stream. It is not without note that all other States and Territories have introduced their own version of the New South Wales race fields scheme. Racing NSW is of the view that there would be a negligible effect on totalisator turnover should the current restriction on tote odds betting be lifted. However, there is a significant benefit to racing in supporting oncourse bookmakers as they add to the colour and spectacle of a race day.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Gareth Ward): Order! There is far too much audible conversation in the Chamber. Those who wish to have private conversations, particularly those to my right and behind me, should do so outside the Chamber.

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON: Total wagering on racing events through the New South Wales totaliser data system and fixed odds betting by the TAB is around \$4.96 million per annum. Turnover with New South Wales licensed bookmakers is around \$220 million a year. Therefore bookmakers make up only about 4 per cent of the total invested with New South Wales wagering operators. Historically, bookmakers had a monopoly on all fixed odds betting in this State. These days they are faced with major competition. The proposed lifting of the prohibition on tote odds betting by oncourse New South Wales bookmakers is a modest reform that will enable our bookies to compete on a more equal footing with their many counterparts and competitors.

The practice of tote odds betting will be restricted to the racecourse. It is hoped that it will provide the satchel swingers with a well-needed boost and attract patrons to race meetings to experience the colour and excitement. The second reform contained in the bill is a practical matter which will assist Racing NSW in its ongoing supervision and development of thoroughbred racing in this State. I encourage all those who are keen to get out and enjoy a great day in regional New South Wales to attend our country race meetings and enjoy the day. You cannot go wrong. I thoroughly commend the bill to the House.

Mr CHRIS HOLSTEIN (Gosford) [5.19 p.m.]: I support the Racing Legislation Amendment Bill 2013, which was introduced by the Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Hospitality and Racing, and Minister for the

Arts—and what a great job he is doing in his portfolio. The purpose of the bill is to amend the Thoroughbred Racing Act 1966 with respect to sanctions for breaches of conditions of registration by race clubs. It also seeks to amend the Totalizator Act 1997 with respect to totalisator odds. These amendments will provide Racing NSW with additional tools to effectively manage the conduct of race clubs and ensure the continued viability and future development of the industry in the State. It also will ensure the viability of New South Wales licensed bookmakers and their ongoing contribution to the economy and the racing industry in particular.

Like the good member for Tamworth, who spoke about the race clubs in his electorate, I will talk a little bit about the Gosford Race Club in my electorate. Chairman of the club, Michael Cusick, is a legend in the industry, as was his father, Malcolm, now deceased, who introduced me to racing and who did wonders for racing on the Central Coast. Michael Cusick is ably supported by a very professional chief executive officer, James Heddo, who is doing a wonderful job at Gosford. Gosford Race Club is a great club. Race clubs are not just for the die-hard pundits, they also provide a social outlet for attendees at meets and many clubs have approvals for uses, on a temporary basis, unrelated to horseracing.

Part of Gosford Race Club's values and vision statement is to deliver a valued racing and entertainment experience, to commit to integrity and respect in all its dealings and to strive to lead in Gosford and the Australian racing community. Gosford Race Club has held 11 meetings in the past three months, and 2011-12 was a tremendous year with one of the biggest crowds seen for many years. The club made a good profit and it was its best result since 1999. The club has investments of more than \$8 million and net assets of more than \$20 million. It has approval to allow temporary use for functions unrelated to horseracing.

The member for Tamworth spoke about a special event in the race club in his electorate. I think I can outdo him. The Gosford Race Club has been the leader of Gosford's New Year's Eve celebrations. Gosford council's family picnic day is conducted on New Year's Eve at the club, followed by the mighty Mariners playing at Bluetongue Stadium, followed by a great fireworks display on the beautiful Central Coast broadwater. The picnic day enables families to experience the racing and to watch a good football team—the Mariners—and then to have a community celebration at the end of the day with fireworks. That event has been coordinated through a range of people on a committee led ably by our Chamber of Commerce and well supported by Gosford Race Club, which sees beyond just horseracing and seizes opportunities to get involved in many other events in the community.

The current Totalizator Act prohibits a person from offering a bet on any event or contingency where the payout on the winning bet is based on the dividend declared by a totalisator, such as the TAB, for that event or contingency. This is also known as tote odds betting and may include offering a slightly higher dividend than the TAB or guaranteeing the best dividend on the Australian TAB pools. This practice, whilst prohibited in New South Wales, has been exploited for years by corporate bookmakers licensed in other jurisdictions. They have a large New South Wales client base and conduct tote odds betting on a significant scale.

Tote odds betting is now commonplace with bookmakers licensed in other jurisdictions and it is now a permitted practice in other States, including South Australia, the Northern Territory, Victoria and Queensland—effectively the entire eastern seaboard, except New South Wales. Tote betting is now an acceptable practice in a competitive national market where it is viewed as a form of price matching, but, unfortunately, New South Wales is now at a disadvantage competitively compared with its interstate counterparts. There is widespread support for the situation to be addressed and the three controlling bodies of racing—Racing NSW, Harness Racing NSW and Greyhound Racing NSW—have all supported the New South Wales Bookmakers Co-operative's request to have the prohibition in New South Wales removed. That would assist its members in achieving competitive neutrality by making available to them the operational conditions and wagering products that are available to them in other States.

The proposal to lift this prohibition has also received the support of all Ministers at the Australasian Racing Ministers Conference in 2012. Only New South Wales and Tasmania still had this prohibition in place at the time of the conference. The amendment proposes to add a clause to section 88 of the Totalizator Act 1977 to provide that a person is not guilty of the offence of tote odds betting if that person is a New South Wales licensed bookmaker and is present at a licensed racecourse when such a bet is offered, whether face-to-face, by authorised telephone or by electronic means. The prohibition of tote odds betting by unlicensed people is retained as a deterrent to offcourse, or starting price [SP], bookmaking activities.

The purpose of this reform is to achieve a consistency of minimum standards across race clubs in New South Wales by providing Racing NSW with the power to impose a wider range of sanctions on race clubs that

fail to comply with a condition of registration or fail to comply with directions on these standards across a multitude of matters. Those matters include the financial governance of a race club, the level of facilities and amenities at a racecourse and the manner in which racing meets at that club are conducted. Failure to comply with certain directions made by Racing NSW in relation to minimum standards may result in the imposition of a civil penalty of 50 penalty units, and up to 100 penalty units for further breaches, suspension or cancellation of that club's registration or a public admonishment of the race club.

Currently the only sanction available to Racing NSW is the cancellation of the club's registration, thereby effectively prohibiting that club from conducting racing. The one and only sanction, unfortunately, can have severe adverse effects on employees and suppliers and on the continued operation of the club and should be used only in extreme circumstances. These additional measures will allow Racing NSW to bring other pressures to bear on an errant club, short of the ultimate sanction of deregistration. These additional powers will help ensure that Racing NSW can uphold the widely recognised standards of excellence and integrity in New South Wales racing. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.27 p.m.]: After hearing the contributions of the member for Tamworth and the member for Gosford the House can rest assured that I will outdo them with the racing meets that happen in the electorate of Bathurst. It gives me great pleasure to speak on the Racing Legislation Amendment Bill 2013. People can be very passionate about racing and some might say that this bill is very important to the future of the racing industry. It gives me great pleasure to acknowledge the Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Hospitality and Racing, and Minister for the Arts as someone who knows firsthand how important country racing is to our communities. He is no stranger to my electorate, having attended quite a number of events and functions there over the past several years.

