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# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Wednesday 27 March 2013

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

**The Speaker** read the Prayer and acknowledgement of country.

## AUDITOR-GENERAL'S REPORT

**The Clerk** announced the receipt, pursuant to section 63C of the Public Finance and Audit Act 1983, of a performance audit report of the Auditor-General entitled, "Managing gifts and benefits: Department of Planning and Infrastructure, Environment Protection Authority, Transport for NSW, WorkCover Authority", dated 13 March 2013, received 27 March 2013.

## BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

### Notices of Motions

**General Business Notices of Motions (General Notices) given.**

### TERRORISM AND HOMICIDE VICTIMS REMEMBRANCE DAY

**Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD** (Myall Lakes) [10.03 a.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) notes that Friday 12 October 2012 was New South Wales Terrorism and Homicide Victims Remembrance Day;
- (2) notes that the day was instigated by the Homicide Victims Support Group (Aust) Incorporated and is a significant day of remembrance for family members of all acts of homicide and terrorism;
- (3) notes that the day is about remembering the families left behind, the police and emergency staff, volunteers and counsellors also affected by these tragedies;
- (4) notes that the day brings people together for the opportunity to reflect on the life or lives lost and provides community support for victims' families; and
- (5) congratulates Martha Jabour, Executive Officer of the Homicide Victims Support Group, on her tireless work to raise awareness of the effect of homicide and terrorism on victims' families.

Friday 12 October 2012 was just after I first moved this motion and time has moved on, but again in October this year a New South Wales Terrorism and Homicide Victims Remembrance Day will be held. The Homicide Victims Support Group was formed in 1993 to provide support, counselling and information for families and friends affected by homicide in New South Wales. Prior to 1993 there was no counselling or help for victims' families left behind as a result of homicidal or terrorist acts. The father of a boy who was murdered while delivering pizzas formed the group.

The Homicide Victims Support Group has four main aims: to provide support, information and counselling for families and friends affected by the murder of a loved one; to educate the general community and professional bodies about the needs of people affected by homicide and to increase communication between all parties that come into contact with families of homicide victims, thus promoting understanding; to educate the general community and professional bodies about the needs of people affected by homicide; and to promote the interests and rights of families of homicide victims lobbying for legislative change wherever inequities or loopholes exist.

The Homicide Victims Support Group provides services such as counselling, support meetings and a 24-hour contact line, and the group supports victims who go through the court system. Facing the person accused of taking a loved one's life can be extremely traumatic. When a member of one's family is taken in those sorts of circumstances having someone available to help with counselling and to have a support group that

has been through the same experience are very important. This is a group of victims helping victims—families who have been through the same grieving process and the same court battles helping those people who are going through the same thing. Nothing could be more important than that. The group is there to offer a cup of tea and to talk to victims' families as they go through the process.

One wonders how many lives have been saved by that group: how many people that group has stopped from taking their own lives by giving them a chance to talk and to reach out to other people who have had similar experiences. As a former detective I have experience of murder trials. I had to advise the victim's family what had happened and then get statements from them. It was a very, very lonely time for those families. One particular trial—I will not name the people involved or say too much because the last thing I want is for those family members to go through the trauma again—followed the murder of a mother by the step-father of her two children, who were teenagers at the time. There was absolutely no support at all for those children—no-one who had been through a similar experience and could empathise with them. As a detective I did as much as I could but I did not have sufficient freedom with my time to help them as much as I would have liked, particularly as I was in Taree and the children were living about an hour and a half away.

At the trial the daughter was cross-examined as to what the step-father had said prior to the murder. She happened to mention that she heard him talking to himself, and it became the defence that the step-father was insane at the time of the shooting, which was absolute rubbish. The defence and prosecution negotiated on withdrawal of the murder charge and the acceptance of a plea of guilty to a charge of manslaughter instead. After a lot of negotiation the Crown prosecutor chose to accept the plea of manslaughter. When the judge directed the members of the jury to enter a guilty verdict they refused to do so. Subsequently they were taken away, counselled and came back with the guilty verdict by direction. I raise that because the daughter of the victim in this matter has had to live with the consequences of her evidence. I commend the motion to the House.

**Dr ANDREW McDONALD** (Macquarie Fields) [10.10 a.m.]: I commend the member for Myall Lakes for this motion. It is an important motion because families of victims of homicide and terrorism live a life sentence. The unresolved grief that often blights the lives of the families of victims of homicide and terrorism can also have a devastating effect on future generations of their families. The Homicide Victims Support Group provides vital support and counselling. Its work to raise community awareness through education is also important. It is not only the community but also professionals who have to deal with the effects of homicide and terrorism. It affects those who are directly involved, such as the police, as well as the other people who come in contact with family members such as health workers and teachers. Department of Community Services staff and disability support workers also are often involved with families who have been the victims of homicide and terrorism. Awareness of the effect that these events have on families must be increased, because the effects are too rarely discussed and too often forgotten.

Acts of homicide and terrorism are rare in Australia. That means that few of the victims would have contact with other victims without a group such as the Homicide Victims Support Group. It is astounding that the group was only founded in 1993 and that there was no support for families of the victims of homicide and terrorism prior to then. As the member for Myall Lakes said, the court process is extremely traumatic and may provide no resolution even after the verdict has been arrived at. As I said before, many members of these families live a life sentence, as do their children, and sometimes their grandchildren, because of their unresolved grief. Martha Jabour, the executive officer of the Homicide Victims Support Group, is a true hero. I commend the member for Myall Lakes for bringing this motion to the House. I also place on record the admiration that is felt for him by all members of the House for his previous work as a policeman who was often involved in traumatic cases. I commend the motion to the House.

**Mr GEOFF PROVEST** (Tweed—Parliamentary Secretary) [10.13 a.m.]: I commend the member for Myall Lakes for bringing Terrorism and Homicide Victims Remembrance Day to the attention of the House. I also commend the member for Macquarie Fields for his contribution. Terrorism and Homicide Victims Remembrance Day is a day to remember the victims of acts of terrorism and homicide, and their families and friends who are left to deal with the consequences of such tragedies. It is also a day to remember and acknowledge the police, ambulance officers, firefighters, other service men and women, counsellors and members of our local communities who are deeply affected by these tragic events.

The date of 12 October marks the anniversary of the 2002 Bali bombings, which killed 88 Australians. That event had an enormous impact on the Australian public. This is a suitable day to remember all victims of terrorism and homicide. People in the Tweed were greatly affected by the Bali bombings. We lost a young fellow named Billy Hardy, who was tragically struck down during that attack. I had known Billy and his father

for some time. I also know his wife, Sue, who is still the principal of Cudgen primary school. I saw firsthand how Billy's death deeply affected not only his immediate family but also the wider community. After attacks of terrorism and homicide we always ask: Why did this happen, and what can we do to support these people?

As the member for Myall Lakes mentioned, on Terrorism and Homicide Victims Remembrance Day we also must acknowledge the hard work and consistent effort of the Homicide Victims Support Group workers, who tirelessly provide support and assistance to victims' families. Their focus on supporting families while educating the community and professional bodies about the needs of people who have been affected by homicide and terrorism serve to strengthen the future networks of assistance and counselling. We also acknowledge the hard work of the individuals who have lobbied Federal and State governments to instigate a day of remembrance for victims, particularly Ms Elaine Dawson, who lost her sister and brother-in-law in the Bali bombings.

I also acknowledge the police and ambulance officers and other professionals who have to deal with these events. That was brought home to me today when I saw the emotion and depth of feeling of the member for Myall Lakes during his contribution. I can only try to understand that depth of feeling and, I suppose, his high level of frustration. The awareness and consideration we can create by supporting this day as leaders in our community will be a step towards healing and eventual understanding of that depth of feeling. I have never been a victim myself; I can only imagine the trauma, despair and despondency that would arise from such a situation. It behoves members on both sides of politics to do all in their power to ensure that the proper procedures, support and guidance are put in place. Most importantly, we must do what we can to generate a deeper level of understanding in the wider community. I am honoured to support the motion of the member for Myall Lakes to acknowledge Terrorism and Homicide Victims Remembrance Day.

**Mr BRYAN DOYLE** (Campbelltown) [10.17 a.m.]: I am proud to support the motion of the member for Myall Lakes, who is my good friend and a former police officer. Homicide is the worst crime in our society. The Homicide Victims Support Group, led by Robert Taylor, does a marvellous job. I note that the group's policing consultant is John Laycock. He is a learned officer who has served the community as a detective and an assistant commissioner and he brings a great deal of experience to the group. Some of the finest police officers I have worked with have been from the homicide squad. Perhaps the highest honour a detective can be given is to investigate and bring to justice those who commit the worst offence of murder. Good friends and colleagues of mine have served in the homicide squad for many years, including Detective Inspector Russell Oxford and Detective Chief Inspector Pamela Young. These officers bring their superior criminal investigation skills to the fore and hold real concern for and have ongoing contact with the victims of the crimes they investigate.

Detective Chief Inspector John Lehman and his unsolved homicide team are testament to the fact that the NSW Police Force not only investigates present offences but also follows up on past cases that the police have not been able to crack. The NSW Police Force maintains its focus on bringing justice to victims' families. Throughout my policing career some of the families of my fellow officers have had a need to rely on groups such as the Homicide Victims Support Group. When I began my career in the Police Force a colleague of mine, Paul Katsivelas, was murdered with his own gun by an offender on 4 April 1984. The family of another colleague, Senior Constable Jim Affleck, VA, who is remembered every year at Campbelltown for having laid down his life in defence of his community, has received support. I commend the Homicide Victims Support Group to the House.

**Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD** (Myall Lakes) [10.20 a.m.], in reply: I thank the member for Macquarie Fields, the member for Tweed and the member for Campbelltown for their contributions to the debate. We have covered everything—how important this day is and that it is more than a day of remembrance. It is also a day that helps us to understand the importance of the work of the Homicide Victims Support Group to the community and to homicide victims' families. I commend the motion to the House.

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

**Motion agreed to.**

## **ELECTRICITY PRICES**

**Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD** (Myall Lakes) [10.21 a.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) notes that State energy ministers have praised the Federal Minister for Resources and Energy for his statement that the States are not responsible for big increases in electricity prices on top of the carbon tax;
- (2) commends the Minister for Resources and Energy, Special Minister of State and Minister for the Central Coast for his determination to make and implement changes to the electricity industry in New South Wales so as to drive down prices;

- (3) condemns the Federal member for Lyne for his advocacy of a Federal takeover of electricity price regulation; and
- (4) notes that the Federal Minister for Resources and Energy described the member for Lyne as making threats to State governments over energy price regulation.

What the former Federal Minister actually said was "cheap threats". Things have changed since notice of this motion was given in October 2012. In September 2012 the Federal member for Lyne introduced a private member's bill for the Commonwealth Government to regulate the price of electricity. Major parties in the Federal Parliament did not support the National Electricity Bill 2012, and the bill was described as a stunt that was designed to divert attention from his vote in favour of the carbon tax, which has resulted in electricity prices soaring.

The Federal member for Lyne, Mr Oakeshott, supported the Federal Labor Government's carbon tax legislation, which significantly increased electricity prices, and he then tried to blame the cost of poles and wires for the increase. At that time a Federal Labor politician who is very well respected on both sides of politics, the former Minister for Resources and Energy, Martin Ferguson, said that conservative States are not responsible for big hikes in electricity prices and do not need to be threatened in a quest for cheap headlines. Former Minister Ferguson rejected a plan by Independent Rob Oakeshott for a Federal takeover of electricity price regulation to stop States such as New South Wales "milking" massive dividends from their electricity assets. Mr Ferguson said:

The States do not control regulatory authorities that set prices and any suggestion that they do has no basis in fact and is a cheap shot ... the States might be getting good dividends but they do not determine the price setting rules.

He went on to state:

The history of reform shows you need co-operation ... cheap threats do not assist in this debate ... because it is a complex reform that won't be solved by cheap front page headlines.

Martin Ferguson correctly identified exactly what the member for Lyne was about when he made those statements and introduced that bill. Some sectors of electorates Australia-wide are very concerned about price increases. The member for Lyne was trying to make himself out to be the little person's champion of electricity price regulation, but he knew the situation. He has been in politics for a long time. He is a political animal. He went from school to the university and on to being a political adviser and then became a member of Parliament. He knows what the real state of the nation is. The very highly regarded Federal Minister, Martin Ferguson, said that it was nothing but a cheap shot, and that is what it was all about. Rob Oakeshott was the chairman of the carbon tax committee that delivered the carbon tax to us. Rob Oakeshott simplistically fails to account for the cost of domestic solar programs that do nothing to reduce peak demand while decreasing demand for mains power and driving up prices for other customers.

Rob Oakeshott has given the Gillard Government a blank cheque and repeatedly has voted to introduce Labor-Green policies, the main driver of electricity price increases. He has repeatedly voted with the Gillard Government because, he said, that would deliver a more stable government. What has that done for Australia? It has delivered the most unstable government and the most unstable period in Australia's political history. Even when it was obvious to everyone that the Gillard Government was unstable and incapable of properly governing Australia, Rob Oakeshott continued to vote with the Gillard Government. For example, he voted with the Federal Government on the Malaysian solution, the \$500 million reduction in palliative care funding, the removal of the Chronic Disease Dental Scheme, and on some of the fancy and silly Gillard Government budget measures. All along the member for Lyne has voted with Labor in the Federal Parliament, knowing that his electorate is conservative and that the people of his electorate expected him to vote with the Coalition. He did not do that.

The Minister for Resources and Energy, Chris Hartcher, yesterday announced a \$16 million boost to the New South Wales Government's Low Income Household Rebate, which for the first time will be available to residents of retirement villages. That is on top of a \$210 million package of assistance measures that were announced by the New South Wales Government last year, which helps households to manage increasing electricity costs. The Low Income Household Rebate, which currently is \$215, will increase to \$225 from 1 July this year and to \$235 in 2014. The State Minister for Resources and Energy is broadening assistance measures to a new group of customers in retirement villages. The Myall Lakes electorate has a significant number of retirement villages. I am very pleased that the Minister has taken heed of the hardship experienced by people in retirement villages. The Minister also announced further changes to improve the Energy Accounts Payment Assistance Scheme by increasing the value of emergency vouchers to \$50 from 1 July 2013. The motion

deserves the support of the House. The Government of New South Wales is doing everything it can to drive down electricity prices whereas the member for Lyne on the mid North Coast is taking cheap shots and engaging in political stunts in an attempt to enhance his standing in the lead-up to the Federal election.

**Mr MICHAEL DALEY** (Maroubra) [10.28 a.m.]: My contribution to debate on this motion on behalf of the Opposition will be brief. It is interesting that the campaign by The Nationals against Robert Oakeshott has begun. I point out that we are a long way from Canberra. The Nationals overstate their importance and effectiveness. The member for Myall Lakes has been railing against Robert Oakeshott, as though Robert Oakeshott would know, or care, about anything the member for Myall Lakes, Mr Bromhead, would have to say.

**Mr Andrew Gee:** I think he is listening.

**Mr MICHAEL DALEY:** That might well be but he should not kid himself that he will have any part to play in it. This is just lip-service. When one brings to this Chamber a motion relating to electricity, praising oneself and criticising others, one really should do so with clean hands.

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

**Mr MICHAEL DALEY:** Electricity price rises concern all members in this place. We are all family people: we all have electricity bills to pay. We all have people in our electorate who struggle. They tell us about their day-to-day difficulties in paying bills, particularly their electricity bills. We all look at ways to reduce electricity bills. Given the contribution that the member for Myall Lakes just made, he needs a history lesson. I take him back two or three years to 2011, when electricity prices under the O'Farrell Government rose by 18 per cent. The average household spent \$230 a year extra, and Barry O'Farrell's response was to do nothing.

**Mr Mike Baird:** Price determination.

**Mr MICHAEL DALEY:** I will talk about price determination in a minute. It took the Government two years before it contributed an extra \$16 million. That money is appreciated, but in view of the number of people who receive energy accounts payment assistance it is not very much money, particularly in the context of the dividend take that the Government is gouging from electricity companies.

**Mr Mike Baird:** It is less than your forecast.

**Mr MICHAEL DALEY:** It is not less. The latest determination from the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal in July 2012 stated:

Based on our decision average regulated retail electricity prices will increase by around 16 per cent across New South Wales from 1 July 2012.

That is on top of the 18 per cent increase from the O'Farrell Government the year before. It is a very good determination that shows why electricity prices are rising and the contributions from the various sectors.

**Mr Andrew Gee:** Do you support the carbon tax?

**Mr MICHAEL DALEY:** I will get to the carbon tax right now as a matter of fact. The Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal says that the price of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions was contributing 9 per cent; the generation of electricity, which is a State matter, 2 per cent; poles and wires, which is also a State matter, 8 per cent. That means 10 per cent of the increase is based on State factors and 9 per cent on CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, at a time when this Government was taking a billion dollars in dividends from electricity companies. I do not mind you guys having a go at Rob Oakeshott. He is big enough and ugly enough to deal with you guys. But that is not a path I would go down. Government members who move motions such as the motion before the House should avail themselves of history and come in with clean hands. They need to go out and have a good scrub.

**Mr ANDREW GEE** (Orange) [10.33 a.m.]: I congratulate the member for Myall Lakes on the wonderful speech he made in the House and on highlighting the hypocrisy of those opposite and the Federal member for Lyne. As the member for Myall Lakes rightly pointed out, time is running out for the Federal member for Lyne. Just like sand through the hourglass, time is running out for that Federal member. It is running out for him because he likes to blame everyone else for his problems. It is never Rob's fault; it is always someone else's fault. It is Ray Hadley's fault; it is the Liberal's and Nationals' fault; it is John Singleton's fault.

He even has Joe the cameraman in the frame for all of his troubles. The member for Lyne needs to spend a little time in the room of mirrors and think about whose fault it really is. It is his fault for betraying the people of his electorate and for installing the circus sideshow that passes itself off as the Federal Government. He is the one who has betrayed the people of his electorate. He is the one who has supported the carbon tax.

I continually receive calls in my electorate office about the impact of the carbon tax. For example, orchardists are paying thousands of dollars extra every year just to keep their cold storage operations going. It is a big issue in the electorate, and the people of the electorate of Lyne know that Robert Oakeshott has betrayed them. He has installed the Federal Government, he has propped it up, and he has supported it at every turn. He will have a price to pay. It is no good for him to blame everyone else. Mr Oakeshott needs to take a good hard look at himself. Talking about people who need to take a good hard look at themselves, I want to refer to the Leader of the Opposition. Former Premier Morris Iemma said—

**Dr Andrew McDonald:** Point of order: I refer to Standing Order 76, the need to be relevant to the motion. The member is moving away from the motion, which does not mention anything about the Leader of the Opposition.

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Melanie Gibbons):** Order! The member for Orange has the call.

**Mr ANDREW GEE:** Former Premier Morris Iemma said that trying to pin the Leader of the Opposition down was like wrestling with smoke. Old smoky Robertson is what Morris Iemma had to deal with. We saw that in this House whenever the carbon tax issue was raised. We watched the charade where the Leader of the Opposition could not be pinned down on whether or not he supported the carbon tax. Question time after question time he said he did not support it. In the end he said he did support the carbon tax. That is the problem with the Leader of the Opposition: dealing with him is like wrestling with smoke.

**Dr Andrew McDonald:** Point of order: Madam Acting-Speaker, you previously ruled on this point of order. I ask you to bring the member back to the leave of the motion.

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Melanie Gibbons):** Order! The member for Orange is talking about the carbon tax. He should ensure that his comments are relevant to the leave of the motion.

**Mr ANDREW GEE:** In relation to electricity, the power workers on the Central Coast saw through the Leader of the Opposition. He went up there in 2011 and trumpeted his anti-privatisation campaign.

**Dr Andrew McDonald:** Point of order: I will try a slightly different standing order this time. I refer to Standing Order 73. Personal imputations or improper motives must be made by way of substantive motion. If the member has a problem with the Leader of the Opposition he should move a substantive motion.

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Melanie Gibbons):** Order! The member for Orange is speaking about electricity.

**Mr ANDREW GEE:** The power workers on the Central Coast said, "We took action and the Labor Party sold us out. While ever you lead the party, we're not voting Labor." That is a sad indictment if ever there was one. [*Time expired.*]

**Dr ANDREW McDONALD (Macquarie Fields) [10.37 a.m.]:** It is said that the first casualty of war is truth. The first casualty of the electricity pricing issue is fact. For every \$100 of the average 2012-13 annual electricity bill 51 per cent, or \$51 of those \$100, relates to network upgrades, \$20 to retail customer service programs, \$20 to the wholesale electricity generation that is making the electricity, and \$9, or 9 per cent, of the average electricity bill relates to carbon pricing. While the \$9 is important, it must be remembered that carbon pricing adds 9 per cent to the total cost of the average electricity bill. Under the Federal Government's carbon pricing system, rebates for those earning less than \$60,000 means that for the vast majority of people in Australia the offsets exceed the extra cost of electricity. Again, no member has mentioned that carbon pricing will move to an emissions trading scheme in the next few years, regardless of who gets elected to power federally.

As I said before, network costs are the major cause of increased costs in electricity bills, because of the rising cost of infrastructure and the rising peak demand. As we all know, network costs are the major driver. The Federal Minister was correct when he said that the States are not responsible for the big increases in electricity

prices. Network costs are driving electricity bills. The poles and wires are the elephant in the room for this Government, and that will certainly be an issue at the Federal election, when the O'Farrell Government is expected to take the sale of the poles and wires to the electorate for the people to decide whether selling a natural monopoly such as poles and wires to the market is the way to go. Regardless of political beliefs, this is a natural monopoly that in some parts of the world is kept in public ownership and in other parts in private ownership.

Certainly, the network is the major cause of increased electricity prices, as everyone opposite knows. But never let the truth get in the way of a good political grab. We will need to invest substantially in the networks over the next few years. While electricity bills are very high, the State Government has relatively few levers to pull regarding pricing. I am the first to recognise that the market and the need to improve the network are the major drivers of electricity prices rather than State or Federal government policy. This is the true cost of producing electricity in a carbon-constrained world. Whether one does or does not believe in global warming, we need to produce electricity sustainably in some form that restricts the unfettered supply of carbon into the atmosphere. That is the reality with which we all have to live.

**Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD** (Myall Lakes) [10.41 a.m.], in reply: I thank the members representing the electorates of Maroubra, Orange and Macquarie Fields for their contributions to the debate. Interestingly, the member for Maroubra says that we should avail ourselves of history. In the last five years of the New South Wales Labor Government electricity prices went up 60 per cent. Those opposite talk about an 18 per cent increase under our Government. The member for Maroubra said also that the New South Wales Government is gouging. Let us look at the comments of Martin Ferguson—a man respected by both sides of politics who, tragically, has been lost to Australian politics. He said that pricing has nothing to do with State governments, even though they receive the dividend. The member for Macquarie Fields mentioned poles and wires. In 2009 the Australian energy regulator agreed to spend \$19 billion on poles and wires. Who was the Federal Government at the time? Labor. Who was the State Government at the time? Labor. Labor agreed to spend \$19 billion gold plating the poles and wires throughout Australia. These things happened under Labor's watch.

The member for Macquarie Fields said that 50 per cent of the cost of electricity in New South Wales is attached to network upgrades. Who is responsible for that? Federal and State Labor. That big decision was made in 2009. The member for Macquarie Fields also spoke about carbon offsets. We forget that carbon tax is added to every item we buy—a shoe, a car, food. Somewhere in the chain from production to sale consumers are hit with a percentage of carbon tax. Although those on the other side may want to champion carbon offsets, they do not offset the true 9 per cent cost of carbon tax on everything. In Australia the carbon tax is \$23; in Europe it is between \$6 and \$9 and in New Zealand it is about the same. Our carbon tax imposition of \$23 is on everything we do and buy, when it is \$6 and \$9 for the rest of the world. What is carbon tax doing for climate change and the environment? Absolutely nothing except making Australia and all its States globally unproductive and uncompetitive. Producers in the Hunter Valley are closing down and manufacturing in Victoria is gone.

**Mr Andrew Gee:** Kandos cement—gone.

**Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD:** Kandos cement, gone. The Comalco factory in the Hunter region is gone. That is happening because the Federal Labor Government and the New South Wales Labor movement support the carbon tax. It is costing jobs, trade and potential investment around the world.

**Mr Andrew Gee:** It's going to cost Robert Oakeshott.

**Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD:** The member for Lyne also should be condemned for bringing it upon us.

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

**Motion agreed to.**

### **BREAST CANCER AWARENESS**

**Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD** (Myall Lakes) [10.45 a.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) notes that October is International Breast Cancer Awareness Month and that one in nine women in Australia will develop breast cancer before the age of 85 years;

- (2) commends the Hunter Breast Cancer Foundation as a grassroots volunteer organisation that works cooperatively with doctors, nurses and other organisations to ensure the community has access to support services and information; and
- (3) congratulates Heather Kelly on her work in raising funds and awareness of breast cancer in the Great Lakes region.

Breast cancer is the most common cancer in Australian women, with one in nine Australian women being diagnosed before the age of 85. October is Australia's breast cancer awareness month. I gave notice of this motion just before breast cancer awareness month last year and due to the number of motions before the House, today is the first opportunity for it to be debated. This year October once again will be breast cancer awareness month. It is a time to show support for women and families personally affected by breast cancer. I doubt there are any members in the House who have not been touched by breast cancer through their family or their network of friends. More than 14,000 women and 105 men are expected to be diagnosed with breast cancer this year alone. Every day 38 Australian women are diagnosed with breast cancer. While survival rates continue to improve, today more than 88 per cent of women survive five years after diagnosis. We still have a long way to go. Despite improvements in diagnosis, treatment and management in recent decades, sadly, seven Australian women will lose their lives to breast cancer each day, and more than 2,700 each year. Raising awareness is an important part of reducing the impact of breast cancer on Australian women and families.

Breast Cancer Awareness Month originated in the United States in the 1980s and is now an internationally recognised month for breast cancer awareness. During October Australia's main breast cancer organisations—Breast Cancer Network Australia, the McGrath Foundation, the National Breast Cancer Foundation and Cancer Australia—hold events to raise funds and promote awareness of breast cancer. The main fundraising of the Breast Cancer Network Australia during October is its annual Pink Lady Luncheon. Breast Cancer Awareness Month is a time to highlight the dedicated and ongoing medical research that is helping to advance our knowledge and understanding of the disease and provide improvements in detection, treatments, patient care and health outcomes for those diagnosed with breast cancer. Heather Kelly lives in Forster. I first met Heather in 2004. She had been the secretary of the Bradman Foundation and before that was involved with New South Wales and Australian cricket. Heather moved to Forster with her husband, Rowan, and joined the mighty Forster Rugby Club, which is where I first met her.

**Dr Andrew McDonald:** A mighty club.

**Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD:** One could not say the same about the Weebolla Bulls. In that year she discovered she had breast cancer. Heather had a breast removed, treatment and a breast reconstruction. Unfortunately, five years later she found she had cancer in the other breast. She has since had the other breast removed. Heather has been a tireless worker for Breast Cancer Awareness Month and taking part in Pink Lady days. She travels to the Sydney Cricket Ground each year for the McGrath Foundation luncheon wearing pink in support of breast cancer awareness. She is a fantastic worker and a great lady; she is still involved in doing great things for the rugby club. Heather has the support of her husband, Rowan. Heather Kelly typifies so many women that are touched by this illness. I commend the motion to the House.

**Dr ANDREW McDONALD** (Macquarie Fields) [10.50 a.m.]: Notice of this important motion was given on 16 October 2012. At that stage there were two matters of public importance raised in the Parliament, and I recommend that all members read the matter of public importance speech given by the member for Baulkham Hills on 23 October when he talked about his personal journey and experience with breast cancer. There is so much we do not know about breast cancer and so much more that needs to be done. It is a test of the health system and the ability of the community to care for each other. That is why grassroots groups such as the Hunter Breast Cancer Foundation and people like Heather Kelly are absolutely vital in helping others in their local area cope with the difficulties associated with a diagnosis of breast cancer.

Very few people, other than those who have the condition, understand what it is really like to have breast cancer. Community groups are vital in providing support and networks for accessing best-practice treatment. The average age of a diagnosis of breast cancer for women is 60, although the condition affects a widespread range of ages. In Australia 40 women per day are diagnosed with breast cancer. Despite improvements in the mortality rate of nearly 30 per cent between 1994 and 2007 and the breast cancer survival rate being in the high 80s percentile, approximately 3,000 women lose their lives to breast cancer in Australia every year. There are 160,000 women alive in Australia who have breast cancer; many of those women were diagnosed many years past.

The Breast Cancer Network, the McGrath Foundation, the National Breast Cancer Foundation and Cancer Australia are the four major groups who unite for the Pink Ribbon Breakfast held in October. Those

organisations are vital for the support they provide to those in the community who are affected by breast cancer, not only the women involved but also their family members. Treatment for breast cancer changes rapidly and there is no one expert on it. Treatment needs to be carried out by units that treat many breast cancer patients because the treatments are so varied and they quickly change as we learn more. Members are aware that mastectomy is now much less common than breast-conserving surgery. Often breast-conserving surgery has to be accompanied by radiotherapy, chemotherapy and hormonal treatment, depending on the tumour and the person diagnosed.

The need for increasing amounts of radiotherapy statewide has been one of the reasons that linear accelerators for radiotherapy are being rolled out in rural areas. With lumpectomy and radiotherapy, very good long-term survival rates are achievable. Breast cancer accounts for 28 per cent of all new cancers in women in New South Wales and now 16 per cent of deaths, meaning that mortality from breast cancer is, for the first time ever, less common than mortality from lung cancer. The peak age group at risk from breast cancer is between 50 and 69 years of age, which is the age group that is offered breast cancer screening. Issues have been raised worldwide about the efficacy of screening, but all experts agree that screening the population aged between 50 to 69 years is both safe and achievable. It was the policy of the previous Government and is the policy of this Government, and that policy should be supported by all members. I support the motion moved by the member for Myall Lakes. I commend him for bringing this important issue before the House and I also commend the work of the Hunter Breast Cancer Foundation and Heather Kelly.

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS** (Port Macquarie) [10.55 a.m.]: I support the motion moved by the member for Myall Lakes, Mr Steve Bromhead, and congratulate him on raising this important issue in the House today. I join him and the member for Macquarie Fields in commending and congratulating the many volunteers who work closely with the doctors, nurses and organisations across the State to support the many people, particularly women, who have been impacted by breast cancer. The motion commends the work of the Hunter Breast Cancer Foundation. I would like to acknowledge the work of many other groups, including the McGrath Foundation, the National Breast Cancer Foundation, Cancer Australia and the Breast Cancer Network Australia.