The bill has two main components. First, the bill is to provide that Racing NSW may impose sanctions on a registered racing club for a breach of conditions of a club's registration that is consistent with sanctions that may be imposed for failure to comply with directions or minimum standards for the conduct of races and race meetings. The second is to allow licensed bookmakers to offer totalisator odds on bets taken at a licensed racecourse, whether or not the other party to the bet is also at the racecourse. As I said, I am pleased to acknowledge the work of the Minister on behalf of the New South Wales racing industry. Between 1997 and 2007 the industry was decimated. It was on its knees, especially in country areas. The Minister took it upon himself to guide the future of racing in New South Wales. He has seen that the maximum prize money has increased in country areas such as Bathurst, Orange, Dubbo, Mudgee and other areas in the central west from \$5,000 to \$15,000. That is a 300 per cent increase.

Increased prize money has positive effects on the racing industry. It brings more competitors, greater horses with bigger followings, and better jockeys to our events and the multiplier effect back into our communities is tremendous. The racing form guides also show that the increased prize money has had a flow-on effect. On any given day the average race fields 11 or more horses per race. According to the TAB, the maximum industry benefit from gambling is derived when 11 or more horses are in the field. In 50 per cent of bush races, emergencies, as they are called, are coming back. Emergencies can be used in case of scratchings. The maximum number of horses in a field may now be between 12 and 14 runners. More horses at the races entice more people back to racing, and that is terrific news for racing in New South Wales.

The Racing Legislation Amendment Bill 2013 confers upon the Minister the discretion to impose sanctions on a race club as opposed to closing down a race club if it encounters hardship or for other reasons. Closing down a club is the last thing this Government or Minister wants to do. The imposition of sanctions by the Minister is a positive move. The second aspect of the bill allows bookmakers to offer totalisator odds that fluctuate. Rather than offering fixed odds, bookmakers will be able to offer a better product on course at a race meeting. Under this legislation bookmakers will be able to offer fluctuating odds to gamblers on and off course. This will increase the viability of the bookmaker. Through this legislation the Government can improve the situation for all race participants, including trainers, jockeys and the many thousands of other people who are involved in the racing industry.

We all remember years ago what colourful characters the bookies were at race days. They created the hustle and bustle, which we all enjoyed. During the middle of the last century there would be 200 bookmakers at Randwick on a race day; we now have only 200 bookmakers in New South Wales. Those are the guys we want and we must support. I thank Minister Souris for giving me the opportunity to speak on this bill and also for allowing me to represent him at various harness racing events. Let me tell the House about one such event. All members would have heard of the Gold Crown Carnival at Bathurst. It is taking place at home right now. The

event began last Wednesday and comprises a week and a half of festivities in my electorate of Bathurst. Jockeys and trainers from across the State come along to be part of it. The best two-year-old fillies come to Bathurst to compete in the Gold Crown Carnival.

This Saturday night I will represent the Minister at the race meeting, which will feature the two-year-old group one finals for the Gold Crown and the Gold Tiara. There is good prize money as well. But let me not stop there. There also will be held the Gold Crown Ball—we do not need fireworks; we have the Gold Crown Ball—and during the week there will be events for children. The Calcutta draw happened yesterday and the yearling sales have taken place recently. The Gold Crown Carnival is an important event. I must also support the industry. The Bathurst Harness Racing Club, which is located at Bathurst Showground, is looking to extend its track from 750 metres to 1,000 metres and will move to a new location. Next year the Gold Crown Carnival will not be held at Bathurst Showground; it will have a new venue with a 1,000 metre track. Then just watch the horses come from overseas to compete in the event.

Mr Geoff Provost: Like Black Caviar?

Mr PAUL TOOLE: A couple of weeks ago the Bathurst Cup was held at Tyers Park racecourse. Black Caviar has not raced there yet. This is another fantastic event that brought horses together to compete from across the central west. Just down the road Blayney Harness Racing Club is another great club that has been supported by this Government. The club received money from the Government's Community Building Partnership program to build upon its infrastructure and all the hard work of the volunteers. Bathurst also has greyhound racing—we have got it all in Bathurst. Let me tell anyone who has not been to Bathurst for racing that it all happens at Bathurst. The greyhounds have a new shelter and about 50 race meetings take place there every year. When the Government was elected two years ago it made a commitment to invest \$5 million in country racing. As I said, country racing was on its knees and looking for support but it was ignored by previous Ministers.

Thank goodness for Minister George Souris, who is making sure that these racing events support economic activity in our communities. The Minister also is ensuring that the industry stays alive for a great number of years. I note that a champion harness racing hero of the past, the immortal Hondo Grattan, has been inducted into the Inter Dominion Hall of Fame. We in the central west will never forget the exploits of that champion horse, known as the Bathurst Bulldog. Throughout the 1970s Hondo Grattan took on another great pacer in Paleface Adios and thrilled racing crowds. Tony Turnbull and his son Steve Turnbull, the trainers of Paleface Adios, attended the Inter Dominion Ball. Tony and Steve, who live at The Lagoon, are strong advocates for the sport. It gives me great pleasure to support the bill and to be able to speak about our racing champions. I give full credit to the Minister for bringing forward this legislation and I commend the bill to the House.

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) [5.37 p.m.]: I support the Racing Legislation Amendment Bill 2013. The bill is brought to this House by the great Minister George Souris, who is celebrating 25 years in Parliament. He has held portfolios relating to sports, tourism and racing both now and as a Minister in the Coalition Government under that great Premier Nick Greiner. The objects of the bill are to amend the Thoroughbred Racing Act 1996 and the Totalizator Act 1997 to provide that Racing NSW may impose sanctions on a registered race club for a breach of conditions of the club's registration that are consistent with sanctions that may be imposed for failure to comply with directions or minimum standards for the conduct of races and race meetings, and to allow licensed bookmakers to offer totalisator odds on bets taken at a licensed racecourse, whether or not the other party to the bet is also at the racecourse.

This bill seeks to preserve the diversity in the wagering industry by ensuring the viability of licensed bookmakers in New South Wales. The bill also provides Racing NSW with additional tools to manage the conduct of race clubs. The bill stems from requests by Racing NSW and the NSW Bookmakers Co-operative. The three controlling bodies of racing—Racing NSW, Harness Racing NSW and Greyhound Racing NSW—support the change to the legislation. The proposal to change the legislation also was recommended last year by the Australasian Racing Ministers' Conference. Amendment of the Thoroughbred Racing Act 1996 is a practical reform that is directed towards achieving consistency with Racing NSW's existing powers, such as its powers to address a race club's failure to comply with directions in relation to minimum standards of operation.