Heather Kelly is just one of those who work tirelessly in her local community to raise funds and the awareness of breast cancer. We have wonderful people in our electorates who devote hours of their time to support others. These volunteers should not underestimate the amazing work they do and the positive influence they have on breast cancer sufferers and their carers, families and friends. As was noted by the member for Macquarie Fields, in October last year, Breast Cancer Awareness Month, a matter of public importance was put before the House, led by the member for Baulkham Hills, Mr David Elliot. The member spoke passionately about how his life had been touched by breast cancer not once but four times. He talked about his late grandmother who had breast cancer, his mother-in-law, his aunt and his wife, Nicole.

Like so many others who have been affected by this insidious disease, both Nicole and David have used their personal experience to help others by raising awareness of the disease not only in this House in the matter of public importance but also by holding a fundraising event that evening in the Speaker's Garden. The event was well attended and supported by members across this Chamber. I congratulate Nicole and David on the work they have done. In my electorate, the Port Macquarie-Hastings Breast Cancer Support Group is affiliated with the Breast Cancer Network Australia. The group members come together each month to support each other through face-to-face meetings, to share experiences and to host events to raise awareness and funds. I was delighted to join Judith Hutchison, who leads that group, for a special morning tea in October last year during Breast Cancer Awareness Month. At that time they launched their mini-field display outside the library to celebrate their ninth birthday. The mini-field event has become popular across the State, and I look forward to attending the event held in Port Macquarie.

I commend the Cancer Council and the many volunteers who work to raise awareness through the excellent initiative Pink Ribbon Day. In closing, I will use this opportunity to reinforce the message about early detection of breast cancer, particularly for those in the high-risk group between the ages of 50 and 69. BreastScreen New South Wales provides a free mammogram service and I urge all women across this State to join the 400,000 women who last year were screened for breast cancer. As I have highlighted previously in the House, and want to raise again, it is a fact that mammograms do save lives—it is as simple as that. Along with the member for Myall Lakes and the member for Macquarie Fields, I am pleased to have the opportunity to again raise the issue of breast cancer and make sure that it stays well and truly on the agenda.

**Mrs ROZA SAGE** (Blue Mountains) [10.59 a.m.]: It gives me great pleasure to speak to the motion on Breast Cancer Awareness Month, and to thank the member for Myall Lakes for raising this important issue.

Breast cancer is an insidious disease. I think everyone I know and every member of this House has been touched in some way by breast cancer. Three of my friends have passed away as a result of breast cancer; and I know that many others that I have treated as a dentist have breast cancer. Two of those three brave ladies were quite young, and each of them had breast cancer on three occasions. They managed to battle on for many years, but eventually they did succumb.

Breast cancer is the most common cancer among Australian women. It is gratifying to know that there is now quite a level of awareness of this disease, that it is the subject of substantial funding, and that a lot of research has been happening over the years to discover the causes of breast cancer and effective treatments for it. Some of the risks, as the member for Macquarie Fields has mentioned already, include age—the older you get the more likely you are to develop breast cancer. Breast cancer also occurs in men, but overwhelmingly it is found in women. Drinking alcohol is another risk factor. Being overweight is a further risk factor, as is a possible genetic contribution. We heard from the member for Baulkham Hills that many of his and his wife's relatives have had breast cancer, which is a possible indicator of a genetic factor contributing to the occurrence of breast cancer.

As the member for Port Macquarie said, the earlier breast cancer is detected, the better is the prognosis. Survival rates are improving: 89 out of every 100 people diagnosed with invasive breast cancer are now surviving for five or more years. Treatment is often radical, sometimes involving surgery, chemotherapy, radiotherapy and/or hormonal treatment, or a combination of treatments. Evidence suggests that physical activity may decrease the risk of recurrence of breast cancer after treatment. Exercise and physical activity seem to be a panacea for many illnesses, and should not be taken lightly. Even moderate physical activity decreases the recurrence of breast cancer by 24 per cent.

The genetic component is interesting. There is an increase in the incidence of these cancers among women with a familial history: 5 per cent to 10 per cent of women who have a mother or sister with breast cancer have double the chance of developing breast cancer. There is an increased risk of developing breast cancer where even second-degree relatives have a history of breast cancer; and if they develop the disease, it often occurs at an earlier age. We have spoken a little bit about prevention. Breast screening, self-examination and medical physical examination cannot be overlooked; and mammography is recommended every two years for females aged 50 to 70 years. I too congratulate the Hunter Breast Cancer Foundation, a not-for-profit organisation. It provides information and support for sufferers and carers. Well done.

**Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD** (Myall Lakes) [11.03 a.m.], in reply: I thank members representing the electorates of Macquarie Fields, Port Macquarie and Blue Mountains for their contributions to this debate. The member for Macquarie Fields, with his medical background, brought a great deal of expertise to the debate. He spoke about, amongst other things, radiotherapy and linear accelerators, and the rollout of this equipment into regional areas. The member for Orange recently told the House about how pleased his community is that a second linear accelerator was delivered to his local hospital. I spoke earlier about Heather Kelly and her battle with breast cancer, that she had had a breast removed, that on the first occasion she was treated with chemotherapy and radiotherapy but that on the second occasion she chose not to have those treatments. One of the reasons was that she would have had to go to other regional centres or to Sydney for the treatments. That demonstrates how important it is that these machines are located strategically in regional areas.

The member for Port Macquarie spoke about local volunteers in her area, and what a wonderful job they do, as well as the benefits of early detection of breast cancer. The member for Blue Mountains spoke about some of the causes and implications of breast cancer, and familial links with the disease. She also spoke about treatments such as chemotherapy and radiotherapy, and emphasised the importance of prevention measures such as self-examination and mammograms. That is what Breast Cancer Awareness Month is all about—getting the message out there to everyone. As I said earlier, 105 men are expected to be diagnosed with breast cancer this year. It is important to get the message out that you should self-examine for this disease, undergo mammograms and talk to your doctor about it. I commend the motion.

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

**Motion agreed to.**

## **BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

### **Postponement of Business**

**General Business Notice of Motion (General Notice) No. 2393 postponed by Mr Stephen Bromhead.**

**CHRONIC DISEASE DENTAL SCHEME CLOSURE**

**Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD** (Myall Lakes) [11.06 a.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) condemns the Federal member for Lyne who voted to cut more than \$1 billion from Medicare with the closure of the Chronic Disease Dental Scheme;
- (2) condemns the Federal member for Lyne whose actions will leave local residents with cancer, heart conditions, diabetes and other chronic diseases on public dental waiting lists for years;
- (3) rebukes the Federal member for Lyne whose support for the closure of the Chronic Disease Dental Scheme will leave no scheme in its place until July 2014;
- (4) notes that under the Chronic Disease Dental Scheme, dentists in Lyne are able to treat patients, 80 per cent of whom were concession card holders; and
- (5) condemns the Federal member for Lyne for his continued support of the Federal Government.

Dental services in Australia, unlike other health services, are not covered by the principle of universal access. In the Australian healthcare system, Medicare and the entitlement that all Australians have to the medical and pharmaceutical benefits it provides are a well-recognised strength. Public dental services provided by State public health services are largely only provided to the disadvantaged, with no Commonwealth scheme similar to Medicare that provides access to all. The National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission identified lack of universal basic dental programs as a major gap in health service access. Access to dental care is essential for people to improve their oral and general health. The rate of clients visiting dental professionals varies considerably between the most and least disadvantaged in the population. A significantly higher proportion of adults in the least disadvantaged group—a total of 68.6 per cent—visited a dental professional within the past 12 months, compared with the proportion of adults in the most disadvantaged group of 53.5 per cent.

This contributes to the persistent gap in oral health between the most and least disadvantaged. NSW Health provides a safety net public dental system that provides a limited range of services to children and eligible adults. Eligible adults are those who hold a Commonwealth Seniors Health Card, a Health Card or a Pensioner Concession Card. Twenty-four per cent of the New South Wales adult population is eligible for public dental services, with waiting times for access to services based on clinical priority. The Chronic Disease Dental Scheme ran from 1 November 2007 to 1 December 2012 and was administered by Medicare. The scheme closed due to changes made by the Commonwealth Government. New South Wales residents were significant users of the scheme, with just under half of all claims paid nationally in 2012 paid in New South Wales.

The New South Wales Government did not support the closure of the Chronic Disease Dental Scheme. Rather than closing the scheme the New South Wales Government believes there were opportunities to revise and improve it to support the wellbeing of the people of New South Wales. The closure of the Chronic Disease Dental Scheme impacts negatively on those people with chronic conditions who are not eligible for public dental services and cannot afford private dental care. The size of this potential impact is not yet able to be quantified, although the Commonwealth has estimated that around 75 per cent of patients receiving benefits under the Chronic Disease Dental Scheme would be eligible for State public dental services.

While NSW Health will provide more dental services and meet the newly negotiated targets under the National Partnership Agreement on Treating More Public Dental Patients, the closure of the Chronic Disease Dental Scheme may have an impact on waiting lists. New South Wales participation in the scheme is evidence that the private sector is capable of providing additional service activity if appropriate service models are established. New South Wales Government funding for public dental services increased by \$4.3 million from 2011-2012 to approximately \$178.0 million in 2012-13. The 2012-13 Federal budget contained a number of initiatives in addition to reaffirming the Commonwealth decision to close the Chronic Disease Dental Scheme by December 2012.

The new funding initiatives included a "blitz on public dental waiting lists" with the National Partnership Agreement on Treating more Public Dental Patients, which will result in an allocation of \$110.8 million from 2013 to 2014-15. Extensive planning has been undertaken to ensure New South Wales can deliver on that using a mix of private and public sector enhancements. A further initiative is the Voluntary Dental Graduate Year Program. New South Wales was successful in achieving up to 14 of 50 funded places. These graduates, who commenced in January 2013, will work in the Nepean, Blue Mountains, Western Sydney, Sydney, Murrumbidgee, Western New South Wales and South Eastern Sydney local health districts.

On 29th August 2012 an additional dental reform package was announced by the Commonwealth Government. The package commits \$4.1 billion over six years and will commence in 2014. It includes three new initiatives: the \$2.7 billion Child Dental Benefits Scheme over six years, a \$1.3 billion National Partnership Agreement for adult public dental patients over four years and a \$225 million Flexible Grants Program over four years to help support dental infrastructure. The Child Dental Benefits Scheme is a means-tested dental scheme for children aged two to 17—for children and families eligible under Tax Benefit A—covering preventative and basic dental treatment such as fillings and extractions. The scheme will commence on 1 January 2014, with services to be provided in the public and private sectors via a combination of in-house services and outsourced services via the NSW Oral Health Fee for Service Scheme.

I spoke to Dr Eardley Rosario, who is the doctor and dentist at the Biripi Aboriginal Corporation Medical Centre in Taree. He performs dental work and operations not only in Taree but also for the Cabarita Aboriginal Mission in Forster. He said what a disaster it was for the Federal Government to have announced this scheme in 2012 but then to delay its commencement until 2014. He said of all the people in the area, it has the greatest impact on the Aboriginal community, many of whom live in the Taree and Forster regions. The Federal member for Lyne supports the Federal Government in this and did not fight to get some funding for the interim period until the new scheme commences. It is a dereliction of his duty as the Federal member not to ensure that he got that money. He professes to have a special relationship with the Federal Government and that he gets certain things done. He certainly did not get anything done on this occasion.

**Dr ANDREW McDONALD** (Macquarie Fields) [11.13 a.m.]: I am glad that the Minister for Healthy Lifestyles and the member for Blue Mountains are in the Chamber because they know a lot about teeth and this is their one chance to be able to say, as I am going to say, that they support the concept of universal dental care as in Denticare. The biggest legislative mistake in the introduction of universal health care in 1975 was the fact that teeth were removed from the body, so to speak. Because we do not have universal dental care such as Denticare one can tell somebody's socio-economic status simply by getting them to smile. In Australia in 2013 if you are rich you get access to the best dental care in the world; if you are poor you frequently get nothing.

I hope that the Minister for Healthy Lifestyles and the member for Blue Mountains will also indicate their support for the concept of universal dental care. This is their chance to put it on the record. It was a mistake for the National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission to look over the precipice of universal dental care and blink. If one wants to see what health care would be like in 2013 if Medibank had not been introduced by the Whitlam Government all one has to do is look at people's teeth: a vigorous private sector but a large proportion of the population not receiving any dental care.

The dental scheme was designed by the Howard Government. It was not means-tested, which meant that anyone with a chronic disease could access the scheme, although I acknowledge that the overwhelming majority of people with a chronic disease are not wealthy. The scheme was blowing out by a billion dollars a year and has been replaced by a targeted scheme of \$4.1 billion, which offers \$1,000 of subsidised care every two years for children and families eligible for Family Tax Benefit A. As someone who works in a disadvantaged area I can attest that the amount of dental decay in poor children in Australia in 2013 is staggering. The amount of dental caries in poor children is unbelievable. The overwhelming majority of those children have never been to a dentist, and trying to get dental services for them through the public health system is, at times, very difficult. That is why the enhancements from the Government, as outlined by the member for Myall Lakes, are most welcome.

In opposition the current Minister for Healthy Lifestyles was very supportive of the concept of Associate Professor Zoellner that all dentists should undergo an intern year, similar to hospital doctors. I am also on the record in support of that concept because I think it is a very good idea; it would enable the dental workforce in the public health system to be significantly enhanced and it would provide all dentists with easy access to supervised training in their first year. The problem with the Federal-State relationship is that State governments have not looked at this, even though they should, because it is about money rather than sense. If the public health system has the capacity to employ dentists in their first year of post-graduation it would substantially improve the waiting lists for dental care.

As everyone who works in the public health system knows, it is extremely difficult to get dental care and very large numbers of patients present to emergency departments after hours with dental problems, either because of simple dental problems that require a dentist or because of health complications due to their neglected dental care. For example, tooth abscesses, facial cellulitis and infections of the bone due to lack of dental care are quite common in people presenting to emergency departments after hours and they require admission to hospital, which could have been prevented.

The scheme that has been introduced by the Federal Government will target those who need it most: the poor and children. As all members know, the prevention of dental caries in childhood offers lifelong benefits. The Chronic Disease Dental Scheme was a good scheme, but it had its drawbacks. The major drawbacks were that the costs were blowing out and the scheme was not means tested. This new scheme will target those who are most at risk and it has the potential for the greatest savings because it will apply to children. I look forward to the contributions of the Minister for Healthy Lifestyles and the member for Blue Mountains. I expect them to record in *Hansard* their support or lack of support for universal dental care known as Denticare.

**Mrs ROZA SAGE** (Blue Mountains) [11.20 a.m.]: I support the motion of the member for Myall Lakes concerning the axing of the Chronic Disease Dental Scheme [CDDS]. As the member for Macquarie Fields said, the cost of the scheme had blown out—and for good reason. It was poorly managed and badly administered. The scheme targeted those with chronic disease, who were often elderly people. Diabetes, and especially type 2 diabetes, is a chronic disease that is becoming more prevalent in our society. There is a link between heart disease and dental disease but diabetes is also important because it affects the gums and contributes to periodontal disease. Diabetic people may lose their teeth if they do not receive adequate dental care. The Chronic Disease Dental Scheme allowed people with diseases such as heart disease, diabetes and cancer to be treated at a local dental practice.

As a dental practitioner I participated in the scheme to an extent. I will recount the story of one of my patients, who was a nurse and a single mum. Unfortunately she was diagnosed with breast cancer, which caused her to stop work. She also developed some tooth abscesses. Because she had cancer and was undergoing chemotherapy I was able to fix her teeth under the Chronic Disease Dental Scheme. That enabled her to not lose any teeth, which would have affected her chewing and her lifestyle. That was one positive aspect of the scheme. However, one of the negative aspects was the administration of the Chronic Disease Dental Scheme. In 2007 when the Federal Labor Government came to power it was unable to get rid of the scheme, so it changed it to make it so difficult to use that practitioners often fell foul of the administrative procedures. The gateway to the scheme was through a medical practitioner and there were instances when it was difficult to—

**Dr Andrew McDonald:** Get a referral?

**Mrs ROZA SAGE:** No, it was not difficult to get a referral. It was difficult to deal with some of those practitioners in the way that we should have.

**Mr Kevin Humphries:** Doctors rorting the system, in other words.

**Mrs ROZA SAGE:** No, not necessarily. There also was pressure put on them by patients. I am not saying it was the fault of the doctors; the scheme was extremely difficult to administer. The system was always looking for scapegoats and unfortunately the scapegoats were often the dentists. The Commonwealth Government is finally coming to its senses and giving some assistance to dental care through the blitz funding that has been announced. Unfortunately the Federal Government also dragged its feet when New South Wales was ready to go. Fortunately the funding has now been allocated and we will soon have extra money to decrease the dental waiting lists.

**Mr KEVIN HUMPHRIES** (Barwon—Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Healthy Lifestyles, and Minister for Western New South Wales) [11.24 a.m.]: I thank members for their contributions. As the Minister responsible for oral health in New South Wales, I am happy to talk about the Chronic Disease Dental Scheme and its closure, which have been raised in the motion by the member Myall Lakes. It is interesting that it took a conservative Coalition Government at the Federal level to raise the issue of universal dental care. Over time, and certainly in the past 10 years, the scheme has been adjusted on several occasions. The point is that it was the Howard Liberal-Nationals Government that put the Chronic Disease Dental Scheme in place.

As the member for Blue Mountains said, the scheme did have issues. The main issues occurred under the Federal Labor Government, and the Rudd Government wanted to get rid of the program. It was only through the unholy alliance that it had with The Greens in the Federal upper House, who put pressure on the Labor Government, that the program was retained for several more years than intended. I find it a little disingenuous for any Labor Party member in New South Wales to say that they supported the Chronic Disease Dental Scheme when it is well known that the Federal Labor Government tried to get rid of the program several years ago. Those members might pass on a congratulatory remark to their unholy friends The Greens who kept them honest in that.

The other reason why the scheme did not achieve great success nationally was that the Federal Government did not rely on or engage the States in any of the screening. As the member for Blue Mountains rightly pointed out, it was not means tested and it was largely reliant on the referral system between the general practitioners and local dentists. I am aware of some instances when tinea was described as a chronic disease and referrals were passed on. There was no gatekeeping at the State level to find the people most in need and who could have best benefitted from the system.

Whilst New South Wales did well and achieved nearly 50 per cent of its funding, it could have been targeted in better ways. The member for Myall Lakes was correct when he highlighted a particular member who sided with the Labor Government and wanted to get rid of this dental program across the country. It was not universal, and it was not the Denticare program that the member for Macquarie Fields spoke about, but it was at least a step in the right direction. We must resolve the problems of the Chronic Disease Dental Scheme because if we cannot get that right we can forget about universal dental care under the Denticare program. If we do not get it right we will have gaps, because a large proportion of the program ended last year. Most of the \$4.1 billion of funding that was announced by the Federal Labor Government is aspirational funding.

That money is not there in real funding. Blitz funding is the only thing that New South Wales has signed up for—and it took a Coalition State Government to sign up to that National Partnership Agreement with the Federal Government. That will commence soon and it will target the waiting list of the many people who have so far missed out. The Government also will soon make an announcement at the new dental unit at Nepean Hospital about the advancement of the postgraduate dental trainee program. We were lucky in New South Wales to secure over half of those positions. We will form partnerships between public dental and oral health entities and private practitioners over the next 12 months to have a red hot go at that blitz funding. The people of New South Wales will finally get the care that they deserve.

**Mr JOHN SIDOTI** (Drummoyne) [11.28 a.m.], by leave: I commend the member for Myall Lakes for this motion. It shows what it means to be a pinnacle State member who represents his constituents well. The yardstick by which to judge a society is how it treats the most vulnerable people in the community. Many found out on 1 December 2012 that no Medicare benefits would be payable for dental services provided from that date. The Chronic Disease Dental Scheme provided up to \$4,250 over two calendar years in Medicare benefits for dental services received by people with a chronic medical condition and complex care needs and whose oral health impacted on their general health. The Chronic Disease Dental Scheme, which provided Medicare rebates for comprehensive dental care, assisted 1.5 million people from November 2007 to August 2012. Why is the scheme so important? Many people with chronic disease, such as diabetes, cancer or mental health problems, cannot afford private dentistry—it is very simple.

The Federal Government closed the Chronic Disease Dental Scheme and will send patients with chronic disease back to the public dental health waiting list. That is a step in the wrong direction. The Federal Labor Government will argue that it intends to increase public dental spending by 30 per cent in 2014, but in real terms that is much less than will be required to satisfy even current demand. The Medicare Chronic Disease Dental Scheme very successfully treated 1.5 million Australians. It had a very low complaint rate of one complaint per 1,500 patients. Many would argue that the Medicare Chronic Disease Dental Scheme formed a sensible basis for expansion to include the entire population. A bridge is definitely required.

I refer to the plight of a constituent of mine. For the sake of confidentiality I will refer to him as Joe. He lives in a Housing NSW dwelling in my electorate. He is doing it tough with cancer treatment. He came to my electorate office and basically said that his appointment to receive cancer treatment and his dental appointment clashed. He had to wait two months to get his dental appointment, and he did not know which one to forfeit. It was not just a case of Joe selecting another date for his appointment; it was more a case of being given a date for the appointment. This was a dilemma for him. I was not prepared to allow Joe to miss out on dental treatment while he was suffering pain from his cancer treatment and from his teeth.

I am fortunate to have a close relationship with a number of dentists in my electorate. Many of them meet on a regular basis and are at the back end of their career. They feel very grateful and privileged to have served their communities in their chosen fields and want to give back to their communities. In particular, Dr Mario Adamo from Five Dock is an exceptional dental surgeon who wants to give back to the most vulnerable people in society. I could speak at length on the need for a public dental health scheme, but unfortunately time does not permit. I commend the motion moved by the member for Myall Lakes to the House.

**Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD** (Myall Lakes) [11.32 a.m.], in reply: I thank the member for Macquarie Fields, the member for Blue Mountains, the Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Healthy Lifestyles, and

Minister for Western New South Wales, Mr Humphries, and the member for Drummoyne for their contributions to the debate. As stated by members during the debate, on and from 1 December 2012 the Chronic Disease Dental Scheme ceased as a result of a decision made by the Federal Labor Government. Although the scheme closed last December, a new scheme to replace it will begin in January 2014 for children and July 2014 for adults—a gap of 13 months and 19 months respectively. Despite opposition from dental and medical experts, the member for Lyne supported the Federal Labor Government and said that the proposed scheme will help more people on the mid North Coast. He accepted Labor's propaganda about the so-called benefits of the new scheme but failed to notice the gap of up to 19 months. In the context of medical experts, I point out that the Australian Dental Association spokesman, Andrew Wong, said that the scheme was shutting too quickly. He went on to state:

If you extract a tooth, obviously you need a period of time for gums and bones to heal in order for when you fit the dentures to be comfortable when you fit them for the patients.

Twelve weeks for some diseases—especially if surgery is involved—is just not adequate.

Diabetes Australia spokesman Greg Johnson said that the gap between the old scheme and the new scheme is not good enough. He went on to state:

It simply won't meet the prevention need and the ongoing care deed that hundreds of thousands of people with diabetes, adults, are going to need ...

Professor Hans Zoellner, who is the head of oral pathology at the University of Sydney, stated:

These people have been deprived of access to basic care for so many years, now they've finally had some care and the scheme's gonna be taken away from them, which is frankly tragic. 80 per cent of these people are not very well off, they're health care card holders, despite what the [Federal Labor Minister] says that these are all millionaires. That's complete nonsense.

It is obvious that he was most upset about the decision. We have heard from members of this House about the importance of dental health. Chronic dental disease can lead to other health complications, such as heart disease, kidney disease and other ailments. Dental treatment for patients with chronic health conditions is an absolute necessity. To remove one scheme and then leave a 19-month gap before its replacement commences is just not good enough. The scheme that was introduced by the Coalition has been wiped by the current Federal Labor Government, with the support of the member for Lyne. It is just disgraceful. I commend the motion to the House.

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

**Motion agreed to.**

### **HUNTER MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES**

**Ms SONIA HORNERY** (Wallsend) [11.36 a.m.]: I move:

That this House notes:

- (1) the resignation of 21 medical staff from the Hunter New England Mental Health Service in the past 18 months, coinciding with the election of the Government;
- (2) that frontline staff claim workload is the major contributing factor, as caseloads get out of control; and
- (3) urges the Minister for Health to immediately increase funding for mental health services in the Hunter, with the employment of more medical staff, and rein in out of control workloads.

How many members in this Chamber have suffered from depression? How many members in this Chamber have a son, a daughter, a sibling or a parent who has suffered from depression or from some other mental illness? That might seem like an odd question to ask. However, in light of statistics revealing that 45 per cent of Australians who are aged between 16 and 85 years—or 7.3 million people, which is approximately one-third of Australia's population—at some point in their lifetime experience mental disorder, I believe it is a question that should strike a chord with a number of people in this House today. It is certainly an issue that affects my constituency. Hunter residents are hospitalised for mental health issues in higher numbers than in any other New South Wales health district. The *Newcastle Herald* reported on 10 October last year that there had been 21 resignations by medical staff from the Hunter New England mental health service in the previous 18 months. The timing of that event coincides with the election of the O'Farrell Government.

Why did the workers quit? Because caseloads for mental health workers in the Hunter are completely out of control. The blame for the desperate state of mental health care lies squarely with the Minister for Health and with her short-sighted funding cuts and chronic neglect of the mental health sector. The Hunter area has a desperate need for more funds to adequately staff hospitals in the Hunter New England Local Health District with community nurses, doctors and specialists. According to Hunter workers who were quoted in the *Newcastle Herald* article, caseloads have doubled in the past few years, with staff having half the time in which to manage cases.

One worker described the reality of working in the Hunter New England mental health service as being increasingly crisis driven where they spend too much time "putting out spot fires", and went on to say, "Rather than being proactive you are just heading things off at the pass." Some Hunter community mental health workers now have just two days a week to manage approximately 30 clients, whereas previously they had caseloads of 17 or fewer people. With a caseload of 30 patients, it is extremely difficult for health workers to provide adequate care, especially when their time is being taken up with triage, intake work, assessment and acute crisis management. The New South Wales chairman of the Royal Australian New Zealand College of Psychiatrists, Dr Adrian Keller, said:

If you are trying to do all of these things, as many community health workers are being asked to do, that will necessarily lead to less time spent on the core activity of case-managing patients.

According to Dr Keller:

The failure to adequately provide care for this group of patients has a flow-on effect to the rest of the system, in particular to the emergency departments and acute psychiatric inpatient units.

The solution to this problem is employing more nurses. Thanks to the New South Wales Minister for Health Jillian Skinner and her savage funding cuts to public health care in this State, our community will not get them. Michael Whaites, Hunter branch member of the New South Wales Nurses Association, summarised this point nicely. He said:

When you look at the lack of beds and the difficulties people have getting into hospitals, that means more acute patients are out in the community requiring the attention of the nurses. And it's clear to us there's nowhere near enough nurses in the community system.

We have come a long way in this State in addressing the stigma associated with mental illness. We know that mental disorders are an illness, just as real and damaging as their physical counterparts. Mental illness can deeply affect a person's ability to relate to family, friends and workmates, and to function in the broader community. People who suffer from a mental disorder can experience significant distress and disability. If people want to focus on the economics of the situation, as Government members are so wont to do, it is clear that, putting all social responsibilities, community spirit and compassion aside, mental health funding and management in this State are of vital economic importance.

It is so important because, according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, the annual cost of mental illness in Australia has been estimated at \$20 billion. A significant portion of that \$20 billion is made up of lost productivity and lost labour force participation. If members look at the issue of mental illness in this State purely in relation to money lost and gained they will see that it is incumbent on this Government, in the name of responsible fiscal management, to adequately fund mental health services so that mentally ill people can get the help that they need to remain functioning members of the workforce. Matt Byrne, organiser of the New South Wales Nurses and Midwives Association, highlighted the benefit of supporting the mental health sector when he said:

There's enough evidence to show that a person who's well supported in the community may not require frequent hospitalisation in inpatient mental health care. That's beneficial for everyone.

I call on the Minister for Health, Jillian Skinner, to immediately increase funding to mental health in the Hunter, to employ more medical staff and to rein in the out-of-control workloads that are making it impossible for our healthcare workers to provide the vital care for mentally ill people that is of fundamental importance to the Hunter community.

**Mr KEVIN HUMPHRIES** (Barwon—Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Healthy Lifestyles, and Minister for Western New South Wales) [11.43 a.m.]: I thank the member for Wallsend for raising the issue of mental health and for helping the Government clarify a number of issues. I note that notice of this motion was given in October last year. Before I comment more generally on Hunter-New England health I point out that this

is the first Government to quarantine mental health funding. This is the first Government to put additional funding, at difficult times, into mental health, and the health budget in general. I say to those opposite: Please do not judge us by your values. Opposition members talk about their commitment to mental health when the Auditor-General's comment was, "You could not tell where mental health funding was going, how many people were employed, let alone whether it was making any difference."

**Mrs Barbara Perry:** Are you getting a separate stream of funding? Where does it show in the budget that you are getting a separate stream? You are not getting a separate stream.

**Mr KEVIN HUMPHRIES:** It is on the record for the previous, failed Minister. One cannot prop up a system by not placing people in community mental health teams, which was the wages policy of the former Labor Government—40 per cent vacancy rates in community mental health teams. Those are not my words; those are the comments of the previous Auditor-General. Our first commitment was to make sure that those positions were filled. Quite rightly, the member for Wallsend highlighted the fact that if we do not have a robust community mental health sector, whether it be delivered by NSW Health or by the non-government organisation sector, people will default to an acute inpatient system and our emergency system. I am more than happy to furnish members opposite with the Auditor-General's report.

Hunter New England Local Health District is one of the only local health districts, if not the only local health district, that targets and supports very remote areas in my electorate that are linked to a tertiary hospital in Newcastle. Six years ago my Mehi cluster, which covers the area of Narrabri, Moree and Inverell, had one worker. It now has 22 workers. They are working extremely well as a committed unit of community mental health workers covering a very wide area of State. They are out there supporting people in their community. The lower end of the Hunter is an interesting part of the State. As the member for Lake Macquarie would know, we have put additional staff into that local health district. Indeed, Hunter-New England is the beneficiary of a significant funding increase, and that is part of that \$18.3 billion for health in general right across the State, of which \$1.43 billion is for mental health, a record budget spend in mental health. Hunter-New England has been the beneficiary of that in a number of ways.

The Housing Accommodation Support Initiative has been expanded. I acknowledge that was started by the previous Government, partly in partnership with the Federal Government. That is being extended into chronic and more complex cases. The Hunter will be a beneficiary of additional packages in that area. We are building the capacity of the community to deal with the related issues of living with mental health. We believe in a recovery model in the sense that one can live well and have a functional life with the correct support. The overemphasis on inpatient high acute beds needs to be challenged. We need to build more of a continuum of care, as all the leading practitioners would say, and we will continue to build a continuum of care. We will plug the gaps that people were continually falling through under Labor, and we are seeing that also at the Federal level.