At present, Racing NSW does not have similar powers when dealing with a race club for a breach of the club's conditions of registration. The only option available to Racing NSW in those circumstances is cancellation of the club's registration. Effectively, that would exclude the club from racing, which in most cases

would not be the most desirable outcome. As all members know, race clubs administer the races, but there is a whole industry and community relying on the racing industry. Among those who rely on the racing industry for their livelihoods are trainers, strappers, jockeys, bookmakers, feed suppliers and livestock transporters. Wiping away a race club for an infraction should not be the only recourse open to Racing NSW. This amending bill will provide Racing NSW with additional tools that effectively will ensure the continued viability and development of the industry throughout the State.

Allowing licensed bookmakers to offer bets on the declared totalisator dividend, which is known as tote odds betting, remains prohibited in New South Wales. However, the practice is permitted in other jurisdictions, such as the Northern Territory, Victoria, Queensland and South Australia. It has been reported that at least 25 per cent of the annual turnover of approximately \$3.5 billion wagered on thoroughbred racing with interstate corporate bookmakers is sourced from New South Wales punters. The majority of that turnover is based on tote odds betting. The importance of this bill can be illustrated by that \$3.5 billion, which leaves New South Wales and goes to other States. By simply amending the legislation, that revenue will no longer leave the State. One wonders why, during 16 years of Labor Government, Labor members sat on their hands while the racing industry was brought to its knees.

Mr John Sidoti: How long?

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD: Labor was in government for 16 long years. During that period the racing industry suffered. The former Labor Government made none of the changes that had been called for by various bodies involved in racing. The Coalition Government has done so much for racing, particularly regional racing. The Taree Racecourse, which is located in my electorate at Bushland Drive, Taree, is one of six regional training centres in New South Wales. More than \$2 million has been spent to make the course an all-weather track and approximately \$3 million has been spent on patrons' facilities. The Taree Racecourse facilities are first class. It was a great privilege for me to be a member of the racecourse trust and the building committee when the track was redeveloped and the patrons' facilities were built. The people who live in the Manning Valley are fortunate to have those facilities. The only other conference venue that could accommodate 300 or more guests was the Taree RSL Club.

Mr Geoff Provest: It is a good club.

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD: It is a very good club. It is now known as Club Taree. The RSL club moved, and the new club premises did not have an auditorium for approximately 10 years. During that period the patrons' facilities at the Taree Racecourse provided a much-needed facility for the people who live in the Manning Valley. Since the change of government two years ago, the Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Hospitality and Racing authorised an immediate funding boost of \$5 million for regional racing, which was very much appreciated by the Taree Wingham Race Club. Another racecourse in my electorate is the Tuncurry Racecourse, which is the location of the Tuncurry Forster Jockey Club.

In a sense, the Tuncurry Racecourse is in its infancy. It has a wonderful racetrack. However, the patrons' facilities are temporary, and the club is working very hard to improve them. The Taree Wingham Race Club supports a very large contingent of people who derive their livelihood from racing in Taree. Trainers either have their properties within the boundaries of the Taree Racecourse or in proximity to it. Similarly, other trainers utilise the Tuncurry Racecourse. On the mid North Coast, trainers and others involved in the racing industry travel along the coast and move from one carnival to the next. Racing is an extremely important industry on the mid North Coast, which means that it is an extremely important region to the State's economy. It is good to have a Minister who understands the wider significance of regional race clubs.

Many members of this House have experience in the racing industry. For example, the member for Hawkesbury is a great advocate for racing in New South Wales. The legislation and policies for Racing NSW have been formulated in consultation with the racing industry and with the benefit of members' experience. I note for the record, and in passing, the presence in the public gallery of a person wearing a Boer War Descendant medallion and welcome him to this House. As I stated earlier, this is important legislation that will assist in saving the bookmaker industry in New South Wales that is so vital, so much a part of our community and so much a part of our lifestyle. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS (Clarence) [5.46 p.m.]: It is with pleasure that I support the Racing Legislation Amendment Bill 2013. I congratulate the Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Hospitality and Racing on introducing this bill into the House. In particular, I thank the Minister for coming to Grafton last July

during the running of the Grafton Cup and presenting the trophy to the winning horse, Shamardashing. Unfortunately I did not back Shamardashing, but it was a great event and everyone enjoyed the day. Racing is a very important part of Grafton's history. This year the running of the 100th Grafton Cup will be held. An invitation was sent to the Premier to present the trophy to the winning horse of this prestigious event. Unfortunately, I am advised that the Premier will be unable to attend on that date, so we will be looking for another luminary to present the trophy. Unfortunately, I cannot see anyone of sufficient standing to present the trophy to the 100th Grafton Cup winner this year.

The Grafton Cup is one of the biggest non-metropolitan events on the Australian racing calendar. The annual event is run over 2,350 metres for prize money of \$150,000. The cup race is held in July as part of a two-day carnival, with the other major races being the \$150,000 Ramornie Handicap and the \$50,000 Grafton Guineas. The Grafton Cup Carnival is hosted by the Clarence River Jockey Club and is a hugely popular event that attracts quality fields and renowned trainers, such as Chris Waller, Gai Waterhouse and Peter Snowden, as well as bumper crowds. I very strongly recommend that members of this House come along to Grafton during the carnival to enjoy quality racing in a beautiful setting among very friendly country people.

Mr Andrew Gee: I will come along.

Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS: I thank the member for Orange for volunteering to attend. The Racing Legislation Amendment Bill 2013 is important to my constituents and it is certainly supported by Racing NSW and the NSW Bookmakers Co-operative as well. The proposed legislation makes two important changes to racing and wagering legislation. First it will provide Racing NSW with the power to impose a wider range of sanctions on race clubs for failing to comply with a condition of registration. Secondly, it will allow New South Wales licensed bookmakers to offer totalisator odds under certain circumstances. These amendments will assist in ensuring the viability of New South Wales licensed bookmakers and their ongoing contribution to the State's racing industry and economy, as well as providing the controlling body over thoroughbred racing in this State—Racing NSW—with additional tools to effectively manage the conduct of race clubs and ensure the continuing viability and future development of the industry throughout the State.

It has been reported that at least 25 per cent of the annual turnover of approximately \$3.5 billion wagered on thoroughbred racing with interstate corporate bookmakers comes from New South Wales punters. The majority of this turnover is based on tote odds betting. The NSW Bookmakers Co-operative approached the Government asking that the prohibition on tote odds betting be lifted so that New South Wales bookies could operate on a level footing with their interstate competitors. All three racing control bodies—Racing NSW, Harness Racing NSW and Greyhound Racing NSW—support this change. Greyhound racing is a big part of the racing carnival in Grafton in July, and we are able to satisfy all racing needs of the New South Wales racing fraternity. This legislation will not weaken the regulatory controls over bookmaker operations and licensed bookies. They will still be subject to the same level of scrutiny by racing authorities and the Government.

The second part of the bill is to amend the Thoroughbred Racing Act 1996 to provide Racing NSW with the power to impose a wider range of sanctions on race clubs that fail to comply with a condition of registration. The purpose of this amendment is to achieve consistency with Racing NSW's existing powers in respect of a race club's failure to comply with directions in relation to minimum standards for an array of matters. The minimum standards extend to the manner in which race meetings are conducted, the financial governance of a race club, and the level of facilities and amenities at a racecourse. If a race club fails to follow certain directions made by Racing NSW in regard to minimum standards, the controlling body may publicly reprimand the race club, impose a civil penalty of 50 penalty units and up to 100 penalty units for further breaches, or suspend or cancel the race club's registration.