It is no accident that the largest trial of the National Disability Insurance Scheme will be in the Hunter. We argued strongly, and were successful with our Federal colleagues, that mental health be in scope for that National Disability Insurance Scheme. I think the last planning meeting is today. The scheme will be announced and commenced in the next three months, and will target 10,000 people living in that part of the world. It is sanctimonious to talk down the help we are providing in that part of the world, particularly to people living with mental illness. We are taking a more coordinated care approach to people living with mental illness, and their carers and people living in the community who are supporting people living with mental health issues. I repeat to those opposite: Please do not judge us by your standards. In October last year there was an issue with a position, the manager of medical administration.

The absence of that position was leading to recruiting difficulties. That has been rectified, and many senior staff who were working with Hunter New England have returned to work with Hunter New England. There is an aggressive and assertive recruitment policy, particularly in the lower end of the Hunter. I would like to highlight a couple of other issues that I have had the pleasure to be involved with in the Hunter. The member for Lake Macquarie might support me in this, because it was an issue he raised previously. People like me are actively engaged with people living with a mental illness, and that is both a privilege and a challenge. The forensic care unit interests me most. I have spent a fair bit of time dealing mostly with male staff, consumers and residents of Morisset—not so much with ladies. I take my hat off to the staff who deal with people with severe mental illness. I acknowledge the ministerial Morisset 11 cricket team with which I have played over the past few years at Petersham Oval or Gladesville.

**Mrs Barbara Perry:** Petersham, which I did too.

**Mr KEVIN HUMPHRIES:** Wonderful. I take my hat off to the staff in that part of the world for trying to normalise the lives of those suffering mental illness and provide them with the quality of life which we aim to provide.

**Mrs BARBARA PERRY (Auburn) [11.50 a.m.]:** I support the motion of the member for Wallsend and also acknowledge her great work and contribution to this Parliament and, in particular, to her community. She is incredibly hard working, and I know that no member in this place would disagree. She is an extremely engaged local member. I am here to place on record our opposition to the health system cuts of this Government and their impact on mental health support, particularly in the Hunter. Three things result from the comments of the Minister for Mental Health. The Minister seeks to reassure us that these vacancies are being filled, yet he was light on providing figures apart from saying that one person was returning. The motion states that 21 staff from the Hunter New England Mental Health Service have resigned. In opposition the Minister was vociferous on issues for which he now says there are no need for beds. That is very different from his previous comments. The Minister still has no budget separate from the Health budget, which is something he said he would deliver but has not.

Clearly, the people being impacted by the New South Wales Government's cuts to Health are front-line workers, who are being put under extraordinary pressure, particularly in community and mental services. As critical positions are not filled and with not enough beds being available acute cases are not being dealt with and this is putting pressure on mental health professionals. The system is becoming crisis focused rather than doing preventative work. The member for Wallsend indicated that caseloads are spiralling out of control due to cuts to support and administrative positions. Front-line staff are being forced to deal with increased caseloads and are not getting the support they need to focus on their patients. Meanwhile the Government tries to wash its hands by saying those issues are to be dealt with by the health districts.

The disbandment of the Central Coast Mental Health Team shows that neither the Minister for Health nor the Minister for Mental Health are aware of what is happening on the ground or the impact of these cuts on good services. The Hunter region has a high rate of unemployment compared to the rest of Australia, and has a higher rate of hospitalisation for mental health than any other area in the State. In the 2010 and 2011 period the Hunter had 4,048 overnight stays, higher rates of hospitalisation for intentional self-harm by young women aged between 15 and 24 years, and a higher use of antipsychotics and antidepressants than the national average. The number of cases general practitioners referred to psychologists for treatment has jumped by 32 per cent and is rising. Clearly, the demand is great. That is why this Government's cuts have had such an impact in this area. One does not have to look far to see what is happening. As the member for Wallsend noted, there have been 21 resignations from mental health services in the past 18 months. Such an impossible workload means, tragically, that many patients are just not getting the support they need.

Dr Mark Foster, the chief executive officer of Hunter Medicare Local, says that rural areas in particular are struggling with a lack of mental health support. The ramifications of these cuts are severe and cannot be underestimated. The resignation of so many medical staff is the canary in the coalmine and is a very clear indication that things are falling apart. Services trying their utmost to help are buckling under pressure. We have done much to raise awareness and to normalise mental health issues, and we should be proud of our achievements. What goes hand-in-hand with this is ensuring that people get the early support they need. This is smart policy and good governance. Reducing the system to being crisis driven only means that many people requiring early intervention cannot be treated. In the long run that is not cost-effective.

**Mr ANDREW CORNWELL (Charlestown) [11.54 a.m.]:** The 2012-13 New South Wales Health budget is \$18.3 billion, which represents an increase of \$940 million or 5.4 per cent over the figures for last year. The claim of the member for Wallsend about health cuts is simply incorrect. She claims that we have cut nursing numbers. Since we came to government we have employed an additional 3,000 nurses. I repeat that for the benefit of the House and those in the gallery: since we came to government we have employed an additional 3,000 nurses, having committed to employ an additional 2,500 over the first four years. Not only is it a good news story overall; we have exceeded our own targets. It is disingenuous and sanctimonious to try to claim that nurse numbers are being cut. It is just not true. These numbers also include significant growth funding for local health districts to allow them to treat more patients. In 2012-13 the budget for Hunter New England Health was \$1.8 billion, which is an increase of \$56 million, or 3.2 per cent more than in the previous year.

As part of this, mental health services in the Hunter New England region received additional funding of \$376,000 in 2012-13 to support the declaration of Armidale Hospital Emergency Department as a mental health

facility for assessment purposes. This enhancement has increased the hospital's capacity to receive people with mental health issues within the district. This is coupled with recruitment initiatives aimed at key clinical staff for the Hunter region. The local health district has been actively recruiting to key mental health positions. The appointment of a full-time director of mental health and full-time manager of medical administration—both psychiatrists—will ensure strong leadership for Hunter New England Mental Health Services. The focus also has been on supporting recruitment and retention of senior medical staff.

The district constantly reviews roles and responsibilities of clinical positions to ensure that positions are matched with service needs. This also means recognising opportunities for career progression and personal growth. As part of this strategy opportunities have been provided for medical staff to undertake diverse clinical roles and medical staff have been encouraged to become involved in teaching and research. A large number of senior staff who were former employees of Hunter New England Mental Health Services have returned to the service. In addition, key appointments of visiting medical officers and a clinical director for the Hunter Valley have been made recently. Recent recruitment efforts allowed the local health district mental health service to reach a near-full complement of staff in rural regions for the first time in many years. Let me repeat that: for the first time in many years.

The district is committed to its workforce and manages leave to ensure staff are supported in having breaks from the workplace without having a detrimental impact on their colleagues and to support a family friendly workplace. Workloads are reviewed in consultation with staff as part of routine practice. There has never been a government in New South Wales with a stronger commitment to improving the mental health and wellbeing of the people of New South Wales and giving mental health the prominence it deserves. We went to the last election with a commitment to improving outcomes for mental health patients, their families and carers across New South Wales. We are delivering on that commitment. The Government has delivered on its commitment to establish the Mental Health Commission of New South Wales, which stands as perhaps the single greatest mental health reform in the State's history. [*Time expired.*]

**Mr GREG PIPER** (Lake Macquarie) [11.58 a.m.]: I speak largely in support of the motion of the member for Wallsend. I acknowledge that there have been positive changes and additions to the delivery of mental health services in New South Wales under the O'Farrell-Stoner Government, including the implementation of the Mental Health Commission in 2012. The commission, which provides a substantial improvement to mental health services, has not yet reached its full potential. However, that does not take away from the need to continue to improve mental health services. The motion talks about impacts on the Hunter, with the resignation of 21 mental health staff from Hunter New England mental health services in 18 months. It is hard to say what the reasons are for all those resignations but we cannot dismiss the concerns raised by organisations such as the Health Services Union, which has identified the heavy caseload as a problem in the region.

The people we have to listen to are those at the pointy end—at the coalface. I note that the Minister contributed to the debate. I am sure the member for Wallsend is pleased that the Minister did so. I have met with the Minister at Morisset hospital where I worked for 26 years. For 16 of those 26 years I worked in mental health and the rest in developmental disability. When I met with the Minister I discussed the issues at Morisset hospital. There is a feeling of gloom hanging over mental health services in the Hunter; that is how I would put it. In some areas there are elements of light but overall it is a strained area of health. The member for Wallsend, the member for Charlestown and I have had a great deal to do with Dr Mark Foster, a general practitioner and Chief Executive Officer of Hunter Medicare Local. Dr Mark Foster says that access to mental health services across the Hunter is patchy and there is a shortage of psychiatrists and other mental health professionals. There may be areas where there has been improvement but I do believe there are issues of concern for our area.

Late last year the national Mental Health Commission released a report called, "A Contributing Life: the 2012 National Report Card on Mental Health and Suicide Prevention." One of its key findings was that more action was needed at a local level in order to make inroads into mental health problems. It also found that proportional spending on mental health was significantly lower in Australia than in Europe and New Zealand. Against this background the New South Wales Government should be doing more to increase mental health resources, to ensure that caseloads are maintained at a reasonable level and to encourage clinical staff to remain in the field and continue their good work. Some good things are happening but it remains to be seen how it will pan out in the long term for the benefit of mental health services. In the short term, the people delivering the services have been severely impacted. A heavy caseload and workload will impact on the delivery of services and therefore impact on the clients of the mental health service in the Hunter. I call on the Minister to take every measure to improve the situation.

**Ms MELANIE GIBBONS** (Menai) [12.02 p.m.]: I speak for the Government in debate on the motion moved by the member for Wallsend. The 2012-13 budget for the Hunter-New England area was \$1.8 billion. That is an increase of \$56 million, or 3.2 per cent, from the previous year. The New South Wales Government is absolutely committed to reforming the mental health system, which was left in a critical state after years of mismanagement by those opposite. In extremely tough budgetary conditions, the Government has invested more money into mental health than any government in the State's history. For a second year in a row we have increased funding in this area.

Let us look at what the Government has done in the 2012-13 budget to continue its once-in-a-generation reform of the State's mental health system. It is delivering an unprecedented investment in mental health to improve services and outcomes for the people of New South Wales. The recurrent expenditure budget for mental health is \$1.4 billion, an increase of \$72 million, or 5.4 per cent, over 2011-12. Despite very difficult budget conditions, it has delivered record investment on mental health, which highlights its commitment to improving the lives of those who have been touched by mental illness. This funding will improve and expand services plus deliver better outcomes for patients, their families and carers across New South Wales. They are the ones who need it.

Since the election the Government has led the country when it comes to reforming the way mental health services are delivered. Of particular note is the establishment of the Mental Health Commission of New South Wales, as the member for Lake Macquarie stated, to monitor, review and improve the mental health system and mental health and wellbeing of the people of New South Wales. It has been established to ensure the community, including people with mental illness, their families and carers, have confidence in the mental health system and that there is greater accountability for the expenditure of mental health funds. Funding for the establishment of the commission is \$30 million over three years, with \$8.3 million being provided in 2012-13.

Mental health is an extremely important priority not only for this Government but also for the people of New South Wales. It is disappointing to see Labor again trying to score a cheap point by deliberately misrepresenting the level of funding the Government has allocated to mental health in its budget. I am sure I am accurately representing the feeling of the general community by saying these reforms should have bipartisan support and we should not play politics with such a crucial issue. I thank the member for Wallsend for bringing this matter to the House and for giving the O'Farrell-Stoner Government the opportunity to state the real facts about funding for mental health in New South Wales. I acknowledge the important place that mental health has within NSW Health.

**Mr JOHN WILLIAMS** (Murray-Darling) [12.06 p.m.], by leave: I have listened to this interesting debate on the motion moved by the member for Wallsend. The notice of motion was given when the Coalition Government was elected a year ago. I turn the clock back three years to when those opposite were in government and look at whether the motion would have been similarly worded. I can assure the House that three years ago none of the motions of the member for Wallsend was as uncomplimentary as the one before the House. Three years ago the member spent most of her time complimenting the previous Labor Government on the good work it was doing.

Mental health is a difficult area of health. People who advocate for greater support for mental health in Australia no doubt are frustrated with the Federal Government and the continuing problem of the provision of resources and staff. Mental health will always be the most difficult area of health. The Chamber heard from the Minister for Mental Health, a ministry that did not exist in the previous Government. This Government appointed a Minister for Mental Health to deal solely with issues surrounding mental health. The Minister has done a great job with a small amount of money hypothecated to improve services for mental health clients. There is no doubt that acute care for mental health patients remains a challenge, and it will always be a challenge. No government in the world has found mental health acute care an easy road.

Recently the Minister for Mental Health was in Broken Hill to open a subacute care facility. That is a clear demonstration that this Government recognises the need to take people out of situations of acute care and provide additional nursing services so that those people will be better prepared to return to their normal lives in the community. This has been an absolutely great initiative. I was at the opening of this subacute facility, along with the Minister for Mental Health and the Commissioner for Mental Health. The commissioner will provide transparency. When Labor was in government it did not recommend that this State have a Commissioner for Mental Health; it was all about burying the issues, keeping them buried and covered, and deny, deny, deny. Today we have a commissioner who will deal directly with—

**Mrs Barbara Perry:** A fantastic man.

**Mr JOHN WILLIAMS:** Absolutely. The member for Auburn agrees with me that the selection of this commissioner has been a great move, and that we have appointed an appropriate person who is well equipped—

**Ms Tania Mihailuk:** Who?

**Mrs Barbara Perry:** John Feneley.

**Mr JOHN WILLIAMS:** I am not a name dropper. He has been appointed to deal with issues surrounding mental health, to provide transparency for this Government, and to let people know fully the issues surrounding care for mental health patients in this State.

**The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser):** Order! Before I call the member for Kiama, I remind the member for Auburn that these debates are usually conducted without interjection. Normally, the member is fairly well behaved. I ask the member, having made her contribution to the debate, to allow Government members to make their contributions without interjection.

**Mr GARETH WARD** (Kiama) [12.19 p.m.], by leave: Before I start, I acknowledge my friends in the gallery today from Berri Masonic Village and also from the Shellharbour Garden Club, and thank them for being in Parliament today. I commend the motion of the Opposition member in relation to mental health. Mental health was one of those things that, even a very short time ago, was frowned upon. If people told a work colleague that they were feeling down, they would be told to muscle up. But if they had a head cold or an identified illness, that would be treated and they would get the support and assistance that they needed. I am pleased that today the Parliament is having a discussion about mental health services, particularly in regional New South Wales.

I know that all members, Opposition and Government, come to this place to argue the case for the improvement of services in our electorates in areas such as mental health. I note that my friend and colleague the member for Shellharbour is in the Chamber. Of course, we have in our community an excellent facility, at Shellharbour Hospital, that treats people with mental health conditions. I know that we are both very proud of that facility. I acknowledge the Government's support for the 14 subacute mental health beds that soon will be established at Shoalhaven Hospital; they are currently under construction.

I would like to thank all the parties involved in supporting that initiative, because it will provide southern residents with the mental health services that they need. I note the services that the member for Wallsend is calling for in the motion that she has brought before the House today. I would also like to place on the record my public commendation for Fay Jackson, a resident of our electorate who has just been appointed as one of the mental health commissioners. I also commend the Minister for Mental Health, the first Minister for Mental Health anywhere in the country. I know that people get up in this Parliament and point-score, but I would like to think that this is something that all sides of the debate—

**Ms Sonia Horner:** Point of order: My point of order relates to relevance. The motion is about Hunter New England Mental Health, it is not about Kiama.

**Mr GARETH WARD:** To the point of order: I am disappointed that the member for Wallsend would seek to politicise this debate by interrupting me.

**The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser):** Order! The motion relates specifically to Hunter and New England Mental Health. Though I know the member for Kiama is a passionate advocate of the people in his electorate, I ask him to return to the leave of the motion.

**Mr GARETH WARD:** I am more than happy to come back to the leave of the motion, which deals with mental health. But mental health is an issue that is supernational; it is not an issue that affects just people in the Hunter; it is not something that affects just people in the north of the State. It affects all people across New South Wales. I am sorry that we seem to be politicising these services. We cannot do that. We need to ensure that all those who need assistance get that assistance. I would like to commend, if I may, organisations like headspace that do an extraordinary job in dealing with younger people with mental health conditions. I would like to commend in particular Chris Comber from headspace Wollongong, as well as those who work in the Shoalhaven.

This is an issue that requires the support of members on both sides of the Chamber, not just one side. It is not an issue on which we should seek to take credit; it is an issue on which we should work collaboratively, so that we get the services that are needed for the people who need them. Winston Churchill referred to his

condition as the "black dog". People have varying names for different conditions. But what we need is a parliament and a government that is committed to providing the services and assistance that people with mental health conditions need so that they can get their lives back on track, and so that those who need the treatment get the treatment that they deserve. I do not want to cop another point of order from members opposite, but I would like to commend in particular John Strang and the Shoalhaven mental health network, who have done an excellent job in this regard.

**Ms SONIA HORNERY** (Wallsend) [12.14 p.m.] in reply: I thank the members for the electorates of Barwon, Auburn, Charlestown, Lake Macquarie, Menai, Murray-Darling and Kiama for their contributions to this important debate. I thank the Minister for Mental Health for contributing to the debate. It is a pity that he did not attempt to address the issue of the out-of-control workloads for medical staff in the Hunter, because that is what the motion was all about. He did not attempt to address the issue of the chronic problem: the worrying resignation rates of Hunter staff. He did not address the worrying issue that those 21 staff resignations have occurred since the election of the Liberal Government. If there is an aggressive policy of recruiting staff, as the Minister says, then why have caseloads doubled? Why is the Government not reining in the out-of-control workloads, a matter that needs to be addressed immediately?

The member for Auburn raised concerns about the resignation rates in the Hunter, the crux of the problem being debated today. The member stated that it is clear that the \$3 billion cuts to healthcare funding are impacting upon front-line staff—in this case, in the Hunter, in mental health services. Out-of-control workloads are leading to stress and resignations, and that is what the motion is all about. Importantly, on a matter that Government members did not address, these cuts impact on the people in our society who are crying out for help.

The member for Charlestown disputed our claim that 21 staff have resigned and that workloads are out of control. I am sure that Hunter New England Mental Health services staff will be reassured by his comments. In fact, according to the member for Charlestown and the member for Menai there are rivers of gold flowing into the funding packages for mental health services in the Hunter. I ask the member for Charlestown and the member for Menai: If all of this money is being thrown around in the Hunter, why are caseloads out of control? Why have caseloads doubled since the Coalition has been elected to government?

The member for Lake Macquarie talked about the impact upon the Hunter of these worrying resignation rates, and the reasons for them. He talked about the heavy caseloads that staff are facing. He also talked about the importance of listening to the people at the pointy end. The member for Lake Macquarie noted that access to services is patchy in the Hunter, and that there are areas of concern. I agree with the member. The member for Menai spoke about the so-called rivers of gold delivered by the Liberal Government to mental health services. It is just unfortunate that that is not so in the Hunter. The member for Murray-Darling did not even address the motion; nor did the member for Kiama, which is a pity. I want to remind the member for Murray-Darling that this motion is only six months old, not two years old, and that the 21 staff resigned in the term of the Liberal Government.

In summing up, I would like to say that 21 resignations do not occur without reason. The fact that caseloads have doubled is a matter of real concern for members on this side of the House. We are desperately hoping that the people of the Hunter who are depressed or have other mental health issues will be seen to by staff in the Hunter, and that the Government will ensure that the staff will be able to adequately address their workloads and not feel stressed themselves. This is an important issue in the Hunter, and I know it is an important issue in the State, but we need to deal with the reasons that people in the Hunter are resigning in such large numbers. I urge the House to support the motion.

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

**Motion agreed to.**

## **INDEPENDENT COMMISSION AGAINST CORRUPTION**

### **Report**

**The Assistant-Speaker (Mr Andrew Fraser)** tabled, pursuant to section 78 of the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act 1988, the report of the Independent Commission Against Corruption entitled, "Investigation into allegations that a manager at the University of Technology, Sydney (UTS) solicited and accepted money, gifts and other benefits from UTS contractors", dated March 2013.

**Ordered to be printed.**

**KIAMA BUSHCARE GROUPS**

**Mr GARETH WARD** (Kiama) [12.20 p.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) thanks the Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage for visiting the Kiama electorate;
- (2) acknowledges and thanks the Minister for contributions made to the Mulgen Creek Bushcare Group, Tullimbar Bushcare Group and the Grotto Bushcare Group; and
- (3) recognises the contribution that Bushcare, Landcare and Dunecare make to maintaining and preserving the environment of Kiama.

Not a day goes by in any part of this State that volunteers do not make an enormous contribution to our community. They come from all facets of life—Rotarians, Apexians, Lions, the Red Cross—and from every community throughout the State. If we did not have the support that we get from volunteers, there is no doubt that the Government would have to pick up the tab and would not be able to afford the considerable costs and contributions that volunteers provide to assist the State of New South Wales. This motion recognises the extraordinary work of bushcare groups that maintain and preserve our natural environment around the State. It is important to recognise the hard work of bushcare and landcare volunteers, as well as the work of dune care volunteers in coastal parts of the State.

Recently the Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage visited the Kiama electorate and presented a number of cheques. George and Betty Windsor from the Mulgen Creek Bushcare Group in Bomaderry received a cheque to support the work they are doing in the area around Bomaderry and around Lyndhurst Drive. That work has resulted in the construction of bridges, the clearing of walkways and the removal of tonnes of lantana. The group has been tireless in its efforts and has made a huge contribution to the Bomaderry community. I have no doubt that had that work been left to council the residents would still be waiting for the work to be done. I am pleased that the Minister has recognised their extraordinary efforts.

Les Chittick is another great man of bushcare along the banks of the Shoalhaven River. He is a member of the Grotto Bushcare Group. I remember well going for a walk with Les when the wattle was in bloom and admiring the significant improvements around the Shoalhaven River thanks to the enormous efforts of the group. They have made the beautiful walking track accessible for people, allowing the river—which I believe is one of the most under-utilised assets in all of the Shoalhaven—to be open to bushwalkers and people who enjoy getting out in the environment. I commend Les for his continual work and I am delighted that I can recognise him, as well as all the other volunteers who play a part.

I have been disturbed to see vandalism of parts of that track as well as illegal dumping. It is very unfortunate, but I know that the council is doing its best to follow that up and I am sure the perpetrators will be brought to heel. Ruth Jenkins of the Tullimbar Bushcare Group is another tireless worker from the north of the city. All of these bushcare groups were visited by the Minister so that she could talk to them and thank them for their contributions. I recently attended an information day held by Ruth and the Tullimbar Bushcare Group. The work they are doing is certainly impressive and I am delighted to be able to acknowledge them today. Last year on 5 June, which was World Environment Day, I was pleased to announce \$204,372 in funding for the Kangaroo Valley Environment Group for a project aimed at restoring bushland in the Kangaroo River system.

The project involves 47 sites and 41 separate landowners. Around 103 hectares will be treated along 27 kilometres of the Kangaroo River and its tributaries. The grant was part of an \$8 million New South Wales Government program to fix degraded natural bushland sites. The project began a new phase at sites that were previously Landcare sites, concentrating on secondary and tertiary weed control, revegetation and increased species diversity. This funding targets key community groups who are best placed to protect their local environment. I congratulate the Kangaroo Valley Environment Group on its tireless conservation efforts as it strives to restore our natural environment in the valley.

**Mr Ryan Park:** Nice place.

**Mr GARETH WARD:** Beautiful place—much better than Keira, although it is almost as nice. Around 103 hectares will be treated along 27 kilometres of the Kangaroo River and its tributaries. The project is among 33 projects across the State sharing \$8 million under the Community Bush Regeneration Large Project grants, part of the Environmental Restoration and Rehabilitation program. In May 2012 I was proud to join with Will

Armitage and other members of the Berry Landcare Group and the Bundewallah Bushcare Group to announce \$22,500 for an environmental restoration and rehabilitation project in Berry. The project was allocated the funds from the New South Wales Government's Environmental Trust, an independent statutory body. Berry Landcare Group received the funds for a project to restore all remnants of Illawarra subtropical rainforest within the Bundewallah Creek catchment. The Illawarra subtropical rainforest is an endangered ecological community and this project will help to restore the biodiversity of the area. The project is a partnership of Bundewallah Bushcare Group, Shoalhaven City Council and private landholders.

The Environmental Restoration and Rehabilitation program funds projects that protect, restore and enhance the natural environment, and grants are open to community, State and local government organisations. I applaud the Berry Landcare Group for its tremendous work and its ongoing commitment to protect and restore our local environment. So many of these projects certainly would not be done if it were not for those who roll up their sleeves and say they are going to do something for their local environment. There is no doubt that much of this State's heritage, the habitat of endangered and threatened species, would not be protected if it were not for the dedicated and tireless volunteers.

There is no doubt that local government also plays a part in protecting these areas, and I commend all the councils in my electorate, from Shellharbour to Kiama, Shoalhaven and Wingecarribee. In fact, the members of the Bombo Headland Landcare Group were recognised at the Australia Day awards recently for their significant efforts around the Bombo community. It is with great pleasure that I commend this motion to the House and I thank all of the volunteers—so many that we cannot name them all here today—who certainly leave a lasting contribution. Their hard work and effort sums up the Australian spirit. So many people want government to do everything, they want things to be done by someone else. But these people have made a very strong and positive contribution by donating their time, rolling up their sleeves and saying, "I will not wait for someone else to do it. I will get on and do it, and I am going to get volunteers, residents, friends and other people involved". They make a great contribution to greening our beautiful environment and preserving our natural landscape, which is so special to our State, particularly in regional New South Wales.

**Ms ANNA WATSON** (Shellharbour) [12.27 p.m.]: It is a pleasure to speak on the motion moved by the member for Kiama—the second-best electorate in New South Wales, Shellharbour being the first, as the member for Kiama knows. I too welcome to the Parliament our friends from the Shellharbour Garden Club and from Kiama. It is an absolute pleasure to have them present and I will catch up with them after this debate. We all know that in New South Wales without volunteers a lot of the work that needs to be done would never get done. Having grown up in the Sutherland shire and having lived right on the bush, I saw my parents and the residents around us spend most weekends in a small bush area moving leaves to prevent bushfires and undertaking other work. I understand why these groups do the work they do. I looked at the garden club's website and noted that the club works very closely with the Mulgen Creek Bushcare Group, the Tullimbar Bushcare Group and the Grotto Bushcare Group. The club also works closely with local government, as the member for Kiama pointed out.

One of the most important roles that all these groups play is in the education of our residents, particularly our youth. There is nothing more important than educating our youth about the importance of landcare and bushcare, what it means and the role they can play in protecting the environment. Let us face it, none of us is getting any younger. We must educate the younger people and get them involved. We must bring them along to events with us and impart our knowledge. They in turn can teach their children and the message will be passed on through the generations. I cannot emphasise enough how strongly I feel about that and I am sure the member for Kiama feels the same. This issue does stop with members of the groups in the gallery; it must be continued. I congratulate the Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage on the grants that have been given to Bushcare groups.

**Mr Gareth Ward:** We want more.

**Ms ANNA WATSON:** The member for Kiama has taken the words out of my mouth. We need more funding, because we need to do more. I cannot think of any better place for that funding than the environment and our Bushcare groups. I know that the Bushcare groups within my electorate of Shellharbour undertake valuable work. They are always there to lend a helping hand on Clean Up Australia Day and on other occasions. They are the unrecognised, unsung heroes of our society. I thank them on behalf of the Shellharbour electorate and on behalf of the Opposition for the work that they do on a daily basis.

The members for the electorates of Kiama and Keira and I drive down Mount Ousley on our way home from Parliament. When I see the expanse of the water and the ships on the horizon I think: I'm home. How good

is this? I continue to drive until I come to the best electorate in New South Wales, Shellharbour, and I think how things just get better and better. Local government workers in Shellharbour and Kiama do a fantastic job and I would never take any credit away from them, but we also are lucky to have such wonderful groups of volunteers in our region. In Wollongong, Keira, Kiama, Shellharbour and the Kangaroo Valley we have groups of people whose hearts are devoted to looking after our bushland and protecting our environment. They ensure that the rubbish is picked up and that our land is looked after.

The ongoing removal and control of weeds and the track maintenance that these groups undertake make a huge difference to the lives of many people. I sincerely thank the members of the Shellharbour Garden Club, who are in the gallery, for the work that they do. I know that they will continue with their good work but, as I said, we can always use more money. We should work towards that in order to improve our environmental projects. I hope the Shellharbour Garden Club has a great day at Parliament House. I am sure they will be well looked after by the member for Kiama. I look forward to catching up with them.

**Mr ROB STOKES** (Pittwater—Parliamentary Secretary) [12.32 p.m.]: I support the motion of my colleague and friend the member for Kiama, which congratulates the Bushcare groups on the wonderful work they do in his community. I also acknowledge the contribution of the member for Shellharbour, who is clearly passionate about bushland in her electorate. Important strands of temperate and tropical rainforest stretch along the east coast all the way from beautiful electorates such as Shellharbour and Kiama up to the best electorate in the country, Pittwater. We will have continual arguments about which is the best electorate, because all members in this place are passionate about the communities they represent. The bushland that forms part of our electorates is important to our communities. That is particularly true in the outer metropolitan and regional electorates where we are blessed to have so much of our bushland remaining. While we are blessed to have so much bushland, it is vital that we continue to look after it and protect it from incursions by urbanisation, weed infestation, unsympathetic development and other factors that put constant pressure on our remaining bushland.

The landscape of the Illawarra was altered early on during the European settlement of this nation. The early timber-getters went into that area to log the turpentine trees, but much beautiful rainforest remains. Angophoras and blue gums and, on the fringes, coastal banksias and stringy barks create beautiful landscapes, and it is critical that we look after them. Therefore we must support the work of Bushcare. As the member for Kiama mentioned, we must also support Dunecare and Landcare in the work they do in other areas of the State. The work that takes place at the community level by local groups in their local bit of bush is important. When local groups take custodianship of the land that they identify with they are able to pass it on to the next generation of residents to enjoy.

It is through each of these groups looking after its own patch that together we are maintaining so much of our bushland legacy. Our communities rely on these passionate groups to protect, preserve and restore local areas of importance. I know that the members for the electorates of Kiama and Shellharbour appreciate the work of these groups. When speaking of the Illawarra I must acknowledge Anders Bofeldt, who tragically died in 2011. He made a significant contribution by mapping the various plant species throughout the Illawarra region. That work took him decades to complete and it has been recorded by the local councils. My area of Pittwater has similar community groups that do similar work and I thank them for it.