The proposed amendment is practical and will assist Racing NSW to maintain the high standards of operation and integrity that are expected by the patrons of this very popular sport in New South Wales. While I am not an avid horserace follower, I certainly did enjoy watching Black Caviar win its twenty-fourth consecutive race at Mooney Valley on Friday night while I was watching the Bombers win their first game of footy for the season. It was a spectacular race. I think everybody watching that race was riding Black Caviar. That horse has captured the nation's attention. This racing legislation is important, as evidenced by the people who followed Black Caviar on Friday night. I support the legislation and I commend the Minister for bringing it to the House. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr JOHN SIDOTI (Drummoyne) [5.54 p.m.]: It is with great pleasure that I support these amendments proposed in the Racing Legislation Amendment Bill 2013, which will do three things. It will bring

New South Wales bookmakers in the horse and greyhound racing industries into line with their counterparts in other Australian States and Territories. It will help preserve the competitiveness of New South Wales bookmakers in the national racing and betting market, and it will improve the standard of race clubs across the State by giving Racing NSW the power to impose a wide range of sanctions on clubs for breaches of the conditions and standards attached to their registration. Racing has a long history in New South Wales. The first official thoroughbred race meeting was held in October 1810 at Hyde Park in Sydney.

Trotting was established during the 1880s and by the 1920s greyhound racing also had become increasingly popular. Racing also has an important place in our cultural and economic life. As well as racing contributing to our cultural diversity and providing entertainment and employment for many members of our community, it also makes a substantial contribution to New South Wales finances. These funds are used to improve and support the infrastructure and services provided by the Government across New South Wales. However, despite racing's increasing popularity, the number of people attending race meetings both in metropolitan Sydney and in country New South Wales has steadily declined.

There are numerous reasons for this, ranging from the extensive televising of races, the introduction of betting at off-course totalisator agencies—colloquially known, of course, as the TAB—and, more recently, the transmission of race meetings and the availability of online betting services on a broad range of electronic devices such as smart phones and iPads. Historically, the racing industry has consisted of State- and Territory-based TABs, offering betting services on course, in retail shops, over the telephone and, more recently, over the internet, and bookmakers offering fixed odds and services primarily on racecourses. Traditionally, the business of New South Wales bookmakers involves setting a book and managing risk over racing events in New South Wales.

However, the internet in particular has led to a breakdown in State-based exclusivity over its sporting events by creating a national online betting market. Betting on races outside the State or Territory in which a punter lives is now well established. For example, a New South Wales resident can now place a bet with a Northern Territory bookmaker on a race or sporting event anywhere in Australia including, of course, such an event in New South Wales. The internet has allowed betting providers to operate in a national market at very low cost. It enables them to enter the market anywhere in Australia at varying levels of regulation and taxation—and often at lower standards than those required of New South Wales bookmakers by legislation—and to be very competitive once they do so.

Corporate bookmakers, in particular, have taken advantage of the growth of the internet to establish businesses that offer wagering services online to a national audience in jurisdictions that charge little or no tax or racing industry fees, and that have regulatory structures that allow them to offer products and services not permitted in other States or Territories—for example, the Northern Territory. This allows corporate bookmakers to offer better prices to customers because of the relatively low tax and racing industry contributions required; a broader product range, including the ability to bet on novelty events; and betting on credit.

Many aspects of racing, whether or not conducted in New South Wales, have operated on a national basis for some time. For example, Sky Channel has been a national race broadcaster since 1985; and the State-based racing associations work together to create a national racing calendar, with race scheduling being nationally coordinated so that races occur every four to five minutes on most days of the week. As a result, all racing industries derive more than half of their income from interstate racing. In other words, individual States are dependent on each other to create an attractive racing product for their punters. Clearly, betting has evolved from a series of State- or Territory-based markets to a national market. This situation has led to both punters and operators jurisdiction shopping across the country for the best products and odds while States and Territories—including New South Wales—are legally restricted in their ability to regulate operators outside their borders.

Although the greatest share of revenue raised by the Government is from the TAB, significant revenue is sourced also from the business of New South Wales bookmakers. It is estimated that approximately \$3.5 billion is wagered annually on thoroughbred racing in Australia, of which at least 25 per cent is estimated to come from New South Wales punters. The majority of this amount is based on tote odds betting, that is, offering bets based on the dividends declared by a totalisator. The New South Wales TAB has the right to offer fixed-odds betting. However, the Totalizator Act 1997 prohibits a New South Wales bookmaker from offering bets based on the dividends declared by a totalisator. New South Wales and Tasmania are the only States that do not allow their bookmakers to offer tote odds bets. Bookmakers in States and Territories, including the Northern Territory, Victoria, Queensland and South Australia, are permitted to do so.

Corporate bookmakers also can offer tote odds, which accounts for the majority of their sales. They do this by duplicating the odds created by the various Australian TABs and use their tax and product-fee advantage to add a premium to this price, for example, tote odds plus 5 per cent. In many cases the offering of tote odds by corporate bookmakers is an almost risk-free exercise as the entire amount of bets received can be bet back with one of the totalisators, and any premium offered to customers can be offset by volume rebates paid by these organisations. In 2009 Tabcorp estimated that the annual funding tax loss to Victoria and New South Wales created by these significant changes in the betting industry and the entrance of these new players into the market was \$18.9 million and \$29.8 million respectively, and funding losses of \$45 million to the Victorian racing industry and \$58 million to New South Wales.

Increasingly, punters seek out betting opportunities that provide the best price, products and complementary services. Operators will seek out a business environment that enables them to maximise returns. The amendments proposed under this bill are an overdue and logical step to help provide a contemporary and equal service to New South Wales punters and to ensure bookmakers in New South Wales can operate on a level playing field—or racetrack if you will—and remain competitive with their counterparts across Australia. All three controlling bodies that regulate racing in New South Wales—Racing NSW, Harness Racing NSW and Greyhound Racing NSW—support the legislative changes outlined in this bill.

I also note that these amendments do not change the stringent controls imposed by existing legislation over licensed New South Wales bookmakers and their operations. All these matters will continue to be carefully scrutinised and monitored by these racing authorities and the Government. In summary, this bill will assist New South Wales bookmakers to remain viable in the very competitive national betting market while still offering their regular on-site clients the same betting products offered by interstate operators and corporate bookmakers. The bill will help to ensure government revenue from racing remains in and benefits New South Wales. The second set of proposed changes in this bill amends the Thoroughbred Racing Act 1996 to provide Racing NSW with the power to impose a wider range of sanctions on race clubs for breaches of conditions of their registration.

At present, the only remedy available to Racing NSW under the legislation is to deregister the club for any breach, however minor, of matters such as liquor licences, the terms of a club's constitution or articles of association or, say, its workplace safety obligations. If a club is deregistered it cannot hold a race meeting. While such a step may be justified in extreme or serious circumstances, or for consistent and repeated breaches, it is not necessarily appropriate for more minor matters, one-off situations or to improve compliance by the club in question. Therefore, these reforms benefit not only bookmakers and racing clubs in New South Wales, but racing generally in our State. I therefore commend this bill to the House.

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

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Gareth Ward): Order! Government business having concluded, the House will now proceed with private members' statements.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

GOVERNMENT ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES

Mr NICK LALICH (Cabramatta) [6.05 p.m.]: A little over 100 years ago, in 1893, a gentleman named Mr Henry Willis, a former tanner, took office as the first Mayor of Cabramatta and Canley Vale Council when the two suburbs were separated from Liverpool Council. Over the years many more changes would come into effect, and in 1948 Cabramatta and Canley Vale City Council were amalgamated into the city of Fairfield. I do not believe they were called city councils in those days. Mr Willis retained his position as mayor of what would now be known as Fairfield City Council for a number of years. He served also on Camden Council in 1897 and then Randwick Council from 1899-1902. To clear up any confusion as to why I am talking about Mr Willis, approximately 100 years ago this year Mr Willis was the Speaker of the House during 1911-1913 as appears in the plaque on the wall above the Speaker's chair.

In 1901 Mr Willis was elected to the House of Representatives as the Federal member for Robertson. He was re-elected in 1903 and in 1906, before he was defeated in 1910. Mr Willis was not out for long. He was re-elected in 1911 and joined the New South Wales Legislative Assembly. On 24 August 1911 Henry Willis

took the position of Speaker of the House and was confronted with a 24-hour long sitting amidst unprecedented scenes involving violence and disorder following his party's discontent with his taking the position of Speaker against its wishes. Not all of his time serving the community was unpleasant, and that is not what I want to highlight. Mr Henry Willis, like many others, has made a career out of serving his local community and giving all to make our communities a better place. Political affiliations aside, Mr Willis had a longstanding career serving in all three tiers of government and providing assistance and a voice to those in his local constituencies.

I too was given the opportunity 100 years later to be an elected representative of Fairfield City Council. In those days the position was known as an alderman. In 1993 the Local Government Act changed the reference to council representatives from aldermen to councillors. In 2004 I continued to serve the people of my electorate and became the first popularly elected mayor of Fairfield city. I am now an elected member of the Legislative Assembly and cannot be happier for the opportunities bestowed upon me to proudly represent and serve my local community and my constituents who need someone to speak on their behalf. Before I conclude, I mention two others who come to mind when thinking of individuals who served in my local area first through council and then State Parliament. Mr Frank Hill was mayor of Cabramatta and Canley Vale from 1935 to 1945. He then became the member for Blacktown, a position he held in this place from 1941 to 1945.

Ms Janice Crosio was an alderman on Fairfield City Council from 1971 to 1980, mayor from 1974 to 1975 and again from 1977 to 1980 before she became the first woman elected to the New South Wales Legislative Assembly in 30 years. Janice continued her State political career representing Fairfield from 1981 to 1988 and Smithfield from 1988 to 1990. She was the first woman to become a Cabinet Minister in New South Wales, serving as Minister for Natural Resources from 1984 to 1986, Minister for Local Government from 1986 to 1988 and Minister for Water Resources from 1986 to 1988. In 1990 Janice was elected to represent Prospect and became Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Arts and Administrative Services, in 1993, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Environment, Sport and Territories, from 1993 to 1994 and Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Social Security from 1994 to 1996.

Finally Janice was Opposition Whip from 2001 to 2004. She retired at the 2004 election, having attained executive status in each tier of government to which she was elected. It brings me great pleasure to be able to acknowledge the great work that the Hon. Mr Willis, Mr Hill and Ms Crosio carried out for many years. Not just for serving in a number of local councils, State Parliament and Federal Parliament but for being there for the people of my electorate, doing the best they could to serve the members of our local communities and also for their help in shaping our city into the great metropolis that it is today.

GUNNEDAH WEST ROTARY ANNUAL DEBUTANTE BALL

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth) [6.09 p.m.]: I inform the Parliament and my colleagues of a wonderful event that happened on Friday 22 March 2013. It was the Rotary Club of Gunnedah West thirty-eighth annual debutante ball. It was a wonderful event hosted by the Rotary Club of Gunnedah West. My wife and I were honoured to be invited and to attend. In Australia a debutante ball is often part of the high school system and both men and women are included. The ball symbolises the debut of the soon to graduate high school student into the young adult world. Traditionally the girl asks the boy to the ball. Dinner, speeches and ballroom dancing are all features of the debutante ball and Gunnedah shone. These events are an important part of Australian culture that I firmly believe should be encouraged, and that is exactly what happened at Gunnedah on Friday 22 March. The ball was well supported with over 400 people in attendance to welcome the debutantes and their partners.

The following debutantes attended the ball: Courtney Brandon was partnered by Luke Curgenvén, Alison Korn was partnered by Matt Gillham, Tahlia Horvat was partnered by Jackson Ludlow, Courtney Grace was partnered by Isaac Keeler, Kayla Smith was partnered by Adam Curgenvén, Anna Maxwell was partnered by Joe Duffy, Katie Norsworthy was partnered by Brady Eason, Amy Hammond was partnered by Kurtis Tydd, Mikaela Pease was partnered by Blake Small, Lara Guest was partnered by Luke Mackay, Taliea Endicott was partnered by Ethan Pratt, Krsytal Lynch was partnered by Kalin Eade, Alex Koenig was partnered by Nick Jones, Sophie Hendrie was partnered by Jake Wharton, Amia McDonald was partnered by Nick Smyth, Rebecca Pryor was partnered by Josh Day, Montana Dries was partnered by Daniel Head and Reanna Hill was partnered by Matt Hassan. The flower girl was Josie Kingdom and the page boy was Noah Lousick.

The debutantes and their partners are a fine group of young people and Gunnedah can certainly feel proud of the young people in Gunnedah and know that they will certainly go on to bigger and better things. They are in good hands. These events certainly would not be possible without the wonderful organisation and

support of our volunteers. In this case the Rotary Club of Gunnedah West did an outstanding job. I congratulate the club and all those who assisted, particularly in the dance instruction. President Kelvin Walls and his wife Pat introduced the debutants and their partners, the club secretaries Kerry and Alison Bee attended and Gunnedah Mayor Owen Hasler and his wife Di were present. Di Hasler did a wonderful job instructing the students in dance. Also in attendance were Rotary District Governor Brian Beasley and his lovely wife, Heather.

My wife and I were made most welcome and can I say that the official party did a great job "mixing it up" and "tripping the light fantastic" with the debutantes and their partners. I am looking forward to a little dance instruction next year from Di Hasler and my wife and I look forward to taking part in the debutante ball again in 2014. Without clubs like Rotary these events would struggle to occur. They are an important part of our culture and it is important to show young people how to dress and to conduct themselves. The 18 debutantes and their partners were respectful, polite and put on a fantastic performance. I congratulate the Rotary Club of Gunnedah West and thank them for the invitation to the thirty-eighth annual debutante ball. I look forward to attending again in 2014.