John and Lynette Illingsworth received a substantial grant from the Minister for the Environment under the Environment Trust Fund to restore the Ingleside Chase area. When I visited them they made the point that it is not enough just to go in and clear the weeds once, it has to be a constant program of works so that the weeds do not re-establish themselves. I also thank the Pittwater Environmental Foundation and its directors Bill Rooney and Jim Longley, who is a former member of Parliament. I also thank Marita Macrae from the Pittwater Natural Heritage Trust, David Palmer from the Ingleside Residents Landcare group and all the other groups in our communities. I thank the member for Kiama for bringing this matter to the attention of the House.

**Mr GARETH WARD** (Kiama) [12.36 p.m.]: I thank the members for the electorates of Shellharbour and Pittwater for their contributions to the debate on this motion. I agree with everything that was said by those members other than their comments about who has the best electorate. Notwithstanding that perennial debate, the members who spoke represent some of the most beautiful parts of the State. I note that the member for Bega, who is the Minister at the table in the Chamber, also comes from a wonderful part of the State that benefits from Buchcare, Landcare and Dunecare. The member for Bega has a green thumb and he is also committed to the environment. I know the groups in his electorate appreciate the wonderful work that he does for them.

I thank the member for Shellharbour for her positive comments in relation to Bushcare. All members enjoy working with charity and community groups, and the member for Shellharbour is no different. I also thank

my wonderful friend and colleague the member for Pittwater, who has a stunning electorate. When I venture out of the bounds of the wonderful Kiama electorate I have been known to holiday at places such as Great Mackerel Beach. His electorate also has exquisite islands such as Scotland Island. I note that the member for Pittwater won at that booth at the last election, which I do not think even John Brogden, the former member for Pittwater, was able to do. That is testament to the great work of the member for Pittwater in that area.

As I said earlier, volunteerism is central to this debate. I will return to the central tenet of the motion, which is to thank the Government for the environmental trust funds that are coming through to local community groups. This Government is intent on empowering local communities and delivering resources back to local communities to enable them to make decisions. The member for Shellharbour knows that, the member for Pittwater knows it, and I know that all other members in the Chamber know how powerful volunteers can be when they are given the tools by government to be empowered to do things for themselves.

I acknowledge all people who are involved in caring for our local environment ranging from the Office of Environment and Heritage to our local government workers who are involved in administering complex legislation across this State, to volunteers who roll up their sleeves to assist Bushcare, and to volunteers who involve themselves in campaigns such as Clean Up Australia Day. They are all doing a wonderful job. Bushcare volunteers constantly seem to be doing that type of work. There is no doubt that Bushcare volunteers make an awesome contribution to caring for our environment. I thank all members who contributed to the debate. I also thank other members in the Chamber from the Central Coast who wished to contribute to the debate, but for whom time did not permit. I am sure they will make valuable contributions to debates on this topic in the future. I commend the motion to the House.

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

**Motion agreed to.**

#### **LOCAL INFRASTRUCTURE RENEWAL SCHEME**

**Mr GARETH WARD** (Kiama) [12.40 p.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) thanks the Minister for Local Government, and Minister for the North Coast for visiting the Kiama electorate;
- (2) recognises the work of the Minister for Local Government, and Minister for the North Coast through the New South Wales Local Infrastructure Renewal Scheme; and
- (3) acknowledges that this scheme will assist in breaking down the infrastructure backlog left by the previous Government.

The former Labor Government left an enormous infrastructure backlog and enormous debt to the incoming O'Farrell Government, including \$55 billion in general debt and a \$30 billion infrastructure backlog. As I look around this Chamber I see some wonderful local government representatives, such as my good friend the member for East Hills, my good friend the member for Gosford, and my wonderful friend the member for Drummoyne. They are all great local government contributors and, in the case of the member for Drummoyne and the member for Gosford, great former mayors of great councils who did wonderful things for their local government authorities. When I look across the Chamber, I see a current member of the United Services Union who, as a union official, looks after the interests of employees in local government. This Parliament has a wealth of local government experience in members who know about the needs of local government. We also know what local government can do when governments put funding into the front line to ensure that local government projects are improved.

The Minister for Local Government, and Minister for the North Coast should be commended for fighting for the Local Infrastructure Renewal Scheme to be part of the instrumentalities that the Government is rolling out. Projects funded in round one and applications that have been received for round two are significant. To date the New South Wales Government has committed \$100 million over six years to assist local councils to pay for loans to provide much-needed upgrades and maintenance of infrastructure as part of the Local Infrastructure Renewal Scheme. In round one, an independent assessment panel recommended that 84 projects of 64 councils receive subsidy funding under the scheme. That was approved by the chief executive of the division of local government. Successful council applicants were offered a 4 per cent interest subsidy. In total, an investment of just \$65 million over 10 years for round one projects has enabled the unlocking of investment in local infrastructure to the value of \$439 million.

Round two of the scheme offers a 3 per cent interest subsidy to relieve infrastructure backlog and fund housing-enabling infrastructure projects. After the receipt of 62 applications from 52 councils for a total project value of \$361 million, the round closed in December 2012. The applications are being assessed by a technical panel before being referred to an independent assessment panel for the final selection process. Announcement of successful round two projects are scheduled to be made by the end of May 2013. All approvals for the Local Infrastructure Renewal Scheme subsidy funding are made subject to TCorp approval. TCorp is working towards completion of financial assessments for all councils by the end of March 2013. The total of proposed borrowings for all approved projects in round one is \$343 million, and so far 50 councils have accepted their round one funding offers. The total of proposed borrowings for all round two applications is \$224 million.

The majority of the projects, which is approximately 70 per cent of the projects, are for roads, buildings, water and sewage treatment. Approximately 60 per cent of the funding is for projects in Sydney, the Illawarra and the Hunter regions. Five of the 62 projects are for infrastructure to support the building of new homes. The Local Infrastructure Renewal Scheme, which is now providing \$100 million over six years, was first announced in the 2011-12 budget. In the first round it provided a 4 per cent interest subsidy to assist councils with legitimate infrastructure backlogs to meet the cost of borrowing. The second round will provide a 3 per cent interest subsidy for backlog funding as well as for housing-enabling infrastructure projects.

The subsidies provide incentives to councils to make greater use of debt funding to address backlogs and are intended to augment funding options that already are available to councils. A probity adviser has been appointed to ensure that the assessment of the applications is undertaken in a fair and transparent manner. An assessment panel has been established to make recommendations on funding. It comprises an independent chair as well as representatives of the Department of Planning and Infrastructure, Treasury, and the division of local government in the Department of Premier and Cabinet. A technical specialist subpanel also was appointed to provide the assessment panel with a detailed technical analysis of each of the projects.

Projects are assessed according to the following criteria, which are further outlined in the assessment and probity plan: a council's capacity to deliver the projects and programs, demonstration that the project will address genuine infrastructure backlog or, in round two, provide new housing-enabling infrastructure, demonstration that the Local Infrastructure Renewal Scheme subsidy will accelerate infrastructure provision, a council's financial preparedness, project integration with State infrastructure, and project consistency with State strategic policy direction. A summary of funding distributions through the Local Infrastructure Renewal Scheme, round one, has been made available to local councils and successful applicants. In the Kiama electorate, money was made available for the Kiama Leisure Centre. As a result of recent weather events, it may be more of an insurance matter than a project that will be covered by the scheme. However, I know that the Mayor of Kiama, Brian Petschler, and the Kiama council are keen to ensure that the funding remains in the Kiama community. I share their enthusiasm.

Funding was delegated to the Wollongong City Council. I acknowledge the presence in the Chamber of my friends the member for Keira and the member for Wollongong. The Wollongong City Council received funding to unlock money for footpaths in the Wollongong area to ensure that those basic amenities, which I know our ratepayers long for so much, can be provided. I know that this scheme will be of great assistance in that regard. The member for Shellharbour and I were very pleased to see money allocated to the Shellharbour City Council, amounting to approximately \$3 million in interest subsidies, to release projects for roads. Funding has been made available to the Shoalhaven City Council, on which I served as a councillor and deputy mayor, for roads.

I recognise the work of the Speaker to ensure that funding for important and much-needed projects would be delivered. Giving local government authorities the tools to complete their projects is essential. It is essential that we fund and resource local government in the smartest and most intelligent ways possible. The Local Infrastructure Renewal Scheme, which has been approved by the Minister for Local Government, has been warmly welcomed by councils who wish to clear the infrastructure backlog that remained after the term of the former Labor Government expired. The O'Farrell Government listens to local government authorities. We want to have a meaningful partnership with local councils because local councils are at the front line of community services. The Government wants to listen, act and deliver for local communities across the State.

**Ms NOREEN HAY** (Wollongong) [12.47 p.m.]: During my contribution to debate on the motion, I will respond to some of the comments made by the member who preceded me, the member for Kiama. He persistently attempts to reinforce his contention about a financial black hole that was left by the former Labor Government.

**Mr Andrew Constance:** It was \$5.2 billion.

**Ms NOREEN HAY:** That is absolute rubbish.

**Mr Gareth Ward:** Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 76, relevance. I note that the member for Wollongong took a similar point of order in debate on the previous motion, but nowhere in the motion currently being debated is there a reference to the budget black hole. Madam Acting-Speaker, I ask you to direct the member for Wollongong to confine her remarks to the leave of the motion.

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner):** Order! I thank the member for Kiama. The member for Wollongong may continue.

**Ms NOREEN HAY:** In the opening remarks made by the member for Kiama—

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner):** Order! We do not need to hear from members in the peanut gallery. Members will remain silent.

**Ms NOREEN HAY:** Clearly, Government members do not wish to hear what I want to say.

**Mr Andrew Constance:** Point of order: Madam Acting-Speaker, I seek clarification of your ruling on the previous point of order. You have directed the member for Wollongong to continue her speech. I have no doubt the good member for Wollongong would like clarification of your ruling as well.

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner):** Order! The clarification is that I uphold the member for Wollongong's speech. I thank the Minister for Ageing, and Minister for Disability Services for directing my attention to the ruling.

**Ms NOREEN HAY:** It is no surprise to me that the member for Bega and the member for Kiama would seek to use political tactics in this place to stop me from contributing, because they do not like to hear what I have to say.

**Mr Gareth Ward:** Point of order: My point of order relates to attacks on other members, which should be by way of a substantive motion. You should call the member for Wollongong to order.

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

**Ms NOREEN HAY:** That just proves my point. They do not want to hear anything that is said. They are too busy on that side patting themselves on the back—

**Mr Gareth Ward:** Point of order: The member for Wollongong is now flouting your ruling. You told her to come back to the leave of the motion and she got stuck back into me again.

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner):** Order! The member for Kiama will resume his seat. He will not tell me how to do my job. The member for Wollongong has the call.

**Ms NOREEN HAY:** For the sake of the debate I remind the member for Kiama that the current Government was given a triple-A rating when it came into office thanks to the former Labor Government. Members are attempting to stop me from contributing and reminding people of that while they are patting themselves on the back. As I have said in the past in this place, self-praise is no recommendation.

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner):** Order! Government members will come to order.

**Ms NOREEN HAY:** If the member for Kiama could just stop congratulating himself for two minutes, we might be able to get down to tin tacks. He has nothing but hot air to congratulate himself for, and I give him credit for being full of that.

**Mr Gareth Ward:** Full of what?

**Ms NOREEN HAY:** Hot air, in case the member missed that. Under the previous Liberal Government, the one prior to this one, Kiama hospital was closed. While this Government talks about giving decision-making back to local government—

**Mr Andrew Constance:** Point of order: Could you please ask the member for Wollongong to come back to the leave of the debate? She was talking about the Liberal Government of 20 years ago and Kiama hospital—

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery):** Order! The member for Bega is wasting time. He will resume his seat.

**Mr Andrew Constance:** Can I just finish my point of order?

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery):** The member for Bega did not refer to a standing order under which he was taking his point of order. I have asked the member for Wollongong to return to the leave of the motion. The member for Bega will resume his seat.

**Mr Andrew Constance:** Point of order—

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery):** Order! I heard the member's point of order. He will resume his seat. The member for Bega is just wasting time.

**Mr Andrew Constance:** I am taking a point of order under Standing Order 76.

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery):** Order! The member will resume his seat. I hear what he is saying but he is just wasting time.

**Mr Andrew Constance:** Make a ruling.

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery):** Order! It is not up to the member for Bega to tell me what to do. The member may ask the Speaker whether I am entitled to be here. The member for Bega will resume his seat and stop making inappropriate comments. The member for Wollongong has the call. I apologise to the member for Wollongong for the constant disruption.

**Ms NOREEN HAY:** I think the member for Bega should be apologising, and the member for Orange should not be interjecting either. Nonetheless, they do not like to hear any negatives because they spend their time patting themselves on the back for talking.

**Mr Andrew Gee:** Point of order: The member for Wollongong is offending Standing Order 76 and the sensibilities of every member.

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery):** Order! The member for Orange will resume his seat. The member for Wollongong will be heard in silence.

**Ms NOREEN HAY:** I will place on record that there is no question in my mind that a lot of these first-time members do not have a clue about how to debate. Two sides are involved in a debate, not just the Government side, and the fact that a lot of them are oncurs is something they will have to live with. When their Treasurer can lose a billion dollars that could have been spent on infrastructure in Kiama—

**Mr Jonathan O'Dea:** Point of order: We welcome a debate if the member would debate the motion.

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery):** Order! The member for Wollongong will return to the leave of the motion.

**Ms NOREEN HAY:** I am trying to talk about investments that could be made in infrastructure in Kiama by the local council. I am also talking about the fact that the Auditor-General found a billion dollars that had gone missing in the budget.

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery):** Order! The member for Drummoyne will cease calling out from the back of the Chamber.

**Mr Gareth Ward:** Point of order: My point of order is under Standing Order 76. In the last debate the member for Wollongong took a point of order on me for not talking to the motion. The member for Wollongong is doing the same thing.

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner):** Order! I uphold the point of order. The member for Kiama will resume his seat. The member for Wollongong will return to the leave of the motion.

**Ms NOREEN HAY:** I am simply trying to show that in congratulating himself today the member for Kiama is misleading the community and the House. The member for Orange, the member for Davidson and the member to Drummoyne do not want to hear it.

**Mr Andrew Gee:** Point of order: I refer to Standing Order 76 and the rule against abject drivell in Parliament.

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner):** Order! That is an inappropriate point of order. The member's time has expired.

**Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson) [12.54 p.m.]:** I do not think I have heard a speech in this place in which so little was said and so much bluster and empty verbose comments were made.

**Ms Noreen Hay:** Point of order—

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner):** Order! Government members will cease telling people how to do their jobs. They are not helping.

**Ms Noreen Hay:** Point of order: If members want to impugn the reputation of another member they should do so by a way of substantive motion.

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner):** Order! The member for Davidson will continue his speech. Government members will remain silent.

**Mr JONATHAN O'DEA:** I think the member for Wollongong made her own reputation. When someone reads the speech she made they will draw their own conclusions. Local government infrastructure assets provide people with access to economic and social facilities and services. They generally have high capital costs, take a long time to plan and build, and need to last many years. Examples include buildings and road infrastructure, as well as plant and equipment. While they may have lower operating costs, their benefits are often not fully recovered through user charges. Like the member for Kiama, I have experience in local government and appreciate the need for greater investment in New South Wales local government infrastructure to create strong foundations for our local communities to grow and prosper.

In its 2011-12 budget the O'Farrell Government provided a total of \$70 million over five years for the implementation of the local infrastructure backlog policy. The Local Infrastructure Renewal Scheme, which provides an interest subsidy to fund council infrastructure backlog borrowing, is a critical component of this policy. Round one of the scheme saw a variety of projects approved, ranging from buildings and road renewals, overbridge replacements and swimming pool rejuvenation to major airport reconstruction works. I understand that overall the scheme recommended 84 projects put forward by 64 councils, adding up to a total cost of \$439 million to go ahead, subject to TCorp approval.

Without the Local Infrastructure Renewal Scheme, funding these vital projects may have otherwise remained unfunded for many years. This motion acknowledges the scheme's assistance in breaking down the infrastructure backlog left by the former Labor Government. Round one of the scheme is helping to deliver enhanced regional infrastructure, including in the Kiama region and the Davidson region, or to improve local infrastructure and recreational opportunities in Sydney's north. In the northern Sydney region the New South Wales Local Infrastructure Renewal Scheme is assisting local government— [*Quorum called for.*]

[*The bells having been rung and a quorum having formed, business resumed.*]

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner):** Order! The member's time has expired.

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

**LEGISLATION REVIEW COMMITTEE****Report: Legislation Review Digest No. 34/55****Question—That the House take note of the report—proposed.**

**Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD** (Myall Lakes) [1.00 p.m.]: As chair of the Legislation Review Committee I take this opportunity to comment on the recent Legislation Review Digest tabled on 25 March.

**Mr John Williams:** Did the member for Bankstown attend the meeting?

**Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD:** Yes, she did. This is the thirty-fourth digest prepared by the Legislation Review Committee of the Fifty-fifth Parliament. Since 2003 the role of the committee has been to identify issues in proposed legislation and regulations as outlined in sections 8A and 9 of the Legislation Review Act. As members of the House may be aware, it is incumbent on the committee to identify issues in legislation that may trespass on individual rights and liberties, inappropriately delegate legislative power, confer wide or ill-defined powers, limit appeal or review rights, or insufficiently scrutinise the Executive to legislative power. In the digest tabled this week the committee reported on four bills, two of which attracted comment. The two bills that did not attract any comment were the Public Interest Disclosures Amendment Bill, and the Game and Feral Animal Control Amendment (Pink-eared Ducks) Bill.

The committee first considered the Crimes (Criminal Organisations Control) Amendment Bill. This bill substantially reintroduces the 2012 amendment bill with minor amendments. The bill has been modelled largely on the Queensland experience. Two key features of the bill are that the Supreme Court rather than an eligible judge is to now act as arbiter, and that a criminal intelligence monitor will oversight certain matters. The committee reiterated its previous concerns arising out of this scheme. The committee raised a number of issues regarding the bill trespassing on the rights and liberties of bikie gangs—terrible. The second bill that attracted comment was the Intoxicated Persons (Sobering Up Centres Trial) Bill. This bill facilitates a trial of a scheme for the temporary detention or care, or both, of certain intoxicated persons to enable those persons to sober up. The bill provides for the mandatory detention of intoxicated persons in certain circumstances, including that the period of determination will be for not less than four hours and not more than eight.

The committee referred to Parliament whether the mandatory detention provisions of this bill trespassed on individual rights and liberties. The bill also provides that a cost recovery charge is payable by an individual subject to a mandatory detention order, and that there can be no review of the circumstances or lawfulness of the detention that gave rise to the imposition of a cost recovery charge. The committee referred to Parliament whether the lack of a review right relating to the circumstances of an individual's detention is appropriate. The committee also considered whether an individual's right to privacy is interfered with by enabling specified government agencies and other individuals to enter into information-sharing arrangements of personal or health information of intoxicated persons who have been assessed for admission to sobering up centres.

This week the committee also considered three regulations, to which I shall refer shortly. Under section 9 of the Legislation Review Act the committee has the ability to bring to the Parliament's attention regulations it considers may trespass on individual rights and liberties or may have undue impacts on the business community, or where the objective of the regulation could be better achieved by alternative and more effective means. The Liquor Amendment (Kings Cross) Regulation provides that individuals wearing clothing, jewellery or accessories featuring the name of the any of the 22 bikie gangs may not be permitted to enter licensed premises in the Kings Cross precinct—disgraceful. Although the committee considered the freedom of association implications of this regulation, given the overall public interest it did not make any further comment. The Rail Safety (Adoption of National Law) Regulation provides that rail safety workers could be required to undergo blood and urine tests. The committee considered whether this would constitute a violation of their personal physical integrity.

Again, the committee considered the balance required between personal rights and liberties and the overall health and safety of the public at large. Lastly, the Universities Governing Bodies (Macquarie University) Order amends the Macquarie University Act 1989. The committee previously raised its concerns that enabling subordinate legislation to amend the principal legislation from which it derives its authority is an inappropriate delegation of legislative power. The committee reiterated this view when it considered this order. For a detailed consideration of the identified issues in the bills and regulations I once again invite members to

review the digests. The digests are prepared with a view to raising ideas and discussion points for the benefit of the House. I hope that this week members will continue to enjoy the work of the committee. I congratulate committee members and the committee staff, who prepared this digest within a very short turnaround.

**Ms TANIA MIHAILUK** (Bankstown) [1.06 p.m.]: I contribute to the take-note debate on the fifth Legislation Review Committee Digest of 2013. I acknowledge the chair of our committee, the member for Myall Lakes, our fellow committee members, the member for Rockdale, the member for Parramatta and the member for Swansea, and our colleagues in the other place, the Hon. Shaoquett Moselmane, the Hon. Dr Peter Phelps and Mr Shoebridge. I take this opportunity also, as always, to commend the committee staff for their hard work in preparing the digest. Obviously, three sitting weeks made it difficult to prepare three digests, but they have done a magnificent job. I take this opportunity also to wish the staff the best of luck for the April break, including Easter. They deserve a good rest. After last week's action-packed 10-minute-long marathon meeting the committee returned to its usual two-minute meeting.

**Mr Stephen Bromhead:** You should have said something. You could have raised an issue.

**Ms TANIA MIHAILUK:** We did try to raise a couple of issues, but our committee does not like a lot of debate. At the previous meeting we tried to move a few amendments, but they were quickly shot down. This week's digest reviewed four bills: the Crimes (Criminal Organisations Control) Amendment Bill 2013; the Game and Feral Animal Control Amendment (Pink-Eared Ducks) Bill 2013; the Intoxicated Persons (Sobering Up Centres Trial) 2013 and the Public Interest Disclosures Amendment Bill 2013. The digest also reviewed three regulations: the Liquor Amendment (Kings Cross) Regulation 2013; the Rail Safety (Adoption of National Law) Regulation 2012, and the Universities Governing Bodies (Macquarie University) Order 2012. I shall comment briefly on some key recommendations contained within the digest.

The committee reviewed the Crimes (Criminal Organisations Control) Amendment Bill 2013 and referred to Parliament whether the bill trespasses on personal rights and liberties insofar as the presumption of innocence was concerned. The committee noted that the broadening of the definition of "serious criminal activities" to individuals who have yet to be convicted or even charged for the purpose of issuing control orders might trespass on personal rights and liberties. The committee also raised issues relating to access to justice, procedural fairness and judicial review. In particular, the committee raised whether it is fair for criminal intelligence to be admitted in evidence, despite any rule relating to the admission of hearsay evidence, and stated:

The Committee refers to Parliament whether enabling criminal intelligence to be tendered despite the hearsay rule trespasses on rights and liberties.

The committee raised issues with the duration of declarations under the legislation. In particular, the committee noted that the legislation will extend the duration of a declaration from three to five years. The committee referred to Parliament whether this might breach the presumption of innocence and constitute prejudicial punishment where this applies to those who have not been charged or convicted of a crime. The committee also referred to Parliament whether the legislation limits the right of appeal in that organisations declared to be criminal have only 28 days from formal notification to appeal that declaration.

Regardless of a member's particular position on any given piece of legislation, these are serious issues which are worthy of consideration. The committee also reviewed the Intoxicated Persons (Sobering Up Centres Trial) Bill 2013. The committee raised issues concerning the mandatory detention provision proposed within the legislation. The committee noted that intoxicated individuals might be subject to mandatory detention where they have been neither arrested nor charged with an offence, and that may constitute an undue trespass on an individual's right to not be arbitrarily detained. The committee also noted that the legislation contains no mechanism to review the lawfulness of an individual's detention or right of appeal. I commend the digest to the House.

**Mr ANDREW GEE** (Orange) [1.10 p.m.]: I will make a brief contribution to this debate. I pass on my hearty congratulations to the member for Myall Lakes on the efficient way he conducts meetings of the Legislation Review Committee. Unfortunately, there are members on the benches opposite—I think because of their love for middle management—who seem to equate a long meeting with a good meeting. That is not the case. The member for Myall Lakes gets through the meetings efficiently and gets the business of the committee going each week. I congratulate the member for Parramatta, who is the deputy chair of the committee. This

Government has been much more active than the previous Government in getting legislation through the House and that has greatly increased the workload of the Legislation Review Committee. I congratulate the member for Myall Lakes and the hardworking staff who support the committee.

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

**Report noted.**

*[Acting-Speaker (Ms Sonia Horner) left the chair at 1.11 p.m. The House resumed 2.15 p.m.]*

#### **REPRESENTATION OF MINISTER ABSENT DURING QUESTIONS**

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL:** I inform the House that the Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Hospitality and Racing, and Minister for the Arts will answer questions on behalf of the Deputy Premier, Minister for Trade and Investment, and Minister for Regional Infrastructure and Services, who will be absent from question time today.

#### **QUESTION TIME**

*[Question time commenced at 2.19 p.m.]*

#### **BARANGAROO CROWN LIMITED PROPOSAL REPORT**

**Mr JOHN ROBERTSON:** My question without notice is directed to the Premier. Why has the Premier refused to release today, in full, the Deloitte report on the Crown Barangaroo proposal, given neither Deloitte nor Crown is opposed to its release?

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL:** As I have said before, the report will be released after the stage two process, which is currently underway. David Murray having been appointed to go through the stage two process to determine—

**Mr John Robertson:** No-one else has any objections?

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL:** Do you want an answer or not?

**Ms Noreen Hay:** Settle down, Barry.

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL:** There are some days when you get the interjections you have been waiting for. Of all people to put their head up—the person who made a \$60,000 clerical oversight in lodging an election return, the member for Wollongong.

**Ms Noreen Hay:** Shame you've got no class, Barry.

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL:** We do not know whether or not the clerical oversight was made at the table of knowledge, but we certainly know the odd kebab was consumed.

**Ms Noreen Hay:** Shame you've got no class, Barry. Great statement.

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL:** Keep coming, Noreen, keep coming.

**Ms Noreen Hay:** Don't worry, Barry, I will.

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL:** I do not want to get between the member for Wollongong and the member for Murray-Darling. As I was saying, the stage two process is underway. David Murray, the former head of the Australian Future Fund, is undertaking that assessment on behalf of the State Government. He will make a recommendation to us by the end of April. That recommendation will then be considered by the Government and at that stage reports will be released. If there is a green light, if legislation is required, of course that information will be released; it was always going to be released. I have said time and again that midway through a commercial process being conducted at arm's length from and independently of government is not the time to release such information.

## HEALTH FUNDING

**Mr MARK COURE:** My question is directed to the Premier. How are the State's hospitals benefiting from the Government's commitment to health?

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL:** I thank the member for Oatley for his question. Another week, another health infrastructure project underway. Last week it was Campbelltown Hospital, today it is St George Hospital. In the decades and generations to come, statues will not be erected of former Governors or sports stars, statues of Jillian the Builder will be erected. They will appear across the State in bronze and with a shovel in hand because of the work she is doing in relation to health infrastructure.

Today I was delighted to join the Minister—a bronze Jillian with a shovel in hand—the member for Rockdale, the member for Oatley and members of the great St George Hospital team led by Dr Trevor Chan, the head of the emergency department, to turn the first sod for the redevelopment of St George Hospital. Former Premier Morris Iemma was also present in his capacity as chairman of the local health district. Last year the emergency department of St George Hospital treated more than 62,000 patients, including 13,000 children. Dr Chan said that this year the hospital is on track to see almost 70,000 patients—189 a day, on average, and he said that that number is significantly higher on Mondays and Tuesdays.

The excellent staff of St George Hospital deserve a state-of-the-art environment to provide an even better service to the people of that district, and this \$39 million redevelopment will deliver that. The new emergency department has been designed from the ground up. It will include five new resuscitation bays, an acute adult area with 34 beds, a paediatric zone with 12 treatment spaces, an adult fast-track zone to ensure that those with less serious problems are able to be dealt with more efficiently, and expanded waiting and triage areas with dedicated areas for important services such as X-rays, CT scans and ultrasounds.

The investment kicking off today at St George Hospital is being replicated across the State. As I have said time and time again: Think of a part of the State and think of Jillian the Builder. Blacktown Mount Druitt Hospital is having \$300 million invested into a project that, as the former member for Blacktown Paul Gibson said, the State Labor Government ignored for 16 years. Last Friday I was at Campbelltown Hospital, where \$139 million is being invested to improve that hospital, which is in a growth zone of Sydney. I went past Hornsby hospital a week or so ago. I know the member for Hornsby is delighted with the progress he is seeing there—upgrades that also were ignored by those opposite. The Northern Beaches Hospital is certainly progressing.

**Mr John Robertson:** When?

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL:** The Leader of the Opposition asks when. He accused us of doing nothing and he put out a brochure saying that we are doing nothing, but he has got the biggest hospital project in his electorate, delivered by us. Talk about ingratitude. Upgrades to hospitals at Wagga Wagga, Tamworth, Parkes, Wollongong, Dubbo, Kempsey, Port Macquarie, Bega, particularly west of the Great Dividing Range, were promised by those opposite time and time again to shore up Independents in seats previously held by Coalition members. Having duped electors election after election, those upgrades were never delivered. But they are now being delivered by Jillian the Builder.

**Ms Noreen Hay:** It's a joke—

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL:** No, you're the joke, Noreen. You are the lazy joke—lazy, lazy, lazy—who cannot get her return in on time and who famously, during the massive strike and demonstration by public sector workers out the front of Parliament House, went to lunch instead of expressing solidarity with the unions. There was a double celebration at St George Hospital today. I stood with Chloe and Hayden, two of the latest graduate nurses to enter the nursing system. Chloe is nurse number 3,999 and Hayden is nurse number 4,000 to have been employed by this Government. Chloe is a graduate of Wollongong University and Hayden is a graduate of the University of Sydney. In our first two years we have employed 4,000 new nurses, bringing the number of nurses across the State to 47,500 for the first time in the State's history. [*Extension of time granted.*]

We are getting on with the job not only of employing 4,000 additional nurses but also of employing 900 doctors and other allied health professionals across our health system to ensure that as the population grows so too do the services and the infrastructure required to give people quality health care across the State. Those 4,000 additional nurses include 616 in the Hunter New England Local Health District, 468 in the Central Coast

Local Health District, 402 in the South Eastern Sydney Local Health District and more than 300 in South Western Sydney and Western Sydney local health districts. That is in addition to nurses who have joined health districts across New South Wales. Those opposite continue to talk down what is happening in our health system.

Those on the Government side of the House understand what is actually occurring and are lobbying actively for it. The person who deserves the most credit for today's commencement of the redevelopment of St George Hospital is the member for Oatley, who I saw day in, day out in this place pushing the Government and the Minister for Health to ensure that the commitment was delivered. Today we were delighted to turn the first sod on the redevelopment, which again demonstrates that we are getting on with the job. The 4,000 more nurses, 900 new doctors and dozens of new or upgraded hospitals across the State are a tribute to the Minister for Health. It is an indication of our determination to overcome the backlog in Health we inherited from those opposite and it is a further sign that we are governing in the public interest.