WOOLLAHRA MUNICIPAL COUNCIL COMMUNITY LEADERS RECEPTION

Ms GABRIELLE UPTON (Vaucluse—Parliamentary Secretary) [6.14 p.m.]: I had the pleasure of attending Woollahra Council's community leaders reception on Thursday 21 March 2013 in my electorate of Vaucluse. At the annual reception awards are made to our local leaders for their demonstrated strong commitment to the community. It is always an enjoyable reception for all community leaders, who come together to celebrate their best. I will reflect tonight on the award winners for 2013. There are a number of categories. The youth award was given to Adam Schwartz, who is an inspiring member of our local community. Adam, who lives with severe autism, is a shining example of how rich life can be, not just for people living with disabilities. He volunteers at Centennial Park, Holdsworth Community Centre and Neilsen Park delivering leaflets, refilling pamphlet holders, cleaning and picking up rubbish. Adam also has his own small business delivering organic veggie boxes to homes in the area and has recently started a job at Mitre 10. Congratulations Adam.

Ros Horin and Carmel Dwyer won the innovative community project award for devising the Woollahra Festival of Arts and Ideas four years ago: A festival by the community, for the community. The ideas component of the festival has five streams: current affairs, fresh ideas, readers and writers, safari bar and visual arts. The arts component delivers a high-quality entertainment program. In 2012 more than 13,000 people attended the festival. This is only possible through the dedication and personal commitment of Carmel and Ros. There were two winners for the innovative community culture and arts initiative award. The first was to Stella Downer, who has been an important part of the Woollahra Small Sculpture Prize since its inception in 2001. Stella has played a role in selecting and securing judges, overseeing the placement of the works for the annual exhibition and organising the tenth anniversary touring component of the exhibition. Woollahra Small Sculpture Prize is a major event in our local community calendar.

Marlene Antico was the second winner. Marlene has always had a strong commitment to the visual arts in the Woollahra community, including running the eponymous commercial art gallery in Paddington for over 10 years. She is both the founder and the sole patron of the inaugural Paddington Art Prize for Painting and its exhibition, which is now in its tenth year. The winner of the contribution to the community award was the Mum for Mum program. Twenty-five local Mum for Mum volunteers visit socially isolated mothers in the Woollahra district once a week for up to the first year of the babies' lives. The volunteers give the new mothers confidence in their parenting ability, help them solve problems, allay the mothers' fears and encourage them to enjoy their babies. The volunteers are fantastic women and have positively affected the wellbeing of these new mums.

In the senior citizen of the year category the highly commended award went to Norton Whitmont. Norton was being recognised for his long-term support of the Woollahra Philharmonic Orchestra, attending every concert since 1996. He helps with ticket sales, stage set up, artist and audience liaison, selling raffle tickets, instruments, lighting and anything else that may need doing. Congratulations Norton. The winner of the senior citizen of the year award was William McQuaid. Bill is a regular contributor to programs at the Woollahra Seniors Community Centre and a dedicated volunteer. He is a member of the Woollahra Gaden Choir, the seniors art program, Lions Club and Probus. He hosts bingo and organises the Jewish Women's Club through Jewish Aid—although he is not Jewish himself. On a weekly basis Bill takes people with limited mobility and disabilities to lunch, as well as brightening people's day by playing his accordion.

The final award for the night was for the citizen of the year, which was shared between two outstanding people. The first awardee was Monsignor Tony Doherty, AM, who has been parish priest at St Mary Magdalene Church at Rose Bay since 2004. He was recognised for his enormous contribution to the community and going far beyond the normal duties of a parish priest. Tony is involved in pastoral care assisting the marginalised through the St Vincent de Paul Society, Alcoholics Anonymous, St Canice's Kitchen, St Vincent's Hospital, and the Sacred Heart Hospice in Darlinghurst. He has also raised funds locally for St Jude's School in Arusha, Tanzania—a free school for 1,600 needy children.

The second recipient was Jessica Brown. Jessica was also the winner of the People's Choice—Community Heroes Award at the 2013 New South Wales Women of the Year Awards. Jessica founded the Life Changing Experiences Foundation in 2003 and has dedicated the past 10 years to changing the lives of underprivileged and disadvantaged girls. I need say no more about Jessica; her accomplishments are on the record in many forms now, being such a prominent winner in Women's Week. On this note, I commend my private member's statement about the local Woollahra Citizenship Awards to the House.

FIRE AND RESCUE NSW FUNDING

Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) [6.19 p.m.]: I rise tonight to support all firefighters in New South Wales, particularly those that work and live in my electorate of Shellharbour. As our communities are well aware, the O'Farrell Government has imposed budget cuts that are seeing fire stations being closed down and communities left with fewer and fewer and fewer firefighters. The O'Farrell Government's June budget imposed across-the-board cuts to the public sector wages bill of 1.2 per cent, with Fire and Rescue NSW being hit with a larger cut, amounting to 1.75 per cent. Fire and Rescue NSW has confirmed that firefighters are not "frontline" staff and Fire and Rescue NSW will have to make these cuts despite Government announcements that frontline staff will not be affected. In the case of Fire and Rescue NSW, the O'Farrell Government requires employee-related expenses to be slashed by about \$7.6 million in 2012-13, and by another \$32 million over the next two years.

Public service funding is a matter of life and death. I am sure those opposite cannot disagree with that statement. Firefighters, like all staff in the public sectors, need to know that our State Government is committed to providing decent services for the people of New South Wales. Proper funding can make a difference in saving lives. Firefighters are at the coalface in the public sector. If they are poorly resourced the community suffers the most in an immediate way. Public funding of services is not some optional extra; it is the difference between life and death. In the event of a fire, hazardous material spills, car crashes or other rescue situations we all need a fast, professional and well-resourced response. This cannot be achieved for free; it requires a financial commitment from government.

In a four-page letter written to Mr Jim Casey, the State Secretary of the Fire Brigade Employees Union, then commissioner Greg Mullins discusses wage cuts, capping, taking fire stations "off line" to save on overtime, and how to reduce sick leave. The correspondence discusses some award entitlements in relation to the attendance and maintenance protocols. This correspondence advises the Fire Brigade Employees Union to be mindful that employee morale and engagement issues can lead to absenteeism. I have visited the fire stations in my electorate of Shellharbour, and the only issue at the moment is lack of support and lack of funding by this Government.

With fire stations going off line, public sector workers being sacked, the wages of nurses, teachers and police being capped, the police death and disability being axed, workers compensation being axed, poles and wires being sold and our ports being sold, and \$1.7 billion being ripped out of the education system and \$3 billion being slashed from the health budget, Barry O'Farrell is ripping the guts out of local communities, including my community of Shellharbour. The people of New South Wales will not wait until 2019; they will not wait to bury Barry. This is a draconian Government. It needs to start supporting our public sector workers—our police, nurses, teachers and firefighters. I for one, as the member for Shellharbour, am disgusted that Dapto fire station is taken off line at times, and quite a few times, in emergencies when staff are sent out to other fire stations. I have spoken to these firefighters. They are very passionate about what they do. They are highly trained professional people, and they provide invaluable services to our communities. They save lives. I, like members of my community, believe you cannot put a price on saving lives.