### INFRASTRUCTURE NSW CHAIRMAN NICK GREINER

**Mr JOHN ROBERTSON:** My question is directed to the Premier. Given that the Federal Court has found Nick Greiner guilty of breaking Federal cartel laws through his direct involvement in an illegal bid-rigging deal worth more than \$200 million, will the Premier sack him as the chair of Infrastructure NSW?

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL:** It is interesting that when anything to do with sleaze, concerns of impropriety or court cases occurs while we are in office the Leader of the Opposition suddenly jumps out of the box and is quick to ask questions. What did he do in Cabinet whilst the Eddie Obeid allegations were on the front page of the *Sydney Morning Herald*? That is why I call him Eddie's right one—he deserves the sack just as much as Ian Macdonald.

**Mr Michael Daley:** Point of order: Standing Order 73 leaps to mind quite readily.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! There is no point of order. The Premier has the call.

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL:** First and foremost we should be careful of members opposite who want to jump to conclusions.

**Mr John Robertson:** What, a Federal Court ruling is jumping to conclusions?

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL:** As I understand it, an appeal is being lodged and so the legal process is not complete. That is important because the last time members opposite jumped to a conclusion in relation to Nick Greiner it was following an Independent Commission Against Corruption finding that was overturned a couple of months later by the Supreme Court. Let us not get in the way of legal process. We must let the process see its way through.

**Mr John Robertson:** There is no process.

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL:** There is a process.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Leader of the Opposition will come to order. I remind the Leader of the Opposition that this is not time for debate; this is question time.

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL:** If an appeal has been flagged, that appeal should be heard.

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

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL:** The point is we could not be happier with the work that Infrastructure NSW has done. In December last year it delivered to this State—for the first time in our history—an infrastructure strategy that goes for 20 years. That sort of strategy has existed for decades in Queensland and Victoria.

**Mr Michael Daley:** Point of order: The question does not relate to the work of Infrastructure NSW; it goes to the conduct of Nick Greiner. It concerns a serious breach of corporate law and the Premier should start taking the question seriously.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! It is absolutely relevant to the question asked. The member for Maroubra will resume his seat.

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL:** It is absolutely relevant, Madam Speaker. What is not relevant is that members opposite are not getting the answer that they wanted. Infrastructure NSW has delivered to this State what has existed in other States for decades.

**Mr Nick Lalich:** You're not going to do anything about it, Barry. That's all you've got to say.

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL:** The member for Cabramatta should not talk about honesty; he is the most crooked bloke in this place. The infrastructure strategy will deliver the same sort of progress that is seen in infrastructure projects in other States. I could not be happier with the work done by Paul Broad and his team, overseen by the board chaired by Nick Greiner. This morning when I saw the reports in the newspaper I contacted the Director General of the Department of Premier and Cabinet, who told me that he has reviewed the extracts of the judgement and has advised that there is nothing that prevents Mr Greiner operating as an effective chair of Infrastructure NSW. Importantly, as he reminds me, this is a civil action in a civil court and Mr Greiner has indicated his intention to appeal. He should be allowed to see that process through.

### SOCIAL BENEFIT BONDS

**Mr JOHN SIDOTI:** My question is directed to the Treasurer, and the Minister for Industrial Relations. How will social benefit bonds help to deliver better support for vulnerable people and the State as a whole?

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Keira will cease interjecting. If he continues to interject he will be removed from the Chamber.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** I thank the member for Drummoyne—otherwise known as the Package—for his work in the community and for his interest in this subject. I am delighted to announce that today the Minister for Family and Community Services and I proudly signed a social benefit bond. The \$7 million bond will fund the New Parent and Infant Network program of UnitingCare Burnside, which is designed to keep families together. This is not only the first bond of its type in Australia; it is the first anywhere in the world. New South Wales is delivering a new social policy that will reduce the number of children in out-of-home care, and it is the first time such a program has been put into a social bond. A new market is being undertaken for social bonds and it will create a new way to deliver social policy. The Government is excited by the opportunity.

*[Interruption]*

I hear members opposite. Yes, those opposite talked about it and ideas were going forward under the former Government. The difference is that this Minister for Family and Community Services has delivered. It is an idea turned into action, and we pay tribute to the Minister for that. The Minister for Family and Community Services is not interested in just putting more funds in to see what happens; she is passionate about putting money towards delivering outcomes for the most vulnerable in our society. This policy is not just an activity, it will deliver outcomes. That is a new way of implementing social policy in this State.

This is personal for the Minister and me, as it is for all members of the Government. It is an opportunity to make a difference in the lives of people who need it most. The social bond is an important policy because for the first time it will give private investors a direct opportunity to invest in social programs that are helping the most vulnerable in this State and those families that need it most. Whether it be charities, investors, superannuation funds or ethical investors, there is an opportunity to directly invest in programs that can make a big difference in people's lives. Government members think that is an important breakthrough in this State and we are proud to take the lead on it.

It delivers a win-win-win. It delivers for families and the kids involved. At the moment the program will be focused on those families who have either had kids just moved to out-of-home-care or whose kids are at high risk of being taken away. This program steps in and makes a difference right away. It provides mentoring and counselling to those families with the simple aim of bringing them back together. The evidence is clear that when those families are brought back together the kids have higher opportunities in literacy and numeracy and long-term employment later in life. At the moment in circumstances when children are placed in out-of-home-care only about 25 per cent of them are restored to their families. This bond aims to raise that to more than 50 per cent. The Government is proud to do that.

The bond will also benefit taxpayers. The expectation is that over time this will deliver more than \$80 million in savings. That will give the Government the opportunity to invest in additional programs for the most vulnerable in this State. At the same time it will deliver benefits to non-government organisations, the partners in these social bonds. It will help them to focus on the outcomes. As returns are provided to them it will give them additional capacity to invest in more programs to help the families and kids that need it most. The O'Farrell Government is proud to announce this new initiative today. I will not pretend that there are no risks with this program, but I think we need to balance those risks against the benefits that will come to the kids who will receive these funds. It is a risk that we are prepared to take. All of us should put ourselves in the shoes of those kids and families and understand that this bond will provide an opportunity for the kids to be restored to their families and enhance their future opportunities. That is something of which this Government is very proud.

### **INFRASTRUCTURE NSW CHAIRMAN NICK GREINER**

**Mr MICHAEL DALEY:** My question is directed to the Premier. Given that Federal Court Justice Michelle Gordon found as a matter of fact that Nick Greiner was the architect and author of an illegal bid-rigging arrangement, and that in his evidence under oath before the court he did not provide satisfactory answers and that he was hostile and evasive, when will the Premier sack him as head of Infrastructure NSW?

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL:** I stand by my previous answer.

### **AUTISM SUPPORT SERVICES**

**Ms MELANIE GIBBONS:** My question is directed to the Minister for Ageing, and Minister for Disability Services. How is the Government supporting children with autism and raising awareness of that condition in New South Wales?

**Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE:** I thank the member for Menai for her question and acknowledge that her community in south-west New South Wales, in common with the communities represented by a number of members of this House, is experiencing enormous change in demographics, particularly an increase in young families, which in turn is associated with an increased demand for services to support people with autism. The O'Farrell Government is transforming lives, reforming the disability system and providing record growth funding to deliver more services to our community, particularly services that support people with disability. We have to recognise that a prevalence study conducted as recently as 2006 by Autism Spectrum Australia has revealed that one in 160 children aged between six years and 12 years are placed somewhere along the autism spectrum.

Autism affects a person's ability to communicate and the ability of an individual to relate to others. It is a very difficult disability because it affects people in varying ways. Ultimately it affects the way in which individuals with autism are supported as individuals. Last week the Premier and I met with Grace Fava from the Autism Advisory and Support Service, which is based in Liverpool. That organisation has established an autism community house, a 24-hour support line for autism, run workshops, and provided support for parents in particular. One of the great features of the Autism Advisory and Support Service is that it runs on the sniff of an oily rag. It has done all its own fundraising, yet it exists in an area that has the fastest growth rates of autism in Sydney, if not the nation. Very pleasingly, the Premier and I were able to announce that \$190,000 a year will be allocated to that organisation.

The Autism Advisory and Support Service is an organisation that has done the work. It has established the networks and has won the confidence of families throughout south-west Sydney. But, most importantly from the point of view of the Government, we want to see organisations such as the Autism Advisory and Support Service become self-sufficient. This valuable government funding will assist in providing more support staff for the work that is being undertaken. The organisation will work alongside the department to ensure that the organisation grows and adopts best practice principles. Given that the Stronger Together II program is underway, there is no doubt that we will see many similar outcomes that feature good community-based support for children with autism and for families.

The Government will commit \$21 million in growth funding to provide an additional 1,000 places for children with autism through the Stronger Together II program. This year alone the Government will provide \$71 million to support families of children with disability, particularly families affected by autism. To address autism adequately we must improve mainstream support, therapy support in mainstream settings and, ultimately, we must ensure that better localised support is available to assist families and children individually. What we

know about autism is that the earlier intervention is undertaken the better the outcomes will be as people progress through their lives. On 2 April we will recognise World Autism Awareness Day. The State Government has waived the fee for the Opera House to be lit in blue that night. Other expos will be held throughout April.

One will be held in Chatswood—supported with financial assistance of \$20,000 provided by the State Government—where thousands of people are expected to obtain greater information and access to support services in relation to autism. Within 100 days the National Disability Insurance Scheme will commence in a number of local government areas in the Hunter. What is pleasing about that is not the funding per se but the way in which support services will be delivered on an individual basis. I have referred to that on previous occasions. Given the nature of disability, autism requires individualised support to cope with the various manifestations of the disability and the way in which it affects children and adults. It is fundamental as a consequence of disability insurance reform that we move to individualisation. [*Extension of time granted.*]

As we move towards implementation of the National Disability Insurance Scheme and the individualisation of planning and funding we must ensure that children, adults and families who are affected by autism are supported by individually tailored services. The Government has done a great deal to transform the system of support services provision. We are moving away from block funding of programs but what is very pleasing about funding that is being allocated to the Autism Advisory and Support Service in Liverpool is that it is funding that sits alongside vital community funds that have been raised.

The Premier met Grace Fava at the Liverpool Chamber of Commerce twice. Grace was there to spread the word about the importance of her organisation to the business community and to the wider community. It was pleasing that Grace told the Premier and me that she will continue to conduct fundraising because it supports the creation of greater awareness of autism across communities. I pay particular tribute to the Autism Advisory and Support Service for its work. I know there are many organisations across our community that support children with disability, particularly within the autism space. It is very pleasing that the Stronger Together II program continues to support the efforts of community organisations that, with financial assistance from this Government, aim to ensure that children with disability are given every opportunity in life—in the same manner that the rest of the community takes for granted.

#### **INFRASTRUCTURE NSW CHAIRMAN NICK GREINER**

**Mr JOHN ROBERTSON:** I direct my question to the Premier. Given that the Federal Court has described Nick Greiner's conduct as misleading and deceptive in stitching together an illegal bid-rigging deal worth more than \$200 million, why is the Premier protecting him instead of sacking him as the chairman of Infrastructure NSW?

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL:** I have made it clear that that is a civil action. I have made it clear that Mr Greiner has indicated that he intends to appeal against the decision. The process should be allowed to follow its course. I have said that there is a great precedent for that. In 1991 or 1992 a decision made about Nick Greiner was overturned by the Supreme Court. But if we want to go to opinions of people, I am very happy to read one onto the record.

**Mr Michael Daley:** Point of order: The question does not go to precedent; it goes to whether Nick Greiner is a fit and proper person to hold his position.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Maroubra is not taking a valid point of order. There is no breach of a standing order.

**Mr Michael Daley:** My point of order relates to Standing Order 129.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The point of order taken by the member relates to relevance. The Premier is being relevant to the question asked.

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL:** If the Opposition wants to refer to various things that politicians say about each other I am very happy to again read onto the public record what Paul Keating said about the Leader of the Opposition, John Robertson, and his leadership. I know that did not seem to have an impact upon the colleagues of the Leader of the Opposition, but the only reason he has the leadership of the Opposition is that he ensured Eddie Obeid remained long enough to deliver him the numbers before resigning.

**Mr Michael Daley:** Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 73. The Federal Court has made findings of fact in relation to Nick Greiner's conduct. The Premier should take the matter seriously.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! What is the breach of Standing Order 73 cited by the member for Maroubra? There is no point of order. Has the Premier concluded his answer?

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL:** No, Madam Speaker. I have addressed part of the question, but I also will address the motivation of the Leader of the Opposition and the way in which he is happy to use that information, despite the fact that a legal process is yet to be completed.

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

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL:** It may be a novel concept for the member for Maroubra but the conscientious business of governance can never be found in a soul so blackened by opportunism. Those words are not mine. I would never say something like that about the Leader of the Opposition; I would be far pithier.

**Dr Andrew McDonald:** Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 129. The question was about Nick Greiner.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I have ruled on the point of order relating to relevance.

**Dr Andrew McDonald:** But the Premier has changed what he is saying and has moved from the topic.

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

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL:** If the Labor Party's stocks ever get so low as to require you as parliamentary leader, it will itself have no future. I did not mention yesterday's opinion poll in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, but I just happened to bring it with me today.

**Dr Andrew McDonald:** Point of order: Yet again my point of order is Standing Order 129. The Premier has moved off the personal attack on the Leader of the Opposition onto yesterday's—

**The SPEAKER:** Order! There is no point of order. I have only heard three words citing a newspaper. I do not know what the Premier is going to say.

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL:** My point is that the Leader of the Opposition has been labouring now for just over two years to revive the fortunes of the Labor Party.

**Mr Michael Daley:** Point of order: I know the Premier does not like this but, under Standing Order 73, the question has nothing to do with John Robertson; it has everything to do with Nick Greiner and Barry O'Farrell.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Maroubra will resume his seat. The Premier is being relevant. There is no point of order.

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL:** The point I simply wanted to make was that yesterday's opinion poll, an opinion poll I do not particularly put a lot of weight on, rates us highly at every indices.

**Mr Guy Zangari:** Point of order: I refer to Standing Order 129, relevance. The answer is not relevant.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! All members can cite Standing Order 129. The Premier has been relevant and continues to be relevant. There is no point of order. I will not entertain any further opportunistic points of order under Standing Order 129. The Premier has the call.

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL:** Over the past two years we have seen him take Labor's primary vote backwards because he continues to focus—

**Ms Carmel Tebbutt:** Point of order—

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I did say I was not going to entertain any more points of order under Standing Order 129. Since I respect the member's views generally, I will listen to her point of order.

**Ms Carmel Tebbutt:** My point of order is under Standing Order 73. Imputations and personal reflections are disorderly at all times except by way of a substantive motion.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Sometimes when members asks a question in question time they will get the answer they deserve. I think this is such a case. As I have said previously, if you ask a provocative question, you will get the answer you deserve. This is an example of three provocative questions in a row. The Premier has the call. Members can move dissent to my ruling if they wish.

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL:** I would welcome an additional two minutes from the Opposition. I am happy to talk ethics with a member of the Cabinet who did nothing while Eddie Obeid and others ripped off this State.

### HANDA OPERA ON SYDNEY HARBOUR

**Mr JONATHAN O'DEA:** My question is directed to the Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Hospitality and Racing, and Minister for the Arts. What is the importance to New South Wales of staging events such as the Handa Opera on Sydney Harbour and other major events such as this?

**Mr GEORGE SOURIS:** The Handa Opera on Sydney Harbour is probably the greatest cultural event on the national and international calendar. It has garnered praise worldwide. That is why I am nonplussed at recent comments by the Leader of the Opposition in the other place, the Hon. Luke Foley, who said of this event that it was "a blight on public lands", and his latest remark, "this land has now been taken away from public use". I notice he was not all that elitist last night when he was noshing it up in the official box at ANZ Stadium for the Australia and Oman match. I am certain his parliamentary leader and other Labor colleagues who attended the opening night of Handa Opera on Sydney Harbour last Friday would agree that the experience and spectacle was well worth it.

**Ms Anna Watson:** How come I did not get invited?

**Mr GEORGE SOURIS:** Didn't you get an invitation? He was also critical by inference that this part of the harbour foreshore is also used for the St George Open Air Cinema, enjoyed by tens of thousands of locals and tourists alike. Last year, 3.5 million people visited the Royal Botanic Gardens. There were just two complaints about the use of foreshore land for these events, and guess how many complaints there were this year? Absolutely zero. Ms Debbie Mills from the Friends of the Botanic Gardens certainly does not agree with the Hon. Luke Foley. She told the ABC, "We are in favour". She went on to say, "People enjoy the experience—many of our members actually go".

This Government, through Destination NSW, invested in Handa Opera on Sydney Harbour because of its ability to stimulate cultural tourism. London's *Guardian* newspaper profiled the 10 major cultural tourism cities in the world and Handa Opera on Sydney Harbour was rated as the number one event in the world, above the most famous opera houses in the world—La Scala, Covent Garden and the Metropolitan in New York. Handa Opera on Sydney Harbour is watched by millions worldwide on television and recently won six major awards. The economic benefits of this event resonate far beyond the final curtain call with the New South Wales Government's three-year investment in Handa Opera on Sydney Harbour expected to add \$100 million to the New South Wales economy.

I congratulate Opera Australia and the wonderful cast and creative team behind *Carmen*, including the genius artistic director Lyndon Terracini from Lismore, stage director Gale Edwards, set designer Brian Thomson, conductor Brian Castles Onion from Cessnock, costume designer Julie Lynch and choreographer Kelley Abbey, on their outstanding efforts in producing this internationally acclaimed event for the second time. Based on 18 performances and a capacity of 54,000, Destination NSW expects that \$20 million in new money will be driven into the economy throughout the *Carmen* season. Investing in events that have such a bold vision is a priority for the New South Wales Government to ensure our State is the number one events destination in Australia.

As for the Hon. Luke Foley's inane comment about public land not being available to the public, here are the facts. The Royal Botanic Garden consists of 64 hectares; Centennial Park, 189 hectares; Moore Park, 115 hectares. Guess how much Opera on the Harbour and the St George Open Air Cinema each take up—less than one hectare. Thanks to this Government's policies and our establishment of and support for Destination NSW, our State has regained its rightful mantle as the nation's number one events destination. This Government

has already held or announced 84 major events since March 2011—sporting, arts and cultural exhibitions and premiere stage productions. A conservative estimate from Destination NSW indicates that since our election the major events calendar has brought in \$1.2 billion additional money to the State's economy.

**Mr Nathan Rees:** You can't include ICAC.

**Mr GEORGE SOURIS:** You can't agree?

**Mr Nathan Rees:** You can't include ICAC.

**Mr GEORGE SOURIS:** No, of course not. The major event occurring at ICAC is of its own making and grows and grows. If Destination NSW had any idea, we would have sold it to tourism operators around the world.

**Mr Adrian Piccoli:** He was Don Gringo.

**Mr GEORGE SOURIS:** Which one was Don Jose—Rees? Which one was Escamillo? The New South Wales Government has also supported a further 91 regional events which, I am advised, have attracted an extra half a million visitors to these events last year compared with the previous year. [*Extension of time granted.*]

I am advised that Newcastle and the Hunter are reaping the benefits of events and festivals which were worth about \$700 million to the local economies last year, resulting in Newcastle, together with Sydney, being selected as one of the 2012 World Festival and Event Cities by the International Festivals and Events Association.

#### STATE WATER SUPPLY

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH:** My question is directed to the Premier. Building on his recent prohibitions on new coal seam gas mining in residential and sensitive rural areas, will the Premier honour his pre-election guarantee to also ban this activity in water catchment areas to protect the Sydney and wider New South Wales drinking supply?

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL:** The New South Wales Government now has the toughest coal seam gas regulations in the nation. Of course, we injected some common sense into them in February when, despite the actions of those opposite, which saw petroleum exploration licences for coal seam gas extended across villages, towns and suburbs across New South Wales, we decided they would be excluded from coal seam gas. In answer to the member's question, greater Sydney drinking water catchments are protected by closed catchment areas with regulated access, providing a critical barrier around the drinking water supply. Since coming to office we have made a number of decisions in order to protect the State's water supplies. The Minister for Resources and Energy has banned BTEX chemicals and the Minister for Primary Industries has implemented the aquifer interference policy, the first clear objective set of measures against which all mining and coal seam gas proposals in New South Wales will be assessed in future.

The Aquifer Interference Policy provides clear guidance on the assessment process for aquifer interference activities, including mining and coal seam gas activities—in other words, drilling. The policy applies statewide to all activities that may disturb or take water from any aquifer. For the first time in the State's history we have a policy against which all projects and developments will be assessed. The policy delivers on two commitments given by this Government in the lead-up to the election. We are protecting our water resources by providing clear guidelines against which all coal seam gas and mining developments must be assessed; and we are returning decision-making powers to independent experts by providing the advice from these assessments to the Gateway process, the Planning Assessment Commission and the public.

As we announced last month, the Chief Scientist also will undertake a full audit of all coal seam gas activities across New South Wales. That audit will include a focus on the impact of water catchments. Combined with the revamped role of the Environment Protection Authority [EPA] as the lead regulator, this will ensure that our water supplies are protected. Under those opposite the Environment Protection Authority was allowed to wind down. Under this side of politics it is being wound up to become more independent. All exploration, assessment and production titles will be required to hold an environmental protection licence. The Environment Protection Authority will be empowered to enforce conditions under the relevant environmental

and mining laws, including potential revocation of licences for serious breaches. We are getting on with the job of balancing the interests of economic development and the environment. We are doing so with the best work of the front bench and agencies such as the Environment Protection Authority as the regulator. We are using the Chief Scientist to do what that office is meant to do, that is, provide independent expert advice on these matters. That is the way we will be guided in future.

### EDUCATION REFORMS

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS:** My question is addressed to the Minister for Education. What has been the response to the Government's reforms in education and related matters over the past two years?

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI:** I thank the member for Port Macquarie for her question. I look forward to going to Lake Cathie in the not too distant future to start the process for the new school for which the member has campaigned for many years. What a month it has been in education with the release of the Great Teaching, Inspired Learning: A Blueprint for Action, which we announced three weeks ago, and, of course, the announcement last week of fee reductions averaging 26 per cent for preschools across New South Wales and up to 52 per cent for regional New South Wales.

**Mr Troy Grant:** Hear, hear!

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI:** I acknowledge the member for Dubbo. Of course, we announced that on a terrific day. Do not let it ever be said that bad announcements are only made by governments on days when there are distractions. The day we announced those fee reductions was the day when Kevin Rudd had his failed leadership challenge in the Federal Parliament. So our announcement did not get a particularly good run because other events overwhelmed it. What has been the response to the great teaching paper from Ben Jensen, a very well-regarded academic at the Grattan Institute? Governments do not get much better endorsements than the *Australian* headline, "Gold star for NSW plan to improve teaching." The article by Ben Jensen from the independent research group, the Grattan Institute, said:

The new blueprint should be a model for others for how to achieve education reform.

The paper published in the *Australian* stated:

The NSW blueprint is what we look for in policy reform. It is evidence-based. It provides clear interventions with an implementation timeline. It was developed thoughtfully with input from all stakeholders. Not surprisingly, it was supported by nearly everyone when it was released.

That is the kind of endorsement one gets after properly researching reform and consulting widely. I received an email from the member for Keira, which said, "Thanks for putting the 'K' back into quality education". The editorial in the *Financial Review* talks about teaching reform, "NSW education Minister Adrian Piccoli and the NSW Government have made a substantial contribution to the quality teaching debate." On preschools, Wagga Wagga's *Daily Advertiser*, not renowned for its love of the State and Federal Coalition, under the headline, "Win for families as preschool fees slashed" stated:

Wagga families struggling to send their children to preschool have received a massive boost, with the cost of fees set to be reduced by up to a half.

The *Northern Daily Leader* in Tamworth has had a fair bit to write about in the last week. I am surprised our announcement got a run, given the other events occurring up north. It ran the headline, "Families to get discount on preschool fees." The endorsements continue. The Community Child Care Co-operative's newsletter "Shortside" stated:

We welcome the commitment to fund preschool education ... This is a step in the right direction ... We look forward to further initiatives.

And well may it look forward to further initiatives because there are further initiatives. With all these reforms coming through, what questions does the Opposition ask? In the upper House, Peter Primrose asked me about a cycling program in New South Wales public schools. With all the things going on in education, Gonski, et cetera, I get asked about a cycling program. One question he asked was quite interesting, but not surprising from the party of communists, "Since becoming Minister how many official photographs of the Minister for Education have been placed in the departments or agencies within the Minister's portfolio?"

**Mr Barry O'Farrell:** I got that too.

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI:** They used to do that in Mao's time.

**Mr Barry O'Farrell:** No, Keneally's time.

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI:** I cannot quite do the hair flick, or when I do it actually falls off. The Coalition does not have the picture of the Premier on every wall. The most interesting document was the Opposition's attempt at some kind of two-year review. I acknowledge the Leader of the Opposition's transparency. I agree with it. People can see right through him. He is completely transparent.

**Mrs Leslie Williams:** I ask that the Minister be granted an extension of time.

**Ms Linda Burney:** Sit down, you goose.

**Mr Brad Hazzard:** Point of order: That interjection reflects on the member and on the House. I ask the member to withdraw that comment.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Does the member wish to withdraw the comment? I ask the member to withdraw the comment.

**Ms Linda Burney:** I will withdraw it.

*[Extension of time granted.]*

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI:** I will indicate the clear difference between Labor and the Coalition. We refer to body parts when we talk about fellow colleagues. Chris Hartcher is the brains of the Liberal Party. Mike Baird is the Premier's right-hand man, maybe. Thomas George is the eyes and ears of The Nationals. When Opposition members talk about their colleagues—

**Dr Andrew McDonald:** Point of order—

**The SPEAKER:** Order! It is the last question.

**Dr Andrew McDonald:** It is the last question and the Minister is being completely irrelevant to the question, which was about the response to education reforms.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! There is no point of order. The Minister has one minute remaining. The Minister has the call.

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI:** He reminds me of a rodeo clown. His job is to get up and distract the bull whenever something is going on.

**Mr Richard Amery:** Point of order—

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I advise the Minister to return to the leave of the question.

**Mr Richard Amery:** You have ruled previously that the extension of time is to allow the Minister to provide extra information.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Minister is doing precisely that. I have asked him to return to the leave of the question.

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI:** The Opposition's document was fascinating reading. Topics included "Hundreds of school support staff and teachers' aides sacked". That is right—the 400 that those opposite negotiated to be sacked as part of their deal with the Public Service Association. They are spot on, except it was not us; it was those opposite. Another topic was "Board of Studies loses \$8.7 million". We got rid of the School Certificate. That means there is no need to draft and mark a test. Then there is "School cleaning hours cut". That is right—a contract that was signed by the Labor Government in January 2011, a contract that we cannot get out of. The final one is the axing of the Higher School Certificate advice line. We did axe it because it cost about \$500 per call. It would be cheaper for us to fly a student in Griffith to Sydney, put them up for accommodation— *[Time expired.]*

**Question time concluded at 3.09 p.m.**

**BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE****Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders**

**Mr JOHN ROBERTSON:** I seek leave to suspend standing orders to move a motion calling on the Premier to sack Nick Greiner as chairman of Infrastructure NSW.

**Leave not granted.**

**AUSTRALIAN FOOTBALL LEAGUE SEASON LAUNCH****Ministerial Statement**

**Mr GRAHAM ANNESLEY** (Miranda—Minister for Sport and Recreation) [3.10 p.m.]: This morning the Premier and I hosted a reception for the reigning Australian Football League premiers, the Sydney Swans, and their much younger local rivals, the Greater Western Sydney Giants, to welcome the new Australian Football League season to New South Wales. Not only is this local derby a great way to start the season in this city, but it is also pleasing to see the Swans and the Giants competing in the Battle of the Bridge for the White Ribbon Cup in support of the campaign to prevent violence against women.

I congratulate Minister Goward on her speech at the reception highlighting the important role sport can play in support of the White Ribbon campaign and the White Ribbon Ambassador Program. The Australian Football League's commitment to raising awareness and driving change is to be applauded. There is no doubt sport has the capacity to play a much larger role in helping to address many of the other social issues confronting our communities. As well as the obvious health benefits to be derived from leading an active healthy lifestyle, sports programs can be an effective mechanism to achieve positive outcomes in areas such as education, improved mental health, disability rehabilitation and indigenous and juvenile justice programs, just to name a few. It is great to see a number of my ministerial colleagues have already recognised the value of sport by rolling out sports-related programs in their own portfolios.

Back to the footy. It seems like only yesterday we were celebrating the Swans' premiership win with a ticker-tape parade through the streets of Sydney and now we are about to kick off a brand new season. John Longmire has done an outstanding job with his squad in a relatively short senior coaching career. On Saturday night John will celebrate 50 games as Swans head coach. The 2012 season also saw the introduction of a second New South Wales team, the Greater Western Sydney Giants, with the legendary Kevin Sheedy at the helm. Kevin is one of the great characters of the game but he takes his coaching responsibilities very seriously. The Giants' playing roster for 2013 features a large group of highly talented young players who came to the club via the draft to strengthen the club's inaugural line-up. They are now a year older, wiser, bigger and more experienced, which is certain to make the Giants very competitive this season.

As we all know, New South Wales is a State fortunate to host many outstanding national and international sporting events and our football codes are at the core of our winter sporting interests. This Saturday evening at 4.40 p.m. another outstanding Australian Football League season will commence in New South Wales and if the media interest in this morning's reception is any indication we are all in for a very exciting year ahead. On behalf of the New South Wales Government I wish the best of luck to the reigning Australian Football League premiers, the Sydney Swans, and the Greater Western Sydney Giants in their White Ribbon clash on Saturday. I am quietly confident I will be knocking again on the Premier's door in September to plan another street parade to celebrate the retention of the premiership flag in the great State of New South Wales.

**Ms LINDA BURNEY** (Canterbury) [3.13 p.m.]: It gives me great pleasure to join with the Minister for Sport and Recreation in recognising the first round of the Australian Football League and the reception that was hosted today for the Greater Western Sydney Giants and the Sydney Swans football teams. The Australian Football League has a very strong record and a very good reputation for deliberately using the sport to support worthy campaigns. Women are involved in many aspects of the game, including coaching, umpiring—

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** Order! Opposition members will remain silent while the member is addressing the House.

**Ms LINDA BURNEY:** The inclusion of women in coaching, umpiring, commentating and of course as players and supporters is noticeable. The Australian Football League has also run successful programs against

racism, sexism and homophobia. It is outstanding that a football code is proactive in those campaigns. It was no surprise to see so many players at the reception this morning proudly wearing white ribbons. There are many White Ribbon Ambassadors in the House, including the Leader of the Opposition and a number of members of the Government.

The Australian Football League is a uniquely Australian game that brings together men and women of all backgrounds and walks of life. It is a celebrated fact that sport is derived in part from Aboriginal ball games collectively known as *marngrook*. It is part of the game's DNA. The game's origin is further complemented by the traditions of Gaelic football. The expansion of the game in New South Wales has benefited the State greatly and I believe, despite the views of others, that Sydney is definitely a two-team town. The Greater Western Sydney Giants are now in their second year of competition and are opening up a range of opportunities for people in western Sydney to be significantly involved in the game. Sports teams can be a wonderfully unifying force in any community and western Sydney can be proud of its team.

The Greater Western Sydney Giants have done a good job in supporting up-and-coming players. Today's budding players are tomorrow's Tony Lockett, James Herd, Buddy Franklin and maybe even a Polly Farmer. There was a time not so long ago when the Swans were new in Sydney. They were originally known as the South Melbourne Football Club or the "Bloods", but there is no denying that they are now an integral part of the sporting fabric of Sydney. The Swans have gone from strength to strength playing to packed stadiums week after week. They have won two premierships, and maybe 2013 will bring a third. We all remember last year's premiership game between the Swans and Hawthorne with just a 10 point win by the Swans.

It was fantastic that the member for South Coast joined with the Minister for Sport and Recreation, the Minister for Family and Community Services, and Minister for Women, the Premier and other members of Parliament to celebrate our two Sydney teams and the beginning of the Australian Football League season. Although Israel Folau has left the Greater Western Sydney Giants, I am sure that they will do very well. We will continue to support the Australian Football League within the New South Wales Parliament.

#### **UNPROCLAIMED LEGISLATION**

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** Pursuant to Standing Order 117, I table a list detailing all legislation unproclaimed 90 calendar days after assent as at 27 March 2013.

#### **COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

##### **Inquiry**

**Mr STUART AYRES**, on behalf of the Chair, informed the House that, pursuant to Standing Order 299 (1), the Committee on Economic Development had resolved to conduct an inquiry into skills shortages in New South Wales, the full details of which are available on the committee's home page.

#### **JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON ROAD SAFETY**

##### **Report**

**Mr GREG APLIN**, as Chair, tabled report No. 2/55 entitled, "Report on Driver and Road User Distraction", dated March 2013.

**Ordered to be printed on motion by Greg Aplin.**

#### **PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE**

##### **Inquiry**

**Mr JONATHAN O'DEA**, as Chair, informed the House that, pursuant to Standing Order 299 (1), the Public Accounts Committee had resolved to conduct an inquiry into the follow-up of the Auditor-General's performance audits October 2011 to March 2012, the full details of which are available on the committee's home page.

## 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**.

### **Coal Seam Gas Mining**

Petition calling for a royal commission inquiry into the impacts of coal seam gas mining, a moratorium on coal seam gas mining and a ban on the extraction technique known as hydraulic fracturing, received from **Mr Jamie Parker**.

### **Rooty Hill Railway Station Access**

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

### **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**.

### **Social Housing Tenants Mental Health Support**

Petition requesting the provision of community outreach and support programs directed to people with a mental illness who are tenants of Housing NSW and community housing, 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. Michael Gallacher—Fire Station Closures—lodged 20 February 2013 (Mr Robert Furolo)

The Hon. Brad Hazzard—Kooragang Island Ammonium Nitrate Plant—lodged 20 February 2013 (Mr Tim Owen)

**BAPTIST CHURCHES OF NEW SOUTH WALES PROPERTY TRUST AMENDMENT BILL 2013**

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

**Second Reading**

**Mr GREG SMITH** (Epping—Attorney General, and Minister for Justice) [3.21 p.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Government is pleased to introduce the Baptist Churches of New South Wales Property Trust Amendment Bill 2013. There is no such thing as the Baptist Church. The Baptist Church is actually made up of a number of separate churches, or congregations. Each Baptist church is autonomous and is empowered to run its own affairs. There are currently more than 330 Baptist churches in New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory. A large number of these churches have voluntarily linked together to form the Baptist Union. Being part of the Baptist Union provides individual congregations with the benefits of being part of a larger organisation; but at the same time, individual congregations continue to manage their own affairs.

The Baptist Union of New South Wales is incorporated through a New South Wales statute—the Baptist Union Incorporation Act 1919. Amongst other things, this Act gives the Baptist Union the power to hold property. In 1984, the Baptist Churches of New South Wales Property Trust Act was enacted. That Act established an incorporated trustee—which is known as the Baptist Churches of New South Wales Property Trust—and vested land previously held on trust by the Baptist Union in the new corporate trustee. The enactment of the Baptist Churches of New South Wales Property Trust Act also allowed the Baptist Union to focus on its administrative responsibilities.

The Baptist Union formally requested amendments to the Act in 2012 after an extensive consultation period within the Baptist church community. The amendments do not represent major changes to the Act, but they will help the property trust to manage trust property on behalf of congregations in a more efficient way. For example, at the moment the Act permits trust property to be used in certain ways for the benefit of corporations whose objects are consistent with those of the Baptist Union. However, this is limited to corporations whose directors are members of the congregation for which the Trust holds the property. This can make it difficult to establish corporations with appropriately skilled directors to carry out work on behalf of a congregation, especially if a congregation has only a small number of members.

The amendments contained in this bill will assist by allowing a broader range of people to be directors of corporations that may benefit from trust property. While directors can still be members of the congregation for which the property is held in trust, the corporation will also be able to draw on members of other Baptist churches, and other persons who are committed evangelicals. The amendments also provide further protections for small congregations in relation to trust property. Section 29 of the existing Act provides that where membership of a congregation drops to less than 10 members, the Baptist Union may exercise the functions of that congregation regarding property held on trust.

The amendments in this bill will require the Baptist Union to consult with the remaining church members before giving a direction to the property trust about property held on behalf the congregation. Currently, the Act provides that a congregation can direct the Property Trust to do certain things if more than 75 per cent of members present at a congregation meeting approve the direction. The amendments in this bill provide that, where a congregation has between 10 and 20 members, as well as requiring a 75 per cent majority a vote will be passed only if it is passed by at least 10 persons. A resolution made by a congregation with between 10 and 20 members will have effect only if the executive committee of the Baptist Union consents to the direction being given.

The amendments contained in this bill also simplify the administrative arrangements for making a direction to the trust in relation to certain minor matters relating to the repair or alteration of certain church buildings. The amendment provides that, where a congregation directs the trust about the minor repair or alteration of church buildings, schools or manses, the secretary of the congregation can give a direction without holding a meeting of the congregation. Whether a matter is minor will be determined in writing by the executive committee of the Baptist Union. The bill also includes a number of amendments to clarify when the term "church" means "church building" and when it is intended to mean "congregation". The bill also inserts

definitions of the positions of secretary and deacon. These definitions have been inserted to clarify that these terms include references to persons who hold substantially similar roles but have a different title. Cross-references to certain repealed provisions have also been removed from the Act.

An extensive consultation process has been undertaken by the Baptist Union of New South Wales in relation to these amendments. Each of the proposed amendments was investigated thoroughly by the Executive Committee of the Baptist Union. A summary of the proposed changes was circulated to churches before the mini-assembly held at Epping Baptist Church on 7 May 2011. Local congregations were given further time to review the proposed amendments. The proposals were then brought before the Annual Assembly held at Parkside Baptist Church in July 2011, where they were approved. The Baptist Union then sought legal advice on the approved amendments before making a formal submission to the Government in 2012. The amendments contained in this bill are not major changes to the Act. Nevertheless, the amendments will assist the church to manage its property in a more efficient and effective manner. I commend the bill to the House.

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

**CRIMES (DOMESTIC AND PERSONAL VIOLENCE) AMENDMENT (INFORMATION SHARING)  
BILL 2013**

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

**Second Reading**

**Mr GREG SMITH** (Epping—Attorney General, and Minister for Justice) [3.29p.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Government is pleased to introduce the Crimes (Domestic and Personal Violence) Amendment (Information Sharing) Bill 2013. The bill will amend the Crimes (Domestic and Personal Violence) Act 2007 to provide for information sharing between certain public sector agencies and non-government organisations for the purposes of facilitating access by alleged victims of domestic violence to support services appropriate to their needs. In November last year I launched the NSW Domestic Violence Justice Strategy. The justice strategy aims to make the criminal justice system more responsive to the immediate needs of people who experience domestic violence. The justice strategy has resulted from the work of my department, together with NSW Police and other key justice and human service agencies. It builds on work undertaken in projects such as the Domestic Violence Intervention Court Model [DVICM] trial established in 2005 in Wagga Wagga and Campbelltown as a testing ground for strategies to improve the justice system's response to domestic violence within New South Wales.

Outcomes from the Domestic Violence Intervention Court Model have informed the justice strategy. Recommendations made by the New South Wales Auditor-General, the New South Wales and Australian law reform commissions and the New South Wales Legislative Council Standing Committee on Social Issues Inquiry into Domestic Violence Trends and Issues have also been incorporated into the justice strategy. These amendments, along with the recently announced reforms that will allow police to issue provisional apprehended domestic violence orders, are a key plank of the implementation of the Domestic Violence Justice Strategy. In 2011, the Auditor-General's performance audit of government organisations' response to domestic and family violence identified a number of problems in the current response to domestic violence.

These included a lack of a coordinated response stemming from inconsistent approaches to sharing information in domestic violence cases among government agencies in New South Wales and few victims being referred to services, particularly by police, because there is no common approach to referral. Another problem identified was that when police seek consent to refer a victim to services, many victims are not in a position to provide informed consent at the time of a domestic violence incident. Victims are often also reluctant to give consent to police but would agree to referral if consent were requested by a support service. A further problem identified was widespread confusion within government agencies regarding procedures for requesting victim's consent, a lack of clarity about circumstances when consent is not required, and no consistent procedures for safeguarding people's information.

The bill will modify the application of the Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998 and the Health Records and Information Privacy Act 2002 to remove restrictions that could limit or prevent

interagency collaboration aimed at responding appropriately to the needs of victims of domestic violence. The bill will allow for the collection of information from police without the consent of the alleged victim or alleged perpetrator by agencies providing domestic violence support services—known as support agencies. This will enable the direct referral of victims by police to support agencies, and will facilitate access to services by victims who are often in situations of great need and vulnerability. Following referral by police, support agencies would need to seek the consent of the alleged victim to provide domestic violence support services. Any further disclosures of information, to other support agencies or to non-government services providing domestic violence support, would only occur where the alleged victim had consented and it was reasonably necessary to provide support to her or him.

The amendments also allow for the collection, use and disclosure of information without consent to address a serious threat to a person's life, health or safety—this would be authorised only where an agency believes, on reasonable grounds, that the collection, use or disclosure of the information is necessary to prevent or lessen a serious threat to the life, health or safety of a person; where the threat relates to the commission or possible commission of a domestic violence offence; and where it is unreasonable or impracticable to obtain the consent of the person to whom the information relates. Given that the sharing of information under these provisions will occur without the alleged perpetrator's consent, careful attention has been paid to the need to balance the rights of the alleged perpetrator against the needs of the alleged victim.

In particular, information sharing will only be possible where a case meets a threshold of seriousness; that is, where an apprehended domestic violence order has been sought—including the issuing of a provisional or interim order—or made, or a person has been charged with a domestic violence offence. Generally, victim consent will be required for all sharing after the initial police referral. Exchanges of information with victim consent will be subject to requirements of confidentiality. However, in cases of a serious threat to a person's life, health or safety, sharing of information will be possible without consent, as the need to respond to the threat will outweigh the need to protect privacy. Information-sharing protocols will provide further privacy protections, such as ensuring that non-government support services with which information is shared can appropriately manage the personal and health information of individuals.

I now turn to the key provisions of schedule 1 to the bill. Item [1] inserts into the Crimes (Domestic and Personal Violence) Act 2007 a new part 13A to provide for information sharing between agencies, and disclosure and collection to and from non-government domestic violence support services. The amendments provide for the exchange of personal and health information of alleged victims, known as "primary persons", and alleged perpetrators, known as "associated respondents", in certain circumstances in domestic violence cases. New section 98C sets out the circumstances in which information will be able to be shared in situations other than those involving a serious threat to life, health or safety.

The proposed section applies if an interim apprehended domestic violence order has been made, or an apprehended domestic violence order has been sought or made, or a person has been charged with a domestic violence offence. The proposed section applies to the personal and health information of each primary person and associated respondent that is related to the relevant order or offence. This could include personal information about the criminal history of the associated respondent, previous allegations of domestic violence against the respondent, information about the associated respondent's access to firearms, or health information such as the associated respondent's mental health status or previous and current drug or alcohol use. A support agency may collect personal information or health information about a primary person and any associated respondent that is lawfully disclosed to it by the NSW Police Force for the purpose of the agency providing domestic violence support services to the person.

Although this information can be provided by the police without the consent of the primary person or the associated respondent, a support agency receiving the information is required to obtain the consent of the primary person before any use or disclosure of that information occurs. In addition to collecting information from police, a support agency may also collect personal and health information of the primary person and associated respondent in certain circumstances, that is, from another support agency where that support agency has disclosed the information with the primary person's consent, it was reasonably necessary to disclose the information to the collecting support agency for the provision of domestic violence support services, and the primary person was originally the subject of a police referral; from a non-government support service where the primary person consents to the non-government support service disclosing that information; and from the primary person.

A support agency is not required to inform an associated respondent about its dealings with the information, nor is it required to provide the associated respondent with access to the information. This has the

effect of relieving support agencies from obligations under New South Wales privacy legislation that require agencies to make a person aware when his or her personal information is collected, and to give that person access to any personal or health information that the agency holds about that person. This is to avoid placing victims of domestic violence at increased risk. A support agency must obtain the primary person's consent for any disclosure of information under the proposed section, but the associated respondent's consent is not required.

However, this may be done only in the following circumstances: where the primary person was originally referred to a support service by the NSW Police Force, where the disclosure is for the purposes of that other agency or service providing domestic violence support services to the primary person, and where the disclosure is reasonably necessary for the provision of those services. These two last conditions place significant limits on an agency seeking to disclose personal and health information. Given that this information is disclosed without the consent of the associated respondent, it is necessary for the support service disclosing the information to consider why and how that disclosure is required for the provision of support services.

This limits the potential for irrelevant personal and health information about an alleged perpetrator being shared between agencies and non-government support services. A support agency may use the information collected under the new section to contact the primary person to seek the primary person's consent to use or disclose that information. It may also use the information to provide domestic violence support services to the person once that consent has been obtained. The associated respondent's consent is not required for any such use. New section 98C is not intended to be an exhaustive statement of the ways that information relevant to a primary person or associated respondent may be disclosed.

New section 98C (9) clarifies that nothing in the section would restrict or prevent the disclosure of information under any other Act or law. This would ensure, for example, that disclosures required for the protection of the safety, welfare or wellbeing of children or young persons under part 16A of the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998 will be unaffected by any restrictions set out in section 98C. New section 98D permits the collection, use and disclosure of personal information or health information in cases where there is a serious threat to the life, health or safety of a person.

As noted above, collection, use or disclosure in the circumstances of a serious threat requires that the agency believes on reasonable grounds that the collection, use or disclosure of the information is necessary to prevent or lessen a serious threat to the life, health or safety of a person, it is unreasonable or impracticable to obtain the consent of the person to whom the information relates and the threat relates to the commission or possible commission of a domestic violence offence. This is a new exception to the limits placed on collection, use and disclosure of personal information or health information in the Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998 and the Health Records and Information Protection Act 2002. It responds to a recommendation of the Australian and New South Wales Law Reform commissions in their joint report titled, "Family Violence—A National Legal Response", which was finalised in 2010. It will allow agencies to respond appropriately to domestic violence cases where a serious threat to an individual has been identified but in the circumstances it is not possible to obtain consent for the collection, use or disclosure of that information.

New section 98E permits the Attorney General to make information management protocols and requires the Attorney General to seek the advice of the Privacy Commissioner when making them. Agencies that collect, use or disclose information under new section 98C must comply with these protocols. The protocols will also contain recommended privacy standards for non-government support services and will prohibit the disclosure of information to services that do not adopt those standards. The imposition of the privacy protocols on non-government support services that receive information from government agencies under these provisions is required as a safeguard of that information. Non-government organisations, which are not subject to New South Wales privacy legislation, need to be able to protect adequately the personal information of both primary persons and associated respondents.

The protocols will deal with matters such as procedures for gaining consent from the primary person, the handling and storage of information, the sharing of information between agencies and non-government support services, a complaints-handling procedure if any of the required privacy standards are breached, and compliance audits. The protocols will be developed in consultation with the public sector agencies that provide domestic violence support services, as well as relevant non-government support services. These amendments will provide a framework for the sharing of vital information relating to victims and alleged perpetrators of domestic violence, allowing agencies and non-government support services to collaborate to respond appropriately to the needs of victims of domestic violence in New South Wales. I commend the bill to the House.

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

**INTOXICATED PERSONS (SOBERING UP CENTRES TRIAL) BILL 2013****Second Reading**

**Mr VICTOR DOMINELLO** (Ryde—Minister for Citizenship and Communities, and Minister for Aboriginal Affairs) [3.45 p.m.], on behalf of Mr Greg Smith: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

This bill was introduced in the other place on 19 March 2013 and is in the same form. The second reading speech appears at pages 18741 to 18743 of the *Hansard* for that day. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr NATHAN REES** (Toongabbie) [3.45 p.m.]: I lead for the Opposition in debate on the Intoxicated Persons (Sobering Up Centres Trial) Bill 2013. The Opposition will oppose this bill. We recognise and understand the severe impact that overconsumption of alcohol has on our community. It manifests itself in violence on our streets, in licensed premises and in homes. Overconsumption of alcohol also has significant health impacts and contributes to mortality rates. We recognise also that the bill is a response to a commitment made by the Government whilst it was in opposition and we acknowledge that the Government does have a mandate to introduce it. However, I place on record that when Labor members were in government we opposed this idea on what we believed were sound policy grounds. Those grounds remain and indeed some of our causes for concern have only been exacerbated by the content of this bill.

There is no question that alcohol can be a damaging influence in our society. As Premier I introduced the three strikes and you are out policy, placed the 50 most violent venues under increased scrutiny, implemented mandatory lockouts at 2.00 a.m. and the mandatory use of plastic containers, and so on as we sought to diminish the impact of overconsumption of alcohol in licensed premises, particularly in the city and Kings Cross. But the practical reality of this bill is that a number of individuals who are souped-up, drunk and potentially violent will be locked up together. That strikes us as a recipe for a health disaster.

The propensity for individuals who are heavily intoxicated to either incite or be incited to violence is real. A health worker will be able to do next to nothing if a couple of large young men start getting stuck into each other. No-one wants to see a situation in which someone is injured or worse, but we see nothing in this bill to indicate that there will be sufficient monitoring and controls within these centres to address that risk. The bill proposes a number of centres but will start with two, one run by the police and the other run potentially by a non-government organisation. It makes provision for the employ of health workers in those centres. It goes further to provide that the centres will operate on a cost-recovery basis. The bill and the policy around it is sketchy on detail as to what the costs may be, but back-of-the-envelope calculations indicate that an eight-hour stay at one of these facilities will leave an individual with a bill of around \$2,000—despite their not being charged with an offence and waking up the next day with nothing but a bad headache.

I return to address the Opposition's key concerns in relation to this bill, which are the safety of individuals who are taken to the centres, the safety of health workers who necessarily will operate in close proximity to those individuals, and the expectation that, at the point of assessment, health workers will be able to determine someone's propensity for violence while intoxicated. Advice given to me by the medical expert of the Opposition, Dr Andrew McDonald, is that it is well known in the medical community that it is almost impossible to accurately measure someone's level of intoxication simply by looking at them, let alone determine their propensity to become angry or to incite others. There is a very real risk that health workers or the occupants of the centres will be subjected to violence, and no-one wants to see that.

Nothing prevents individuals from leaving some centres. My reading of the bill is that people can leave non-police centres at any time. Nothing prevents individuals who leave a centre from resuming drinking at nearby premises. There are risks associated with people returning home after leaving a centre. The Opposition is deeply concerned about planning controls and development applications for the centres. The fact that the centres will operate without appropriate development approval is a matter of deep concern. Some of the centres may operate in residential, commercial or retail areas. I make the obvious point that no-one in this Chamber would want one of the centres situated next door to them, but the Government expects to be able to inflict them on communities elsewhere. Part 4 clause 24 provides that the first two centres do not require development approval.

Notwithstanding that the Coalition legitimately may claim a mandate for the implementation of the policy underpinning the bill, for all the reasons I have stated the Opposition believes it is poor policy and that in

a worst-case scenario individuals may be injured or die as a result of its implementation. No-one wants that to happen. The Opposition's considered and measured analysis of the policy indicates that that remains a risk that has not been adequately mitigated by the measures provided in the bill. On all the bases I have outlined, the Opposition opposes the bill.

**Mr BRUCE NOTLEY-SMITH** (Coogee) [3.52 p.m.]: I support the Intoxicated Persons (Sobering Up Centres Trial) Bill 2013. Alcohol-fuelled violence is an issue of immense importance to my constituents in Coogee. From the first day I was elected to public office 13 years ago people have been complaining to me about alcohol-fuelled violence or alcohol-fuelled antisocial behaviour on our streets, and they want something to be done about it. When I was the Mayor of Randwick I was very happy to call for 1.00 a.m. lockouts in pubs at Coogee and to force the hand of the Labor Government later that year to introduce hotel lockouts as a policy. In the most recent community survey I undertook in my electorate of Coogee half of the respondents listed alcohol-related violence and antisocial behaviour as issues of concern. Coogee community members have continuously raised concerns related to those issues, and I do not blame them. Coogee has to cope with some of the largest pubs in the State.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George)**: Order! There is too much audible conversation coming from behind the Speaker's chair. The member for Coogee will be heard in silence.

**Mr BRUCE NOTLEY-SMITH**: I recall that the first question I asked in this House was directed to the Premier and that it related to alcohol-fuelled violence and antisocial behaviour. I asked the Premier what the Government was going to do about it. He said that during the election campaign he was constantly approached by members of the public, in my electorate in particular, who said that they were not happy with how the former Government approached alcohol-fuelled antisocial behaviour. The Premier committed to doing something about it. Across the State between 2005 and 2009 the incidence of alcohol-related violence increased by 9 per cent. Statistics show that more than 40 per cent of violent crime has a connection to alcohol. It was once all right to go out for a drink, stay out for a while and have a good time, but for some reason times seem to have changed. In research conducted in 2011 by the Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research relating to the experience among young people of the responsible service of alcohol it was found that 59.9 per cent of respondents reported that they had consumed alcohol at the acute risk level during the previous 12 months. In other words, one person in five drinks to a level of acute risk weekly.

We must admit to ourselves that we have a cultural problem in this country related to alcohol and how we consume alcohol. That is something that will not be turned around overnight. There is no silver bullet, as I am constantly telling people. However, we can take measures to mitigate the impact of alcohol-fuelled antisocial behaviour. During the 2011 election campaign the current Government promised a raft of measures to tackle alcohol-related violence. We promised to enact the three strikes laws to crack down on rogue premises that were flouting the liquor laws, we gave move-on powers to the police to ensure that drunken individuals do not cause disturbances, we reintroduced the drunk and disorderly offence and significantly increased the penalties for that type of behaviour, and we promised to introduce a trial of sobering up centres across the State to allow people who otherwise would make a nuisance of themselves to calm down and return home safely. The Government was given a mandate to deliver on that promise.

The Government has delivered on that promise. I note that even the Hon. Steve Whan admitted during his speech in the Legislative Council that there are sobering up centres operating in Canberra and the Northern Territory. He said, "In some cases they have been reasonably successful." The bill will introduce this innovative program as one of the measures we need to adopt to address antisocial behaviour and violence. The bill is one of a suite of measures that the Government is taking. The Opposition should support the Government's actions. The concerns expressed by the Opposition will be adequately addressed. The program is innovative and new for this State. It has been trailed elsewhere and found to be successful.

Members will be familiar with the story of Gearóid Walsh, an Irish backpacker who died following a drunken altercation in Coogee in 2009. If the sobering up centres prevent only a few assaults from occurring then it will all be worthwhile. The Government wants to ensure that all people, especially young people, can have a safe night out and enjoy themselves without worrying that they might be attacked on their way home, or that a small disagreement might spill over into something much more serious. This bill will assist in taking drunks off the streets when they otherwise would be a nuisance to law-abiding people. I look forward to a sobering up centre established and operating in Coogee. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH** (Sydney) [3.58 p.m.]: The Intoxicated Persons (Sobering Up Centres Trial) Bill 2013 will allow for the detention of drunk revellers in a police-run sobering up centre in Sydney's central

business district and for non-government centres to operate in the eastern beaches and Wollongong on a trial basis. Detention in the police-run centre will be mandatory and in the non-government centres it will be voluntary. Binge drinking is a major concern for my constituents who live in proximity to the major nightspots of Kings Cross, Oxford Street in Darlinghurst, George Street south, the casino, the entertainment quarter and the sporting stadiums. On weekends those locations attract event-size crowds who drink heavily and often engage in antisocial behaviour and alcohol-related violence. The bill is an attempt to reduce those impacts and make the streets safer. However, I do not believe the bill adopts the right approach, and I am unable to support it.

When the Government first announced sobering up centres it claimed that they would act as a deterrent to binge drinking. But when people are seriously intoxicated their ability to understand consequences and make proper decisions is inhibited. The threat of being detained in a centre does little to prevent a venue breaching laws related to the responsible service of alcohol and continuing to serve a person who is becoming intoxicated. It does nothing to help a person get home from nightspots such as Kings Cross when many continue to drink until the trains recommence running.

The bill will incarcerate people who have not committed a crime. While it is especially concerning in the central business district, where detention will be mandatory, I also worry how an intoxicated person can make an informed decision about being detained in a voluntary centre. The bill allows people detained in centres to be forcibly searched without a warrant. I believe this is a violation of people's rights. They have not committed a crime and should not be forced to submit to being searched. Intoxication will prevent them from understanding and therefore exercising their rights, and they could be coerced into unlawful searches.

I am concerned that sobering up centres could put detainees at risk from themselves and from other detainees. If the bill is to be enforced, as the Government says, on the most intoxicated persons, I am not confident that putting these people together in a closed environment will be safe. Will we have enough individual cells? Even with individual cells, could noise and distractions from distressed detainees impact on others? I am concerned that the sobering up centres should not be used to lock up vulnerable people, including Aboriginal people, homeless people and people with a mental illness. The Minister said in his speech that they will not, and I would like the Government in its response to inform the House how it will guarantee that.

Locking up drunks is a retrograde response to binge drinking and antisocial behaviour. At a recent Kings Cross policing meeting that I attended the commander described how targeted policing over the summer, which focused on moving drunk people out of the area, had significantly reduced crime. This is a less punitive approach than locking drunk people up, but we cannot keep focusing on the consequences and expanding policing responses, because these are not solving the problem. Police do not want to spend their time and energy babysitting drunks. Most of them joined the force to prevent crime and protect the community. The Police Association believes the answer is to restrict access to alcohol in the late hours of the morning when judgement is likely to be clouded. The association wants reduced trading hours and lockouts.

So much in our society—from sports advertising to liquor licensing laws—encourages heavy drinking, but when people get carried away and drink too much the bill will see them locked up, even if they did not do anything wrong other than to be drunk. Our culture encourages getting sloshed as an ultimate aim of going out. Drinking, by its nature, impairs judgement and, once it begins, people can get caught out having one too many. We need better responsible service of alcohol enforcement to stop people getting drunk in the first place, and better transport at night so people can get home. We need to stop clustering of venues in areas that Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research data shows experience violence and crime. Currently councils and the Office of Liquor, Gaming and Racing cannot refuse proposals based on an existing saturation of venues in an area. I look forward to the outcomes of the environmental assessment tool currently being trialled in the central business district.

Cultural change is difficult but vital to reducing the demand that drives late-night supply. Late last year I met with the founder of the Hello Sunday Morning Program, which is an online movement aimed at changing Australia's binge drinking culture. I was impressed because it does not focus on the consequences but aims to support people who want to change their drinking habits using peer support and alternative activities. Support comes from the network of people who join up and share their experiences of not drinking. The Government should look at ways to support this program and other ways to change our culture. I cannot support the bill.

**Mr NICK LALICH** (Cabramatta) [4.03 p.m.]: The aim of the Intoxicated Persons (Sobering Up Centres Trial) Bill 2013 is to facilitate a trial of a scheme for the temporary detention and care or both of certain intoxicated persons to enable these persons to sober up. Under the proposals in this bill a person is labelled as

intoxicated if the person is of or above 18 years of age, the person's speech balance or coordination or behaviour is noticeably affected, and it is reasonable in the circumstances to believe that the affected speech, balance or coordination is the result of the consuming of alcohol or any drugs.

There will be two types of authorised sobering up centres: the Sydney sobering up centre and accredited sobering up centres, which have not had their location determined yet, although Wollongong and Coogee have been earmarked. The sobering up centres will operate on Friday and Saturday nights, with the ability to operate during the week should there be a public event that would warrant the use of these facilities. Each sobering up centre will have a catchment area prescribed by regulation and different provisions will govern the operations of the legislation with respect to the different types of centres.

Provisions have been included in the bill to grant police officers the power to detain an intoxicated individual who is found in a public place in a catchment area of the city of Sydney sobering up centre if the intoxicated individual has refused or failed to comply with a move-on direction, persists in engaging in the relevant conduct that gave rise to the direction or any other relevant conduct, or behaves in a disorderly manner or in a manner likely to cause injury to that person or any person or damage to a property that is in need of physical protection because a person is intoxicated. Intoxicated persons detained for one of the above reasons will be taken to the Sydney sobering up centre. Once an individual arrives at a sobering up centre they must be provided with a blanket, drink and food, and an individual may only stay a maximum of eight hours. Additionally, an intoxicated person who enters any sobering up centre, including the Sydney sobering up centre, may leave that centre at any given time.

This bill has received its fair share of criticism, with members of the NSW Police Force labelling the centres as drunk tanks and Barry's fight clubs, and other sources calling the proposals extremely dangerous. These concerns have resonated across the board, as locking up hordes of intoxicated individuals who may be prone to violence will simply breed further violence and danger for those who must watch over them. Unfortunately, the O'Farrell Government has yet to include the provision of additional police officers to cater to the needs of these drunk tanks, nor has the O'Farrell Government outlined anything within the legislation which would determine the minimum level of medical staff or security required to safely and efficiently operate these drunk tanks.

Although this legislation has merit, there are a number of issues with regard to the ongoing operation and cost as well as several key safety issues which have yet to be addressed by the Government—key safety issues that do not just affect our police and medical personnel, who will be required to interact and assist the intoxicated individual but also potentially put the intoxicated people in these drunk tanks at risk of other violent and aggressive drunks. I do not condone or support drunken behaviour and violence, but pushing through legislation without factoring in key safety issues is not something I can support. For these reasons I must oppose this bill, as safety will always be a matter of paramount concern, and I do not believe the O'Farrell Government has adequately addressed the safety concerns involved.