Mr CRAIG BAUMANN (Port Stephens—Parliamentary Secretary) [6.24 p.m.]: That is probably one of the worst private member's statements I have heard from the member for Shellharbour. I heard not one bit of truth in it. She is obviously in the same parallel universe that her leader was described as being in a few years

ago, when most of the money that the previous Government blew was wasted. She forgot to mention the 3,000 new nurses, or the \$3 billion reinvested in front-line services. I emphasise, that is the worst private member's statement I have heard in this place. The member completely misled the House. Her Government's blowing of the budgets of this State is a sad indictment of what is happening in the Labor Opposition.

INGLEBURN LIONS CLUB

Mr BRYAN DOYLE (Campbelltown) [6.25 p.m.]: I am honoured to inform the House of the Fiftieth Charter Anniversary of my Lions Club of Ingleburn, held on 23 March 2013. With Federal member for Werriwa, Laurie Ferguson, and Campbelltown Councillor Paul Hawker, a fellow Lion, we gathered to celebrate the Charter Night of the Ingleburn Lions Club, which held a banquet dinner at the Belmonte Liverpool on 23 March 1963. Lions' motto is "We serve". As part of the order of celebrations the piper called the meeting to order. The master of ceremonies, my good friend Lion Jim Jelich, President of the Ingleburn Chamber of Commerce, led us through the meeting. The invocation was led by my friend Lion Dennis Baert. I was honoured to read the Lions Code of Ethics. As I outlined to the meeting, those points are very important.

They include: to show my faith in the worthiness of my vocation by industrious application to the end that I may merit a reputation for quality of service; to remember that in building up my business it is not necessary to tear down another's; to hold friendship as an end and not as a means; and to hold that true friendship exists not on account of the service performed by one to another, but that true friendship demands nothing but accepts service in the spirit in which it is given. The Toast to Lions Clubs International was given by my good friend Ray Williams—not our Ray Williams, but Ray Williams, President of the RSL Club of Ingleburn. The response to the toast was by Lion Gary Parker, District Governor 201 N2. And the cake cutting ceremony was by Lion Wayne Franshaw, President of the Ingleburn Lions.

In my address to the Lions Club members on behalf of a grateful community I thanked them for their service, their friendship and their fellowship. I told them in my maiden speech that I had noted the importance of values, service and determination; and that all were hallmarks of the Lions code of ethics. I spoke about that special sense of community that are Ingleburn and Campbelltown; and that makes Ingleburn and Campbelltown the best place to live—that opal of the south-west, the best part of the Macarthur. I told the Lions meeting that I used to think that 50 years was old. But now, as I approach 50 myself, I am much wiser: I have come to understand that this is when they are actually just reaching their peak. I noted how much poorer our community would have been without the service of the illustrious Lions of Ingleburn.

We fondly remembered stalwarts such as Lion Clive Tregear, Lion Bob Ansell and Lion Jim Merry, who contributed so greatly to our community. We reflected on the memorabilia and the photos. We looked at the contributions, which include Lions running regional picnics for handicapped children; their undying support for the Beverley Park Special School; their support of Myrtle Cottage, which provides friendship to the elderly who cannot normally leave their homes; their support overseas for the Solomon Islands project; the Lions barbeque trailer, a frequent and welcome visitor at all community functions, making sure that all in the community are well fed—there are very few functions that cannot be improved by a Lions sausage sandwich and a drink; the refurbishment of community parks; and fundraising to provide equipment for local health services.

We were honoured on the night to have Lion Keith Kent, a good friend of mine from the Ingleburn community, who was an eye witness to the Charter Night. He was able to provide some of the colour, the feeling and hope for the future that only one who was present at the time could convey to the rest of the meeting. We were truly blessed that he remembered and shared those experiences with us. The highlight of the celebrations was Lion Keith Kent, who led us in a heartfelt rendition of the Lions song *I've got that Lion feeling deep in my heart*. The Lions Club generally and the Lions Club of Ingleburn in particular have been great servants to our community. Our community would have been so much poorer without their friendship, fellowship and service. Their code of ethics is something we can all aspire to.

Private members' statements concluded.

SYDNEY ROYAL EASTER SHOW

Matter of Public Importance

Mr ANDREW GEE (Orange) [6.30 p.m.]: Tonight we celebrate the fact that once again it is show time—that one time of the year when the country comes to the city for the Sydney Royal Easter Show. The first

Sydney Royal Easter Show was held in 1823 at Parramatta and the show is now the largest annual event in the Southern Hemisphere. The show had very humble beginnings at Parramatta. It was designed as a forum for farmers to exchange ideas to improve their livestock and agricultural production methods. From Parramatta the show moved to Prince Alfred Park in the city in 1869. In 1881 the show then moved to Moore Park and the first show held there opened in 1882. There are stories about how livestock used to arrive at Central station and then be walked to Moore Park. It was quite an event.

Since then big changes have been made to the show. In 1998 it moved to Homebush to the purpose-built 36-hectare site, which famously was home to the Sydney 2000 Olympics. This year 14,000 animals are expected to participate in the show in some way. The Grand Parade—perhaps the iconic image of the show—is one of the largest coordinated displays of animals in the world. Every year almost one million people—about 900,000—go through the show gates, injecting \$500 million into the New South Wales economy each and every year. This year there is an emphasis in the show on education: educating young children about the importance of agriculture and agricultural production.

There is an interactive display at the show called Food Farm and it is designed for kids between the ages of three and 12 to educate them, to motivate them and to entertain them about the importance of agricultural production and, in particular, the importance of farmers. It is hard for many of us in regional electorates to comprehend that there are many kids out there who have no idea how our food is produced, where it comes from and how it gets from the paddock to the plate. The Royal Easter Show plays a very important role in educating our children about not only food production but how important it is to the New South Wales economy and our society.

The initiative this year also includes an Excellence in Agriculture Day, which is designed to celebrate Australian farmers and farming ingenuity. All members in this place from regional and country electorates have had experience with country shows: it is a very important part of our annual calendars, and certainly this year's Royal Easter Show is no exception. For example, at this year's show Mudgee poultry breeder Pat Birchall has been honoured for his 65 years of exhibiting, stewarding and judging at the show by being named the 2013 Sydney Royal Easter Show Legend. Mr Birchall first attended the show in 1947 and began exhibiting in 1951. Since that time he has missed only one show. Over the years he has accumulated nearly 500 Sydney Royal champion and special prizes. This year, together with his wife Dot, children and grandchildren, he will exhibit 34 entries in 25 classes—a total of 54 birds, including those in teams and trios.

Mudgee goat breeder and exhibitor Darryl Bishop was also nominated as a show legend. Darryl has taken 75 exhibits to the Royal Easter Show for 47 years, and he took part in the Parade of Champions because of his outstanding contribution to the show. One of the great facets of the show is that it allows people of all ages to participate and this year Kinross Wolaroi School Angus stud participated in the Open Angus category, which is an extremely competitive section. It is worth noting that Kinross Wolaroi School was not entered in the schools section but instead participated in the open section. The school walked away with third place in the under 12-months heifer section, second place in the junior bull section and scored two highly commended awards for a 15-month-old bull and a pair of bulls. That was a big result for the school, which was placed third in the Angus breeder section.

I should also mention that Canobolas Eggs was judged to have the best eggs at the Sydney Royal Easter Show for the tenth time. I know Robert Pepper and his family were absolutely delighted that they bagged that award again for their farm near Molong. I believe all members of the House celebrate the Sydney Royal Easter Show.