**Dr ANDREW McDONALD** (Macquarie Fields) [4.07 p.m.]: Let me be quite clear: This bill is an accident waiting to happen.

**Ms Pru Goward:** Ho, ho, ho.

**Dr ANDREW McDONALD:** Ho, ho, ho, laughs the Minister. I have spent 40 years dealing with people with—

**Mr Darren Webber:** Give yourself a medal.

**Dr ANDREW McDONALD:** Please record that interjection from the member for Wyong. Assessing people medically to see whether they are drunk or sick is impossible. If you do it often enough you will certainly be wrong. You cannot tell when a person in front of you is drunk, whether they have a brain injury—

**Mr Darren Webber:** We have been doing it for a hundred years.

**Dr ANDREW McDONALD:** We have been doing it for 100 years, and many people died, which is why this idea has no evidence base. I have been personally involved with people being diagnosed as being drunk and they have died of a condition that masqueraded as drunkenness. How many deaths will it take before this idea hits the dirt? A death is inevitable. It may not happen early in the trial, because the risk is low.

**Ms Pru Goward:** And you think leaving them on the streets is safer?

**Dr ANDREW McDONALD:** If it is done often enough somebody will die. They will die either from the underlying condition that masquerades as drunkenness or because they are frequently not just drunk but have also taken other drugs, or they have high serum alcohol levels and when a back is turned they die of aspiration pneumonia. This is an accident waiting to happen—even without referring to the more likely scenario: Putting a bunch of violent people together is highly likely to increase the alcohol-induced violence that is a common problem in emergency departments. Those opposite who continue to heckle me during this speech need to understand the concept of wilful blindness.

Wilful blindness is knowledge that one could have and should have had but chose not to have. You are liable. All those opposite know that this is an inherently risky proposal. It has no evidence base whatsoever. The evidence base is clear regarding reduction of alcohol-induced violence. Not one of the many numerous inquiries has ever introduced this as a solution to alcohol-induced violence. Anyone serious about reducing the incidence of alcohol-induced violence will examine alcohol pricing and availability measures, which have been proven to reduce it. This trial—

**Mr Stephen Bromhead:** That's all it is, a trial.

**Dr ANDREW McDONALD:** What is the good of doing the trial if the results will not be introduced as evidence? This trial will not provide the evidence required, because the risk to the individual is low. However, if used often enough it certainly will result in a preventable death in one of the centres. We oppose the bill.

**Ms CARMEL TEBBUTT** (Marrickville) [4.11 p.m.]: I speak against the Intoxicated Persons (Sobering Up Centres Trial) Bill 2013. The Opposition does not support this bill. Alcohol-related violence is an increasing problem, as we have heard previously from many speakers. We all agree that everyone should be able to enjoy a night out without being subject to harassment, intimidation and violence from drunk people. Alcohol-fuelled violence is a problem that must be addressed with evidence-based programs that are proven to work, not with politically inspired stunts that risk being counterproductive. I have many concerns about the Government's proposed sobering up centres trial, but given the short time available I will confine my comments to the most important. A bill that provides for someone to be detained by police because they are intoxicated makes it an offence if they fail or refuse to provide their name and allows the use of restraint. Placing them in a facility for up to eight hours with many other drunk people is a recipe for disaster.

The potential for misuse or unintended consequences for the most vulnerable in the community, such as someone with a mental illness or a homeless person, should be obvious to everyone. While the Minister says that rough sleepers and Aboriginal people will not be targeted under the trial, unfortunately all too often those who bear the brunt of legislation that is poorly defined and based on politics rather than evidence are those who are vulnerable and less able to advocate for themselves. The Summary Offences Act was repealed by the Wran Labor Government more than 30 years ago. It included the offence of being found drunk in a public place. Unfortunately, this legislation may have a similar effect to that heinous legislation that ultimately was repealed. People admitted to the Sydney sobering up centre will have to pay cost recovery, as provided for in this bill. That perhaps is one of its most problematic aspects.

It is likely that people caught by the provisions of this bill already are living life on the margins, yet they will be hit with a bill for their time in the sobering up centre. If they do not pay—and many will not be able to pay—enforcement action can occur. So begins the vicious cycle of these people being caught up in the criminal justice system, as has been so well documented by countless reports. This Government could be doing many other useful things to address alcohol-related violence. Much more needs to be done, but when the Police Association, one of the most vocal advocates for tougher measures to reduce alcohol-related violence, says that this proposal does not have merit surely that should cause the Government to rethink its approach.

If the O'Farrell Government is serious about addressing alcohol misuse and its associate violence a good place to start would be to restore funding for the Drug and Alcohol Prevention Unit in the Department of Education and Communities. This highly regarded unit was abolished as part of the Government's \$1.7 billion cuts to education. The unit provided well-researched expert advice and support to schools across New South Wales. The Government could also release the resource "It couldn't happen to you" that was developed last year and which teachers across New South Wales are crying out to use in their classrooms. I urge the Government to consider these and other measures rather than proceed with this poorly thought-out proposal.

**Ms LINDA BURNEY** (Canterbury) [4.14 p.m.]: I will not reiterate all the arguments advanced as to why the Opposition opposes the Intoxicated Persons (Sobering up Centres Trial) Bill. One of my concerns is that this bill will disproportionately affect Aboriginal people. Aboriginal people are highly visible, particularly in some of the areas proposed as locations for sobering up centres. I have enormous difficulty with the suggested test to determine whether someone is drunk. I have great concerns regarding the impact of the cost recovery proposal on the Aboriginal community, principally due to the poverty of most Aboriginal families. They simply will not be able to meet the cost recovery aspect and will then return to the cycle of institutionalisation and being in prison. I add those reasons to why the Opposition opposes this bill.

**Mr JAMIE PARKER** (Balmain) [4.15 p.m.]: I oppose the Intoxicated Persons (Sobering up Centres Trial) Bill 2013. The evidence is clear: the way to reduce alcohol abuse is to reduce density and opening hours, examine prices and enforce the responsible service of alcohol. That is how to deal with alcohol abuse. If people are drunk in public and break the law the police should take action and charge the offenders. This bill provides for the arrest and detention of individuals by police without charge. On that basis alone The Greens oppose this bill. No-one should be arrested and detained without being charged. This legislation does not allow for that proper process. On that basis The Greens do not believe the bill provides for individual liberty. If someone breaks the law they should be arrested and charged. This bill does not propose that.

Critical issues with volume drinking can be reduced. If the Government wanted to take the appropriate steps it could address volume purchasing of alcohol. Alcohol retailers promote volume purchasing with signs depicting "Buy 6 bottles, get 2 free" or "Buy 2 cases" and a range of volume purchasing point-of-sale advertising. Retail volume purchasing discounting must be addressed. Transport issues are also factors for consideration, especially in Kings Cross. People waiting for trains continue to drink because of the inadequate transport service. We must stop the problem at its cause, before people are drunk. That requires addressing the hard things: density of alcohol outlets, opening hours, appropriate enforcement of responsible service of alcohol and prices. That is the way to manage this problem. Our concern is that individual civil liberties will be impinged. As we have heard from other members, this proposal will not be satisfactory and will not provide an evidence base on which to deal with these problems in the future.

**Ms PRU GOWARD** (Goulburn—Minister for Family and Community Services, and Minister for Women) [4.17 p.m.], on behalf of Mr Greg Smith, in reply: The House has heard some interesting contributions from the members representing the electorates of Toongabbie, Coogee, Sydney, Cabramatta, Macquarie Fields, Marrickville, Canterbury and Balmain, and I thank them. This bill has been debated extensively in the other House. I do not intend to go through all the arguments that have been advanced today, except to reiterate, because it is so offensive, that under the New South Wales protocol for homeless people all New South Wales government agencies, including the police, are not obliged to move on a homeless person, including Aboriginal people, unless they require assistance or their behaviour threatens their own or another person's safety. The focus of this legislation is on the behaviour of intoxicated persons or the risk of harm to people as a result of intoxication. This trial will be properly assessed and evaluated. I commend the bill to the House.

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

**The House divided.**

**Ayes, 55**

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

**Noes, 19**

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>
Ms Hornery	Mr Rees	Mr Amery
Mr Lynch	Mr Robertson	Mr Lalich

**Pairs**

Mr Elliott	Ms Burton
Mr Flowers	Mr Furolo
Mr Owen	Mr Hoenig

**Question resolved in the affirmative.**

**Motion agreed to.**

**Bill read a second time.**

**Third Reading**

**Motion by Ms Pru Goward, on behalf of Mr Greg Smith, agreed to:**

That this bill be now read a third time.

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

**OMBUDSMAN****Report**

**The ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr John Barilaro)** tabled, pursuant to section 43 of the Community Services (Complaints, Reviews and Monitoring) Act 1993, the report of the NSW Ombudsman entitled, "Report of Reviewable Deaths in 2010 and 2011, Volume 1: Child Deaths", dated March 2013.

**Ordered to be printed.**

**PORT KEMBLA PRIVATISATION****Discussion on Petition Signed by 10,000 or More Persons**

**Ms NOREEN HAY** (Wollongong) [4.30 p.m.]: Today I speak to the 10,000 signature petition calling on the Government to reverse its decision to privatise the port of Port Kembla. I acknowledge the members of the Save Our Ports committee in the gallery today and thank them for taking the time to travel to Sydney and be present for this debate. It is a sad situation that on the day the 10,000 signature petition was lodged the Government, knowing that the petition had been lodged, rushed the bill through the upper House using its arrangements with the minor parties. In this debate I do not get a right of reply, but I can inform the House in advance what the members opposite will say in the debate. The member for Kiama will support the privatisation of Port Kembla, even though he did not say a word during the election campaign about his support for privatisation.

When Labor was in government those opposite refused to support a call on the Federal Howard Government to make the Princes Highway a road of national importance. The member for Kiama is relying on the \$160 million derived from the privatisation of the port to fix the Princes Highway. The Treasurer, who is present in the Chamber, should hang his head in shame. During the election campaign the now Deputy Premier told the community there was no intention to privatise the port of Port Kembla. The Deputy Premier stated

during the election campaign, "This is just more fear and smear from desperate Labor MPs." I warned the electorate that if the Coalition won government they would privatise the port, and that is exactly what they are doing. According to the Auditor-General, the Treasurer lost \$1 billion. He could not add up to save his life.

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr John Barilaro):** Order! Government members will come to order.

**Ms NOREEN HAY:** The Treasurer has said the State will make \$500 million from privatisation of the port. They can spin it however they like, but no-one would pay \$500 million for a 99-year lease if they were not getting ownership of the asset. Why is the Coalition Government doing this? The answer is that the former Labor Government had the foresight to import cars through the port of Port Kembla and it became a success story for the Illawarra. It was a success for jobs and economic prosperity in the Illawarra. I do not know if members are aware but within the last few weeks two container companies have left Wollongong and Port Kembla and relocated to Sydney. Why would that be? I am sure the Treasurer and the member for Kiama find that funny.

The Coalition misled the people of the Illawarra—where I come from we call that lying. The Government said that it had no intention of privatising the port. The Government also said that no-one in the Illawarra would care if the port was privatised. If that is so, why did it deny the people the right to be consulted? Why did it race the bill through the Houses and suggest to the media that discussing the matter was a waste of time because the legislation had passed? The Government believes the House should ignore 10,000 signatures. I will not ignore 10,000 signatures. Our community deserves to be heard.

The Government says that the privatisation will lead to more investment and jobs creation. That is their usual rhetoric when they are trying to get rid of something and sell it to their mates. We only have to look at the history of the Government to know who they look after, and it is not the ordinary people of Wollongong. Those opposite are a disgrace; half the Government members would not know where Port Kembla is. Between all of the members opposite they could not muster up one solid argument in this debate. I would not put the Treasurer in charge of my kid's moneybox. [*Time expired.*]

**Mr MIKE BAIRD** (Manly—Treasurer, and Minister for Industrial Relations) [4.35 p.m.]: I thank the member for Wollongong for her contribution to the debate. I thank the Save Our Ports committee, who are in the gallery, for coming along today. It is great to live in a State where we can debate an issue like this. I thank the stakeholders, individually and as a group. The Government brought this transaction to Parliament in a manner of transparency, openness and honesty. That is very different to the way those opposite dealt with the gentrader transaction: the former Labor Government shut down Parliament to avoid a debate. This Government will not take lectures from those opposite on consultation and transparency.

The member for Wollongong has raised some concerns. I say to those in the gallery and the community that I genuinely believe this transaction is in the long-term interests of the people of Port Kembla, the Illawarra and across the State. I genuinely believe that or I would not be here today. I informed the *Illawarra Mercury* that I was happy to debate the issue in this Parliament. Forget for a moment the political rhetoric from those opposite. The challenge is that the State has huge financial challenges. It has \$2.5 billion less per year in revenue; it has increasing demand on services; it has a debt profile inherited from those opposite of \$55 billion; and \$30 billion of infrastructure needs to be delivered to the State. If the community wants infrastructure, then the Government has to find a way to deliver it, and that is through a balancing of services. The Government must take the capital it has and invest it in new capital: an asset for an asset. That is what the Government has done in relation to this transaction. I refer to the words of former Labor Premier Anna Bligh when she said:

The reality is, in the twenty-first century our budget is being dragged down by these big commercial assets that need massive investment in order to grow and keep servicing their commercial customers and the more we service those assets the harder it is to service assets such as hospitals and schools and the things that actually make a difference to the lives of everybody every day.

They are not my words; they are the words of former Labor Premier Anna Bligh. I say to the people across the Illawarra and New South Wales that the Government is determined to deliver the infrastructure that this State desperately needs, and we have found a way to do it. The important point with Port Kembla is that if we bring in a new private sector partner we have the ability to bring private sector capital forward. The Government has constraints upon it concerning capital. The private sector can grow the port, it can grow investment, it can grow jobs and it can help grow the State economy. I call that a win for the local community, the region and the State as a whole. It is responsible sensible government and it is in the long-term interests of this State.

As part of the transaction the Government was determined to make a difference to the lives of the people and the communities in and around the port. The Government has allocated \$100 million for that purpose

should the transaction go ahead. I make the point again: The transaction will not go ahead unless it is in the long-term interest of the State. In other words, the Government must receive value for those assets. That is not the way those opposite governed when they were in office. Those opposite have changes in attitude and flip-flop in their views. The Opposition members scream in the Chamber that they are against the transaction. Yet the member for Keira and the member for Shellharbour have written to me about proposals using the \$100 million.

**Mr Ryan Park:** That's me.

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

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** In the letters they say, "Listen, by the way, I would like to put forward a number of proposals for the \$100 million."

**Mr Ryan Park:** Read the first one.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** Members opposite say they are against the transaction but they put up their hands for the \$100 million that will come from it.

**Mr Ryan Park:** That's not true. What did I say in the first paragraph of the letter?

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** The logo looks like the member for Keira. That is entirely appropriate from local members. They understand that in the long-term interests of their community they need additional infrastructure funds, and they want to prioritise those funds, as they should as sensible members. So members opposite should put aside the politics, consider the long-term interests of the community and the State and support the transaction. I understand the concerns that have been raised. We have done all we possibly can to protect community interests, and we will continue to do so. We will continue to provide necessary infrastructure. I conclude by saying that I think the transaction is in the long-term interests of the people in the Illawarra region and the broader community in the State. I would not do it otherwise. [*Time expired.*]

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr John Barilaro):** Order! I remind members that the member with the call has the right to be heard in silence. I will not tolerate any more interjections. I will have no qualms in sending members out of the Chamber for the rest of the afternoon if they continue to interject.

**Mr JOHN ROBERTSON** (Blacktown—Leader of the Opposition) [4.40 p.m.]: I begin by acknowledging the great efforts of the Save Our Ports committee and the work they have done to collect 10,000 signatures. It is not an easy job to collect 10,000 signatures to get such a matter brought before the Parliament. The Treasurer's contribution was interesting; he said "I believe" and "I genuinely believe". My view is that he is trying to convince everyone that he believes in this transaction when, in fact, he does not. I say that because he has managed to move New South Wales from a triple-A rating economy to an economy with a rating on negative watch. He is now saying, "We're going to sell as much as we can so that I look like I'm a reasonable Treasurer." As a result, the people of the Illawarra will suffer from a fire sale of Port Kembla.

Port Kembla provides huge employment opportunities for the people of the Illawarra. Not only does the port provide direct jobs, the multiplier effect means that the port provides many indirect jobs across the Illawarra. What have the people of the Illawarra been told? They have been told that they will get \$100 million. Although Port Kembla generates \$400 million every year for the local economy, the Illawarra will get a one-off payment of \$100 million. I know that the New South Wales Treasurer is loose with the truth. As the Auditor-General pointed out, the Treasurer was also loose with \$1 billion, which he lost down the back of his couch. The people of the Illawarra will get ripped off from the sale of Port Kembla because the Government will take the money from the asset sale of Port Kembla and not spend it in the Illawarra; it will give the Illawarra a one-off payment of \$100 million. That money is supposed to cover the region down to Nowra or further south. The Illawarra and Port Kembla are a uniquely linked local area.

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr John Barilaro):** Order! There is too much audible conversation in the Chamber.

**Mr JOHN ROBERTSON:** I am happy for the Treasurer to spend money further south. However, that should not be done on the back of an asset sale that will rip off the people of Port Kembla to the magnitude as set out by the Treasurer. We are starting to see a theme from the Treasurer. He says, "If you want this, I am sorry but I have to sell the farm so I can do it." The Treasurer is not increasing the assets for the people of New

South Wales. He is simply saying, "We'll sell the farm. We'll sell anything that generates an income and then we'll build other things." He needs to be much more creative and more clever than that. He is creative when it comes to losing money. Perhaps he should start thinking about how he can spend money, attract more money into New South Wales and build the infrastructure. [*Time expired.*]

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr John Barilaro):** Order! I understand that this issue is important to those in the public gallery and that they are passionate about it. However, I will not tolerate applause or any noise from the gallery.

**Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama)** [4.43 p.m.]: I begin by acknowledging the residents of the Illawarra who are present in the gallery today. I also acknowledge the fact that we now have a procedure to debate petitions with 10,000 or more signatures. That allows people to bring issues into the Parliament. It may not always be what the Government or the Opposition wants but it gives people the opportunity to have important issues debated. I will start by dealing with comments made by members opposite. When Labor was in Government it privatised prisons, it privatised the gentraders by shutting down the Parliament, and it privatised State Lotteries. Yet the members opposite have the temerity to lecture the Government about privatisation. We have heard from two Opposition members. Previously I have called on members opposite to outline their policy. I have found a copy of Labor's policy on Port Kembla. I ask members opposite again to tell us what they would do if they were in government because today they have not said one thing about what their attitude would be.

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

**Mr GARETH WARD:** They continue to raise these issues but they have not said what they would do. The member for Wollongong has been running around her electorate with this petition, giving people false hope because she has not said what a Labor government would do. Let us turn to the \$100 million. Members opposite are so opposed to the deal that they have written to the Government saying, "This is how you can spend it." Do members opposite want the money or do they not want the money? They say they are against the deal but they can tell the Government how to spend the money. Can anyone take Labor seriously? I ask members opposite to identify where they would spend the money.

We have heard lies from members opposite. They have referred to the transaction as a privatisation. It is a 99-year lease. When the Labor Government sold the electricity assets and State Lotteries it put the money into the general fund and frittered it away on recurrent expenditure, such as State public servants. Every single dollar from this transaction will go back into infrastructure, like the Princes Highway, and necessary projects in the Illawarra. Clearly, members opposite do not want to mention the \$160 million that will go towards the Berry bypass. Clearly, they want to spend the \$100 million on the Illawarra because they are telling the Government how to spend it but they did not vote for the transaction in the Parliament. The member for Wollongong has been running around the Illawarra misleading people and lying to them about Labor's real intentions. Until she outlines her opposition to the transaction, and until she tells us what a Labor government would do, she is an absolute joke.

**Ms Noreen Hay:** Point of order: The behaviour of the member for Kiama, who is impugning reputations, is outrageous.

**Mr GARETH WARD:** You've got no reputation.

**Ms Noreen Hay:** We put it in there. We put the car imports through Port Kembla.

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

**Ms Noreen Hay:** We put the car imports through Port Kembla.

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr John Barilaro):** Order! The member for Wollongong is on her final warning.

**Ms Noreen Hay:** I didn't have any before.

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr John Barilaro):** Order! The member for Kiama's time has expired.

**Mr JAMIE PARKER** (Balmain) [4.46 p.m.]: I seek leave to make a contribution to the debate. The Greens support the petition.

**Leave not granted.**

**Discussion concluded.**

## COMMUNITY RECOGNITION STATEMENTS

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### SOUTH COAST WOMAN OF THE YEAR AWARD RECIPIENT MRS VIOLET LORD

**Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK** (South Coast—The Speaker) [4.48 p.m.]: Recently I was pleased to nominate Mrs Violet Lord for the 2013 NSW Women of the Year awards. For more than a decade Mrs Lord has coordinated the Nowra East Public School Good Starts Breakfast Club five days a week, ensuring that more than 60 children have a nutritious start to their day. As a member of the Nowra East Public School parents and citizens for more than 40 years, she continues to be active in the organisation, assisting students, teachers and school staff. In addition, she and her family have fostered numerous children over the past 40 years. At almost 80 years old, Mrs Lord is a role model in the South Coast community, a recipient of the Red Cross Emma Geelan Award and a dedicated supporter of underprivileged children. I congratulate Mrs Violet Lord on her significant achievements and note that she is a worthy recipient for the South Coast Woman of the Year.

[*Interruption*]

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr John Barilaro)**: Order! The member for Shellharbour cannot converse with people in the gallery, and people in the gallery cannot converse with members in the Chamber.

### MAITLAND MERCURY 170TH ANNIVERSARY

**Ms ROBYN PARKER** (Maitland—Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) [4.49 p.m.]: I inform the House that the *Maitland Mercury* marked its 170th anniversary of newspaper publication on 7 January 2013. I congratulate the *Maitland Mercury* on its longevity as the second-oldest newspaper in New South Wales and the oldest regional newspaper of mainland Australia. I wish the Mercury's management, staff and readers the best for the future. The Mercury continually supports our community, running many campaigns on behalf of disadvantaged groups. It is really a champion in our area. More than a local newspaper, the *Maitland Mercury* is part of the community. One of the many ways in which the newspaper interacts with the local community is by staging the annual Sportsperson of the Year Awards. After achieving a stunning four-medal haul at the London Paralympics, it was fitting that swimmer Maddison Elliott was named the *Maitland Mercury* 2012 Sportsperson of the Year.

### VIETNAMESE COMMUNITY OF AUSTRALIA VIGIL NIGHT

**Ms TANIA MIHAILUK** (Bankstown) [4.50 p.m.]: Last Friday I attended the Vietnamese Community of Australia vigil night. The night was held in support of freedom and democracy in Vietnam. The ceremony featured leaders from the Vietnamese community, including Catholic and Buddhist leaders. In particular, I acknowledge Thanh Nguyen, the President of the Vietnamese Community of Australia, and thank him for organising this important event and commend him for his exemplary services to the Vietnamese community in New South Wales.

### JOHN HUNTER HOSPITAL AND UNIONS FOR TRANSFUSIONS PROGRAM

**Ms SONIA HORNERY** (Wallsend) [4.51 p.m.]: On 25 January 2013 John Hunter Hospital staff joined the highly successful Unions for Transfusions blood drive program, pledging regular donations as part of a push to boost lifesaving supplies. We recognise that the combined union program, a very clever initiative created by the New South Wales Nurses Association and the Health Services Union, has already seen 100 staff from 20 large workplaces around New South Wales sign up with the Australian Red Cross Blood Service to make regular blood donations. We commend John Hunter Hospital staff for acknowledging the vital importance of blood donations in treating patients, and for taking the time to make the pledge.

### PORT MACQUARIE COMMUNITY ACHIEVEMENTS

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS** (Port Macquarie) [4.52 p.m.]: I would like to acknowledge Narelle Milligan, President of the North Shore Progress Association, for her outstanding efforts to keep the community connected and informed during the recent floods in the Hastings. Narelle has worked tirelessly for her community, which was inundated with floodwaters that caused widespread damage, both physically to homes and infrastructure as well as to the lives of numerous residents. Her contribution to her community is outstanding; and on behalf of the residents of the north shore of Port Macquarie, I say thank you for a job well done. Recently I enjoyed the opportunity to share a barbecue lunch with the North Shore Rural Fire Brigade members, including captain Lee Fitzpatrick and past captain Kingsley Searle and their members as well as local residents. I also look forward to attending the North Shore Community Flood Forum on 17 April. Despite what the community has gone through, it is united and clearly focused on improving emergency protocols and local evacuation strategies for future natural disaster events.

### NUMBERPLATE THEFT

**Mr NICK LALICH** (Cabramatta) [4.52 p.m.]: I call on the House to congratulate the State Emergency Service volunteers and the NSW Police Force on their great work at Bonnyrigg Plaza in assisting with the installation of free irreversible numberplate screws to help curb numberplate theft. This House would acknowledge the importance of this program, and I commend the New South Wales Attorney General for supplying the funding for the program to continue the work of Operation Tabella.

### TERRY AND LESLEY ELLIOTT SIXTIETH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

**Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD** (Myall Lakes) [4.53 p.m.]: I inform the House that two of my constituents, Terry and Lesley Elliott of Tuncurry, celebrated their sixtieth wedding anniversary on 26 February 2013. Lesley was born in Hillston and Terry was born in Taree. When Terry turned 18 he joined the Royal Australian Navy. He met Lesley a few years later, after she had joined the Army. Shortly after, Terry was posted to a ship that sailed to the Korean War, but they decided to be married before the ship sailed. After leaving the Navy, Terry and Lesley settled in the southern Sydney suburb of Sylvania Heights. In 1970 they move to Tuncurry with their two children, and Terry joined his father and brothers as a professional fisherman. Terry and Lesley celebrated their anniversary with their two daughters, their grandchildren and their families.

### MOUNT DRUITT WRITERS GROUP

**Mr RICHARD AMERY** (Mount Druitt) [4.54 p.m.]: I would like the Parliament to acknowledge the efforts of many in the community, including organised events such as the Sydney Writers Festival, who promote the various forms of creative writing among the general population. In particular, I recognise Mrs Gayle Barbagallo who, whilst still a long-time member of the St Marys Creative Writing Group, was fighting to establish a Mount Druitt creative writing group. Her efforts have been successful, and the Mount Druitt Writers Group meets at the Hub, at the Mount Druitt Town Centre, on the second Thursday of each month. I urge all who have an interest in writing, in any form, to become part of the writers group at Mount Druitt. Activities include encouraging people to write memoirs, poetry and exercises in various forms of anecdotal writing—to name a few. All members of the public should be encouraged to write, and I acknowledge the Mount Druitt group and Mrs Barbagallo.

### CASTLE HILL RSL SUB-BRANCH ANZAC AMBASSADORS

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET** (Castle Hill) [4.54 p.m.]: I would like the Parliament to congratulate and recognise the significant contribution that the 2013 ambassadors for the Castle Hill RSL Sub-Branch, Lachlan Elliott, Xanthia Odgen and Natalie Wood, have made to The Hills community through their work for Anzac Day. This day is highly significant in shaping our past and, through this, it is integral in shaping our future. As such, I recognise the contributions that these three young people have made and will make by celebrating such a momentous occasion. They spoke at the presentation of the core values of what it is to be Australian. This House should recognise young people within the community who are so willing to support such important occasions. To quote young Lachlan Elliott:

Soldiers go through thick and thin together but, with a mate at your side, it makes it much better. Mateship not only binds soldiers, families and friends, but us as a nation.

Don Tait, President of the Castle Hill RSL Sub-Branch, said:

To be selected the Anzac Ambassador for 2013 is a great honour for any Australian.

I would like this House to rightly recognise this honour.

## HELLENIC CULTURE AND HERITAGE EXHIBITION

**Mr GUY ZANGARI** (Fairfield) [4.55 p.m.]: The "Nurturing Hellenic Heritage the Australian Way" exhibition was held at Parliament House from 7 March and culminated yesterday, 25 March 2013. The exhibition consisted of costumes, decorative art and jewellery reflecting Hellenic culture and heritage in the aftermath of the 1821 Greek War of Independence. More significantly, the exhibition showcased works from 15 local artists on the theme, the Duality of Greek Australians. The theme resonates not only with Greek Australians but all Australians whose families have migrated to Australia since the turn of the twentieth century. The exhibition was organised by the Hellenic Lyceum and the Thirty-first Greek Festival of Sydney. I note again the exhibition culminated on 25 March 2013. This is significant because it is also Greek Independence Day.

## TRIBUTE TO PROFESSOR DENIS KING, OAM

**Mr GARETH WARD** (Kiama) [4.56 p.m.]: It is with regret that I inform the House today that Professor Denis King, OAM, has tendered his resignation from the University of Wollongong Council, of which I am a graduate representative. Denis's resignation leaves a vacancy on council for a council-appointed member. Options for filling this vacancy will be presented to council later this year. Professor Denis King has been a colorectal surgeon for more than 30 years. Professor King graduated from Sydney University in 1966 and then embarked upon a remarkable career in public health and health management positions. As Chairman of the Governing Council of the Illawarra and Shoalhaven Local Health Network, Professor King was instrumental in securing New South Wales Government funding for significant upgrades to hospitals and health infrastructure in our district. He currently has visiting rights at Hurstville Private Hospital and St George Hospital. Professor King is also well known and respected for his involvement with the St George and Sutherland shire health networks over many years. I would like to extend my warmest regards to Denis and thank him for his services to the University of Wollongong.

## SYDNEY MARDI GRAS CO-CHAIR PETER URMSON

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH** (Sydney) [4.57 p.m.]: I put on record the great contribution of Sydney Mardi Gras co-chair Peter Urmson, who today announced he will step down from his role. Since joining the board in 2009, Mr Urmson has built solid partnerships with the City of Sydney, the New South Wales Government and Destination NSW to help showcase Sydney to the world during the festival. The strong relationship between Mardi Gras and the New South Wales Government was evident last year when Premier O'Farrell became the first Premier to join the parade celebrations. Mr Urmson helped establish the Mardi Gras Museum and, along with Lord Mayor Clover Moore and me, helped launch Oxford Street's globally celebrated Rainbow Crossing. Mr Urmson has also led the way in encouraging greater youth involvement in the festival. I would like to acknowledge his partner, Brenden Spencer, who has supported Peter through the many challenges presented by the role. Pete is a great friend, and I know he is motivated by passion for the LGBTI community and our equality.