Mr NICK LALICH (Cabramatta) [6.35 p.m.]: I have pleasure in supporting the member for Orange in this matter of public importance. The Sydney Royal Easter Show, or as many of us call it, the Easter Show or the Show, is held over a two-week period around Easter and attracts approximately one million visitors each year. The show was granted special permission from Queen Victoria to use the word "Royal" in its name. The show was first held in 1823 and has continued to retain its traditional city-meets-country feel, where rural industries from throughout Australia can come and display and promote their goods to a diverse range of people from all walks of life.

The show is run by the Royal Agricultural Society of New South Wales and the event plays host to a range of attractions such as agricultural shows, amusement rides and a fair, combining the traditional elements of each. The show does not only showcase and promote rural business and trade it also has a large array of places for shopping, restaurants, commercial stands and exhibits. There is a vast array of interesting events that

draws in large crowds each year, such as the judging of livestock and produce, horticultural displays, dog and cat shows, performance stages and arenas. Amongst the shows there is also an array of competitions held at the show each year from arts and crafts to photography and cooking, and even the testing of participants' strength, skill and endurance in the wood chopping events.

Another important part of the show that has become a tradition since the 1900s is the selling of commercial merchandise in show bags. Once upon a time these show bags—once called sample bags—were free to visitors. When I was a kid you could go there and pick up as many as you liked for nothing. The bags were a means for the manufacturers to market and promote their products to the general public. Over the years little has changed in regard to the show bags insofar as they still contain promotional products, toys and miscellaneous merchandise from the associated manufacturers, but we would have all noticed a big change in the price.

Over several years the cost of admission and the cost of show bags have been steadily increasing. The cost of admission for a full day to the 2013 Sydney Royal Easter Show ranges from \$35.60 up to \$37.50 for adults and \$13.00 to \$22.30 for children, depending on the type of events on the day, and eligible concession rates and the price for entry to the show after 5.00 p.m. vary by approximately \$20.00 for an adult ticket. The cost of show bags can range from \$1.00 to \$25.00. It is worrying to see that with the ever-increasing cost of admission and the cost of the other goods inside the show it is making it very hard for families to go to the show and see all it has to offer. It would be a great disappointment to see families being excluded from seeing all the wonderful attractions and events that the show has to offer simply because it is no longer affordable and out of reach for the average family.

I implore the Government and the Royal Agricultural Society of New South Wales to take a closer look at the cost of entry to the Royal Easter Show, because the ever-increasing fees are making it harder for struggling families to attend. As we know, almost since the beginning of this nation many generations of families have visited the show. It would be sad if people were unable to go to the show due to the rising cost of entry and show bags. I again ask the Royal Agricultural Society to look at the costs involved in attending the show.

Mr THOMAS GEORGE (Lismore—The Deputy-Speaker) [6.40 p.m.]: I congratulate the member for Orange on bringing this important annual event to the attention of the House. It is impossible to say all that could be said about the Royal Easter Show in three minutes; however, let me say that the Easter show would not exist without the support of the Agricultural Societies Council NSW and all its little country shows. The showgirls and rural achievers here this year all began their journey to the Sydney show at country and national shows around the State and Australia. People from the northern part of the State are pleased to have Samantha Chilton from Kyogle and Lisa Green from Grafton representing the showgirls of the North Coast. The rural achievers will be judged later on this week. As part of our annual contribution to the show, tomorrow the rural achievers will visit Parliament House as guests of The Nationals. We also used to host the showgirls but the change of dates in parliamentary sittings has made that impossible this year.

As we just heard, the show moved out to Homebush in 1998. I can well remember being at Moore Park for 25 years before that. When I was president of the Stock and Station Agents Association I had the pleasure of commencing the auctioneering competition. Last Friday Michael Easey from Bowe and Lidbury won the State competition and Joe Wilkes from Wagga Wagga won the national competition. I recognise that the O'Farrell-Stoner Government is supportive of the Royal Agricultural Society and even held its Cabinet meeting at the Royal Agricultural Society headquarters this week. I congratulate the Premier, Deputy Premier and Ministers on having the foresight to support the Royal Agricultural Society. It would have been a big day for the society to have the Cabinet there.

The district exhibits are always a major attraction of the show. The Northern New South Wales District exhibit came second in the district exhibits overall and was the Sydney Markets People's Choice winner. I congratulate Arthur John, as well as Ray Reid, Graham and Christine Reid, and Cameron and Geordie Reid—three generations of the Reid family who support Arthur and the whole team to prepare the Northern New South Wales District Exhibit, which was the Most Successful Exhibitor. The Feuerherdts from Tabulam were the winners in the maize growing and Marie Johns and Richard Bryant won the trophy for the heaviest gramma. A lot of prizes went to the Northern Rivers area and we are proud of the contribution from rural and regional New South Wales. I am pleased to contribute to this matter of public importance.

Mr ANDREW GEE (Orange) [6.43 p.m.], in reply: I thank both members for their contribution to debate on this matter of public importance. It has highlighted the importance of the Royal Easter Show not only

to city people but also to country people. As I said earlier, and as the member for Lismore pointed out, the Royal Easter Show is the feeder show for numerous country shows around New South Wales in all manner of categories. For example, Marie Barnes from Cudal has managed to win at least one ribbon each year in the goat category since it was introduced in 1997. In the wine category Ross Hills Wines won gold, silver and bronze this year. Angullong Vineyard won a bronze for its barbera. Patina Wines won a bronze for its chardonnay and also for its riesling. Other winners included Robert Stein Wines at Mudgee, under its principal Andrew Stein. John and Sally Furlong from Two Furlongs Wines at Cooyal also had a successful show. The Furlongs have exhibited wine at the Easter show for many years and have had a great deal of success.

In the dog judging Alan and Sandra Wills of Orange won for their English toy terriers and Jennifer Bayliss of Gulgong won for her Russian black terriers. In the sheep judging competition Bruce and Helen Stanford of Merton Stud at Mudgee have had continued success, as have Ken Williams of Orange and the Rayners of Grathlyn, to name just a few of the breeders and exhibitors. Last year Chris and Jamie Gillespie of Abra Stud at Mudgee also had success at the show. The member for Lismore mentioned showgirls. Of course the Orange showgirl this year was Rosie Pritchard, who represented Orange with great distinction. The member for Lismore also mentioned the district exhibits. This year at the show the Central West exhibit will be a real focus for people west of the Great Dividing Range.

I thank the Royal Agricultural Society for all of its hard work in putting together this year's Royal Easter Show. I also thank the exhibitors and participants who come from all over New South Wales to attend this big event. They really make a great effort in the time, money and commitment that they put in. They are the people who keep the show running. I also thank the general public for its continued support. As I said in my earlier remarks, the Sydney Royal Easter Show has a special place in the hearts of people not only from the country but also from the city. The show is going from strength to strength and is widely supported by people from all around New South Wales. I conclude my remarks tonight by saying: Long live the Sydney Royal Easter Show.

Discussion concluded.

**The House adjourned, pursuant to standing and sessional orders, at 6.46 p.m. until
Tuesday 26 March 2013 at 10.00 a.m.**