## SHOALHAVEN DISTRICT MEMORIAL HOSPITAL

**Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK** (South Coast—The Speaker) [4.58 p.m.]: I rise to commend doctors, nurses and all other staff of Shoalhaven District Memorial Hospital particularly for their efforts in dealing with recent issues at the hospital. The professional approach and first-class care that staff give to South Coast patients each and every day is to be commended, and on behalf of all local residents I express our appreciation for their service. Recent issues regarding the failure of the air-conditioning system are concerning; however, these matters are being dealt with swiftly and appropriately. The staff have gone above and beyond to ensure this issue does not impede treatment of patients. Senior clinicians and management at Shoalhaven hospital, including Professor Martin Jones, head of surgery, have come together to praise the efforts of all staff. A local patient, Marlene Miller, was quoted recently in the *South Coast Register* saying the treatment she received was "first-class". I join senior clinicians and local patients in acknowledging the efforts of the staff at Shoalhaven hospital and congratulate them on their ongoing professional care.

## TRIBUTE TO OSCAR PEREZ

**Mr PAUL LYNCH** (Liverpool) [4.59 p.m.]: I wish to bring to the attention of the House the passing of Oscar Perez in February this year. Oscar was a well-known figure in Sydney's Latin American community. He was a poet and historian. He had been a political activist and militant in the Socialist Party of Chile during the

years of Pinochet's dictatorship, and paid a price for that. He was a political activist in Australia, supporting Chilean solidarity, human rights in Chile and throughout the rest of the world, and progressive causes in Latin America, including the defence of Cuba and the rights of the Mapuche people. He was a comrade and *compañero*—certainly he was my *compañero*. He had worked for me for more than 15 years. He will be very sorely missed by me, my staff, his family and other friends, and the Latin American community generally. He will be a very great loss.

#### **HASTINGS RELAY FOR LIFE**

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS** (Port Macquarie) [4.59 p.m.]: I acknowledge the organisers, supporters and attendees of the eleventh Hastings Relay for Life, an event which so far has raised more than \$118,000 for the Cancer Council. The Relay for Life Port Macquarie event was held on 16 and 17 March—two beautiful days, which were very welcome after two natural disasters on the previous weekends. Team Williams, the team from my office, was one of the 90 teams and 1,003 people who took part in the event this year. I congratulate the organising committee, which was led by Warden Mersey, on their outstanding effort to organise another fantastic event. I was fortunate to open the event and then to walk as part of the survivors and carers lap. Of course, we also had the fantastic candlelit ceremony of hope, which is always well attended. I particularly acknowledge Team Currie, which raised more than \$16,000.

#### **LEBANESE FORCES AUSTRALIA**

**Ms TANIA MIHAILUK** (Bankstown) [5.00 p.m.]: Earlier this month I attended the Lebanese Forces Australia chapter annual function along with distinguished guests and some 1,000 members of the Australian Lebanese community. Lebanese Forces Australia was established by the Lebanese Christian community to assist those of Lebanese Australian ancestry by providing them with support and professional, civic, educational and social opportunities. I acknowledge Father Superior Dr Antoine Tarabay of Saint Charbel's parish along with the many other leaders of the Australian Lebanese community who were in attendance.

#### **DRAGON BOAT STATE CHAMPIONSHIPS**

**Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD** (Myall Lakes) [5.01 p.m.]: I inform the House that two members of the Forster-based Great Lakes Pearl Dragons, Wendy Orman and Heather Masters, have been selected in the mid North Coast dragon boat crew that will compete in the State Championships at the International Rowing Centre at Penrith. They will represent the women's, open and mixed crews and compete against other regional crews from New South Wales. If successful, they will then compete in the National Dragon Boat Championships at Penrith in April. Since January, Wendy and Heather have undergone intense fitness training and weekly on-the-water training sessions at Macksville. Dragon boating is the fastest-growing water sport in Australia, and the Pearl Dragons, the Coomba Park based Wallis Spirit Dragons and the Taree-based Manning River Dragons are the three dragon boat clubs in the Manning Great Lakes region.

#### **ST JOHN AMBULANCE 130TH ANNIVERSARY**

**Ms SONIA HORNERY** (Wallsend) [5.02 p.m.]: We acknowledge that 2013 marks the 130th year of community service for the St John Ambulance volunteers in Australia. In the Newcastle and Maitland areas alone, there are seven adult and nine cadet divisions ranging from Swansea-Caves Beach to Singleton. We recognise the vital role that St John volunteers play in providing assistance to other emergency services during disasters. We applaud the St John volunteers for going above and beyond the call of duty, and engaging in selfless acts to help relieve the suffering of those in need. We thank Adam Heine, a volunteer with the St John Ambulance Hamilton division, for providing an insightful opinion piece to the *Newcastle Herald* on the history of St John.

#### **LIFELINE MID COAST FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY**

**Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD** (Myall Lakes) [5.02 p.m.]: Lifeline Mid Coast recently celebrated 50 years of service to the Australian community. Volunteers from Forster and Tuncurry Lifeline, which have been operating for 24 years, joined in celebrating this milestone. Lifeline was formed in 1963 by the late Reverend Dr Sir Alan Walker after he took a call from a distressed man who later claimed his own life. Sir Alan was determined not to let isolation and lack of support be the cause of more deaths, and he launched a 24-hour crisis support line. In 2012, Lifeline answered more than 540,000 calls, 13,000 of which were on the 24-hour

line. This was the highest number of calls in the history of Lifeline. Lifeline Mid Coast provides services in its local communities, and gives support to many individuals and families who rely on Lifeline at critical moments in their lives.

#### **INDO-CHINA CHINESE ASSOCIATION**

**Mr NICK LALICH** (Cabramatta) [5.03 p.m.]: I congratulate the Indo-China Chinese Association on its successful Chinese New Year lunch on 16 February 2013 for the elderly of the association. I congratulate the association's committee members who were inaugurated on that day. I acknowledge Mr To Ha Huynh, the president of the association, for his and the association's hard work in organising and hosting this successful lunch.

#### **AUSTRALIAN LIONS CHILDHOOD CANCER RESEARCH FOUNDATION**

**Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD** (Myall Lakes) [5.04 p.m.]: On behalf of the New South Wales Parliamentary Lions Club, I attended the Sydney Children's Hospital on Friday last. On behalf of the Parliamentary Lions Club and of the Parliament, I presented a cheque for \$2,000 to the Australian Lions Childhood Cancer Research Foundation staff in company with the Hon. Melinda Pavey, the Parliamentary Secretary for Health, Mr Bruce Notley-Smith, the member for Coojee, and a young girl, Emily, who is having treatment there for cancer. We also planted the Lions rose, which was launched nationally by the Australian Lions Childhood Cancer Research Foundation in conjunction with Treloar Roses in 2012 to symbolise the hope, beauty and inspiration that comes from working for children with cancer who need community support. The cheque comprised \$1,643 from the barbecue we held at Parliament House last week, which was rounded up to \$2,000 by the Parliamentary Lions Club.

#### **SUNFLOWER CENTRE**

**Ms SONIA HORNERY** (Wallsend) [5.05 p.m.]: We recognise the great work done by the Sunflower Centre, a not-for-profit organisation supporting people living with mental illness, their families, friends and the wider community in the Hunter. The Sunflower Centre strives to promote a society in which people with a mental illness are valued and treated as equals. The Sunflower Centre has been working within the Hunter community for more than 10 years to offer services that meet the needs of the Hunter community. The community acknowledges and congratulates all the great volunteers who support the Sunflower Centre through its outreach call service, drop-in centre and one-to-one support services.

**Community recognition statements concluded.**

#### **PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS**

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#### **HEXHAM SWAMP REHABILITATION PROJECT**

**Ms SONIA HORNERY** (Wallsend) [5.05 p.m.]: Habitat destruction represents a primary threat to biodiversity. Hexham Swamp, an internationally renowned wetland that covers 1,946 hectares in the Hunter and Wallsend electorates, has become the victim of habitat destruction after the implementation of a program designed to prevent floodwater from the Hunter River entering the marsh. During the early 1970s, eight floodgates were installed on Ironbark Creek as part of the Lower Hunter Flood Mitigation Scheme. What was initially seen as an excellent idea resulted in the inexorable destruction of the estuary's habitat. Saltmarsh and mangrove areas were replaced by pastures and reeds. Many migratory waders and waterbirds moved elsewhere. The numbers of local fish, prawns and other marine life deteriorated as weeds and pest species thrived in the altered wetland. The area of mangroves declined from 180 hectares to a paltry 22 hectares. Rather significantly, saltmarsh once covered 900 hectares and, as of 2002, there were only six hectares of the vegetation remaining.

Thankfully, the Hexham Swamp Rehabilitation Project was established to try to restore the wetlands to their former glory. The project entails the progressive opening of floodgates to restore 650 hectares of estuarine wetland. The efforts of those involved in the rehabilitation of Hexham Swamp have certainly not gone to waste, with a creek flowing through the wetland for the first time since 1928. Founding member of the Hexham Swamp Rehabilitation Project Dennis Hirst said that the process has been a great success, which has thus far exceeded original expectations. Six of the eight gates at Iron Bark Creek are now open, which increased the number of fish, prawns and birdlife in the vicinity. In addition, significant seagrasses renowned for assisting fish habitat have

re-emerged and are now growing in the wetland. The importance of this project for the local habitat is certainly celebrated in the community, with a local prawn fisherman who has been fishing since 1951 declaring the opening of the floodgates in December 2009 as the best thing to happen to the swamp's estuarine habitat. He said:

"This is what we need to bring our river back to life, and it will. This here is a spawning area for not only king prawns, it's for mullet, it's for crabs, and the food that is involved,"

Re-establishing a thriving nursery habitat by encouraging tidal inundation in the swamp has clearly resulted in many benefits for the environment and the local community, who truly appreciate the refurbishment of the swamp. The remaining two floodgates were set to be reopened by the Hunter-Central Rivers Catchment Management Authority by the end of 2012. The challenge was to balance the transition without severely impacting the water quality and wildlife of the swamp, while ensuring the community is satisfied with the results. I spoke to the catchment management authority and was told that it was still waiting to receive approval from the Department of Planning to open the floodgates—by the end of last year. It was required to send further information after lodging an initial request, which led to a delay in knowing whether the floodgates could be opened. A survey undertaken in October last year and released in late November indicated that increased tidal flow had not damaged the creek.

After 16 years of planning, research and stakeholder consultation, it is fantastic to see the remaining phase of the Hexham Swamp Rehabilitation Project come to a close in a timely manner. The last two floodgates were opened in December, rare bird species have been recorded and the damaged areas are already beginning to heal. I take this opportunity to commend Dr Wej Paradise, Dennis Hirst and the catchment management authority for their involvement in this outstanding project. It has revitalised Hexham Swamp, brought life back to this vital habitat and helped it become the thriving fishery and nursery ground it is today.

#### **SOUTH COAST EMERGENCY SERVICE VOLUNTEERS**

**Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK** (South Coast—The Speaker) [5.10 p.m.]: On Saturday 23 March I had the pleasure of attending a community barbeque to recognise the efforts of local emergency service volunteers during recent bushfires that devastated land and livestock across the South Coast. The event was hosted by Shoalhaven City Council and the Mayor, Joanna Gash—who is also the Federal member of Parliament—and was attended by various councillors, including Alan Baptist, Patricia White, Greg Watson, Lynette Kearney and the Liberal candidate for Gilmore, Ann Sudmalis. It seems so long ago but on Monday 7 January the Rural Fire Service in our area issued a catastrophic fire warning for the Shoalhaven local government area, with extreme temperatures and strong winds expected, which eventuated the next day. The fire burnt for days and devastated more than 9,000 hectares of national park, bushland and property south of Nowra at Dean's Gap, west of Wandandian.

The fire forced the closure of many roads, including the Princes Highway, as it jumped containment lines and headed for Sussex Inlet and the surrounding towns of Swan Haven, Berrara and Cudmirrah. Rural Fire Service and Fire and Rescue NSW firefighters were strategically deployed along the Sussex Inlet Road to protect properties and ensure that there were no homes lost and, more importantly, that no lives were lost. At any given time more than 200 firefighters were battling the blaze with 42 fire trucks, five water bombers and four remote teams who would go into places tankers and large equipment could not go and put in place containment lines, extinguish blazes and investigate other potential threats. The Rural Fire Service worked tirelessly to ensure the safety of local residents and their properties.

Along with the Rural Fire Service volunteers were countless other volunteers from the State Emergency Service, the NSW Fire Brigade, the NSW Police Highway Patrol, the National Parks and Wildlife Service, Surf Life Saving NSW—who were ready, as always, with surf patrol boats in the eventuality that, as happened in the 2001 fires, residents ran into the water—and Marine Rescue NSW, who had boats ready. Volunteers were manning phones and providing meals for workers. Again and again, every time we have a fire or an emergency event the wonderful central catering brigade provides the most wonderful food; their efforts in the Shoalhaven are unbelievable. I express my appreciation to the hundreds of volunteers and the many agency staff who worked countless hours to protect our towns and villages, particularly Wandandian, Sussex Inlet and many others. If those containment lines had not held, the fire would have spread.

I often say that it was not just luck or coincidence that no lives were lost; it was due to the volunteers who worked day and night to prevent the spread of the fire. I make special mention of Shoalhaven Rural Fire Service incident controller Ian Stewart and acting fire control officer Mark Williams and thank them for their tireless work and management. Mark Williams took on the leadership role in an acting position only a matter of

months beforehand. I have said publicly on many occasions that he took on that leadership role and it fitted him like a glove. He handled the situation with calm control, not only in the event room at Albatross Road but also when communicating with the media. He was a remarkable leader throughout that event, as was the local area commander, Joe Cassar. We are grateful to them for their calm control, their professionalism and their expertise during that event.

I also extend my appreciation to our local media: Radio 2ST and Power FM, the *South Coast Register*, WIN News, the *Milton Ulladulla Times* and Triple U FM for ensuring that residents had constant and up-to-date information through publications, television, radio and internet—media members sometimes putting themselves in the firing line in order to get interviews and photographs. Radio 2ST always steps up to the mark. It has reporters at fire control at all times, 24 hours a day, providing up-to-date information. The dissemination of information was most important throughout the fire event. Residents were receiving up-to-date information continually via text messages and phone calls, and that gave them a sense of confidence that somebody knew where they were and was communicating with them constantly. I express my appreciation to them.

Following the devastation of the fires, attention turned to the management and maintenance of the region's 200 fire trails and to ensuring that they were adequate to assist the Rural Fire Service. Volunteers raised with me their concerns at the lack of maintenance leading to the closure of the Drovers Ridge fire trail, which used to run from near Burrier to Touga, near Nerriga. I immediately raised these concerns with the acting fire control officer of the Rural Fire Service and the National Parks and Wildlife Service and sought an assurance that the upkeep of the region's fire trails was adequate and satisfactory. These assurances were met. However, I will continue to speak directly with Rural Fire Service volunteers, who know firsthand the need for appropriate and adequate maintenance of fire trails.

### COFFS HARBOUR COMMUNITY AWARDS

**Mr ANDREW FRASER** (Coffs Harbour—The Assistant-Speaker) [5.15 p.m.]: Today I speak about some good news. We quite often hear complaints made in private members' statements and by other means in this place, but today I commend three people who have received awards in the Coffs Harbour electorate. First is Coffs Harbour's Woman of the Year, Myra Zacher. I have known Myra for more than 30 years. She has been absolutely tireless in her service to the community generally in Coffs Harbour but particularly in netball. Netball is one of the growing sports right across New South Wales and for many years Myra has tirelessly represented the netball cause to me, to council and everywhere she could to ensure that young ladies can participate in a sport that is enjoyable to them and that is held in the very best facilities. Myra has also been a member of the Coffs Harbour Showground Trust for a number of years. For 10 years she has been on the board of Club Coffs in Coffs Harbour and served a considerable time as president of that club.

There is an old saying that if you want something done give it to a busy person. Myra is that busy person. The thousands upon thousands upon thousands of hours of community service she has performed are second to none. That is why Myra is Coffs Harbour's Woman of the Year. The second person I mention has received a New South Wales Government Community Service Award. Kevin Clancy is the Principal of Lowanna Public School. Kevin has been tied up with the surf life saving club, along with his wife Kerry, at Sawtell for I do not know how many years. He is highly respected, not just in the Lowanna school community but at Sawtell where he lives and by Surf Life Saving generally. When we were looking to nominate Kevin we had to get some information on him from Kerry. I wanted to nominate Kerry for an award as well, but she refused to accept an award.

Everyone in this place knows that you cannot do a good job in any organisation unless you are backed by a good woman. This award probably belongs to both Kevin and Kerry for the great job they have done for surf life saving across the board. Kevin has also taught rugby union and rugby league to kids at Lowanna and in the local community. He is another person who has put thousands of hours into community service. Finally, I commend Graeme King, who has also received a New South Wales Government Community Service Award. Graeme was in charge of a hardwood forest in Coffs Harbour for a number of years. Tragically, his wife died from cancer a few years ago. But being the man he is, Graeme continued to throw himself into community service.

Graeme was an active patrol member at Sawtell Surf Club for I do not know how many years. Currently he is the commander of the Marine Rescue Unit in Coffs Harbour—a position he has held since July 2010. Graeme is a great organiser. As commander of that unit he does a fantastic job in providing safety for all the people who utilise the waters off Coffs Harbour for fishing competitions or for the Pittwater to Coffs Harbour Yacht Race, which is an annual event. You can go to the rescue unit at two in the morning and Graeme

will be there or some other volunteer will be there. All the people within the Marine Rescue Unit do a fantastic job. When everyone else is tucked in bed and storms are threatening the coast they are the ones who sit there through the night ensuring the safety of those on the water.

They are in a tremendous position. I have been in touch with the Minister for Local Government and Coffs Harbour City Council to try to get some vegetation cleared so that they have a full 180-degree view of the coastline. Native vegetation that has grown up in the past 20 years needs clearing, and I have raised this matter in the House before. Between them these three people have put in in excess of 100,000 hours of volunteer service to the community of the Coffs Harbour electorate. I commend them for the great job they have done. There are hundreds of other people who also contribute, we all know that, but Kevin Clancy and Graeme King are particularly tireless in their efforts for surf life saving, rugby league, rugby union and marine rescue, as is Myra Zacher for her work with netball, the Coffs Harbour Show Society, and the Coffs Harbour Showground Trust. I commend their fantastic record to the members of this House.

### ALBURY CHARITY GARDEN PARTY

**Mr GREG APLIN** (Albury) [5.20 p.m.]: At various stages of our lives we all need help, but to whom do we turn? It might be an illness or a dietary problem that we are facing or fighting, or elderly friends could be in need of a range of services that would allow them to continue living with dignity in their familiar home. In our busy lives it can be difficult or even awkward to scan the internet or dig through piles of brochures from a community centre display to find the precise help we need. Of course, at other stages of life we feel the urge to give back to our communities. But in order to volunteer our time and experience we need a guide, a map to what is out there and who is looking for new members.

On Saturday 2 March, 103 charities and community service organisations set up in Albury's beautiful and historic Botanic Gardens to show off what they do for the people of the border region. According to organisers of the community Charity Garden Party, the Albury Lions Club, more than 2,000 members of the public attended the day in the Botanic Gardens. As well as the Lions clubs, there were representatives of organisations such as Zonta, Rotary, Apex, the RSPCA, Foodbank, Vision Australia, prostate cancer survivors, and even a local chapter of First Fleeters. Stalls and stands were set up throughout the gardens. The day began at 11:30 a.m. on the Saturday and continued until 3.00 p.m. that afternoon. I had plenty of time to walk around the stalls and catch up with many of the volunteers and their organisations.

It certainly came as a welcome surprise to see all the service clubs and community organisations together in the one place. The vast array of services was spread out before the border community like a smorgasbord of options. Organisations could meet potential new members and potential new clients for their services. Those who volunteered their time with one group were able to meet volunteers from outside their own range of contacts. This is the way to form stronger and more extensive networks. An occasion like this helps demystify what these clubs and support networks are all about.

A highlight of the day was the opening of the community Charity Garden Party by Her Excellency Professor Marie Bashir, Governor of New South Wales. The Governor gave freely and generously of her time to a remarkably packed program, happy to chat with the locals while carrying out her official duties. Many individuals came up to me quietly and asked to have a word with the Governor. While they did not want to intrude, they were clearly drawn to the Governor. One woman said she had attended school with the Governor in Narrandera and wanted to say hello. The diversity of the Governor's work and interests had an impact that could be felt through her popularity with the crowd. Following the garden party, the Governor visited the brand new Albury Wodonga Carer Accommodation Centre.

The centre contains 20 motel-style units for use by patients coming from regional areas to undergo treatment, such as chemotherapy, at Albury Hospital. Once again I thank the health Minister for providing funds on two occasions: first to help kick off the building project and, most recently, to top up the community fundraising to ensure the centre opened with 100 per cent of the budget in hand. The Governor's program included a special service at St Matthew's Church at 4.00 p.m. and then a charity cocktail party of appreciation at 6.30 p.m. at the Albury Club. It was a full day for the Governor and, no doubt, for the organising committee. Of course, the key objective for the day was to showcase the range and number of service and charitable clubs and associations working in the border area. The *Border Mail* reported the Governor expressing her enthusiasm for the day in these terms:

I love days like this because it reinforces my pride in what Australia is all about. I've travelled across many countries over the many years since I graduated in medicine. But the thing about Australia that's so wonderful is its people, and the indigenous spirit that somehow casts a beautiful feeling across the country.

The community Charity Garden Party was an excellent idea and well executed. The level of support from the public was a clear indication that people are looking both for assistance and for opportunities to contribute to those in need around them. I take this opportunity to thank the Albury Lions Club for managing the events of the day, and in particular the garden party committee chair Ruth Ellis. I also express my appreciation to the Governor of New South Wales, Her Excellency Professor Marie Bashir, who has become a regular and most welcome visitor to Albury and its region, and to all the service clubs and organisations that were involved and made the day such a success. The community Charity Garden Party is set to repeat in two years time, when it will, I am sure, be even bigger and better.

### **LIVERPOOL CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS**

**Mr PAUL LYNCH** (Liverpool) [5.25 p.m.]: I draw to the attention of the House a serious electoral matter that has now been raised with me by many of my constituents. I refer to the ongoing issues and dramas surrounding Liverpool City Council chambers. In the 1980s purpose-built council chambers were constructed in Liverpool at 1-3 Hoxton Park Road. The chambers were notoriously destroyed by fire in August 2010. The proceeds of the insurance claim were used by the majority councillors, on the general manager's advice, to purchase an existing building at the corner of Moore and George streets in the Liverpool central business district at 33 Moore Street.

This building came with a price tag of \$19 million and Liverpool is still awash with rumours about the real estate agent involved. I spoke in this place in March last year and expressed concern that the building would require significant extra expenditure to bring it up to standard. This seemed to me then and seems to me now to be a much less desirable option than redeveloping purpose-built premises on the Hoxton Park Road site. Regrettably, the fears of residents that the new council building was a bit of a lemon that would require substantial funds to repair have been proved to be only too accurate. The state of the building is such that the safety of council staff is now at risk. It has been revealed the building has failed to meet fire safety standards.

As I understand it, council staff have served an official order on their own council because of inadequate fire standards. It has been revealed that the council building has breached fire regulations and is unsafe. It failed a fire evacuation test. It has been reported that the fire warning system failed, water hydrants were inoperable, fire detection was inadequate, and part of the emergency ventilation system was not working. To make up for these failures, it has been reported that 20 air horns have had to be installed throughout the building and fire wardens appointed on each floor with two-way radios. Staff cannot work flexitime or be in the building without supervision. They can only work from 8.00 a.m. to 6.00 p.m.

Allegedly, the council as owner and landlord will try to impose similar conditions on other tenants in the building. This rather cuts across claims about the tenants being a desirable ongoing source of revenue for council. These are, of course, very serious matters. Obviously, it is horrific to think that the safety of council staff is at risk because of their dangerous building. But on top of this, also at risk is the financial position of the council if so much money has to be poured into rectification of a dud building in Liverpool's central business district rather than being spent on roads and community facilities in Green Valley, Warwick Farm, Hinchinbrook and Cecil Hills. This is all serious enough, but I have been told by councillors that people at council were aware of these issues about the council building before the building was purchased. If that is so, it is truly scandalous and the heads of council staff recommending purchase should roll, metaphorically speaking.

Moreover, it means council management have placed staff and customers at risk, having done nothing at all about this although knowing of safety concerns for some time. The council should release all relevant documents publicly to clarify this issue. In November last year I spoke in this place about what I perceived to be the extremely zealous enforcement of fire safety standards by council at a block of units at 26 Charles Street, Liverpool. In light of that and similar enforcement actions elsewhere, Liverpool council must now be excruciatingly transparent and open about what has happened to date to its own building and how it has got to this stage. It cannot rigorously enforce standards on others but leave action on its own failures in abeyance. The other aspect of public concern raised with me about the council chambers relates to the site of the previous council chambers.

A council meeting held on 27 February this year considered confidential meeting papers relating to expressions of interest in the possible sale of 1-3 Hoxton Park Road. I understand it will be considered again at tonight's council meeting. Because much of the discussion was confidential we cannot know everything about the council discussion. There is, however, quite a deal legitimately on the public record. Some councillors

walked out of the closed session because council staff refused to convey to councillors information that they, the staff, had that was related to the issue. What I know so far leads me to conclude that much more information should be in the public arena.

There were several options outlined to councillors on the basis of tenders submitted to council. One option disclosed the name of the entity lodging the tender and the amount offered but no other information as to its potential use. Despite this, council expected councillors to make a decision on the issue. Bear in mind that this site is a significant and sensitive site for Liverpool. Staff confirmed that they knew of the potential use of the site but that they had signed a "confidentiality agreement" not to provide this information to other people including to councillors. Several councillors left the meeting refusing to participate in decision-making on topics about which they were not given appropriate information. If this account of events is true, it is absolutely scandalous for council staff to hide information from councillors whose job it is to make decisions and it is worse for staff to agree with third parties to hide information from councillors.

The withholding of information by staff may well lead to an error in the decision-making process. Making a decision without important information could expose councillors to claims not protected by the indemnity provisions of the Local Government Act. It may place councillors in breach of the code of conduct. I also believe it may leave council staff open to a complaint under the code by not complying with the obligations of openness, accountability and integrity. Granted the seriousness of the issues and the assets involved, there seems a real need for a proper investigation into these issues to deal with what seems to be severe dysfunction in decision making in Liverpool council.

#### **TRIBUTE TO MAIA JANE RYALL**

**Mr THOMAS GEORGE** (Lismore—The Deputy-Speaker) [5.30p.m.]: Last Thursday I was honoured to attend a function in the Jubilee Room at which the Minister for Citizenship and Communities, Victor Dominello, representing the Minister for Education, presented the Brother John Taylor Memorial Prize. The prize was established in 1993 by the Board of Studies New South Wales in memory of Brother John Taylor, who was a teacher, principal and executive director of Catholic Education, as well as a long-standing and highly respected member of the Board of Studies. Now in its twentieth year, the prize is awarded to students who have overcome significant hardship, which may include disability or other disadvantage, to attain academic excellence in the Higher School Certificate. The Higher School Certificate is a challenging course of study for all students and for a student to excel when the circumstances of their life already make extraordinary demands upon them is truly inspirational.

This year two young ladies received the Brother John Taylor Memorial Prize. They were Maia Ryall from my electorate and Bethany-Kate Richmond from Grafton High School. Maia Ryall, from Trinity Catholic College at Lismore, has been battling a rare form of cancer. In September 2011 Maia was diagnosed with angiosarcoma. She has since undergone radiation, surgery and other treatments resulting in various ongoing health issues such as fatigue and nausea. Maia's lifestyle has changed dramatically. She has had to completely change her diet, sleeping patterns, and social and sporting activities. During her treatment she was also required to attend regular appointments and tests, which greatly affected her study and lifestyle during her Higher School Certificate. In addition, Maia's radiation treatment took place in Brisbane, which required Maia to live away from her home, family and friends.

Not only did Maia experience emotional and social difficulties during that time but she also had to complete the first term of the Higher School Certificate via correspondence. Maia has always been an exemplary student and has participated in a variety of cultural, community and academic ventures inside and outside of her school. This enthusiasm and passion did not waver even when she was very ill. She is described in her nomination as possessing determination, perseverance and dedication towards her Higher School Certificate studies. Unfortunately, since nominations closed in late December the cancer Maia was fighting has returned. Her struggles continue and will continue indefinitely.

Adam Mayes, head of house at Trinity College, Lismore, nominated Maia. He said she was without doubt the most dedicated and determined student he had seen in 16 years of teaching. As a rugby league coach Adam has dealt with a lot of young people in and out of school. His words accurately describe Maia. Last week Maia was accompanied to Sydney by her mum, Rebecca, and her two lovely little sisters who I think were on their first trip to Sydney. They were thoroughly honoured and pleased to be here for the presentation. Maia did not look like someone who had lived through the story I have just recounted. She was the image of a positive young person. She is now studying law at university in Brisbane and she will dedicate herself to achieving her

law degree. Maia is well respected among her peers at Trinity College and now in Brisbane. Her outlook on life generated nothing but positivity in each and every one of us at the presentation. On behalf of my electorate I congratulate Maia on winning the Brother John Taylor Memorial Prize.

### SHAVE FOR A CURE

**Mr ANDREW CORNWELL** (Charlestown) [5.35 p.m.]: I recognise the importance of the World's Greatest Shave and thank those in my electorate who made an amazing contribution to cancer research by getting involved in the event two weeks ago. The Shave for a Cure event has been embraced by our community, despite the scary commitment made by many who take part to shave their heads. Those who are not game enough to lose their locks have the option of hair dyeing or waxing. This year the event took place on the weekend of 15 to 17 March. Hosted by the Leukaemia Foundation, it is one of our nation's largest fundraising events. It is not hard to see why.

Money raised from Shave for a Cure goes to support people with blood cancer and their families, thousands of whom turn to the foundation every year and are given invaluable help free of charge. The money also funds vital research into finding a cure and better treatments for leukaemia, lymphoma and myeloma. It is a sad reality that in today's world we would struggle to find anyone who has not been touched by cancer in some way. Therefore, it is no surprise that people have been generous. For more than a decade Shave for a Cure and its supporters have raised in excess of \$138 million for those living with leukaemia, lymphoma, myeloma and related blood disorders and their families. These diseases can affect anyone from babies to great-grandparents and the causes are largely unknown. Sufferers often have to undergo chemotherapy and/or radiotherapy, take corticosteroids, or be treated with stem cell transplants.

According to the latest figures from the Leukaemia Foundation, more than 3,200 people are expected to be diagnosed with a form of leukaemia this year. A further 5,000 Australians are expected to be diagnosed with a form of lymphoma and 1,400 with myeloma. That is the equivalent of 25 people every day who will need the support of their families, friends and the medical system as they deal with the physical and mental impacts of the disease. They will also have the support of the Leukaemia Foundation.

Over the past few weeks on social media I have seen dozens of donations made to people in my electorate who have shaved their heads. I could not be more proud. The bravery of those who took to the razor is matched only by the generosity of those who dipped into their wallets to ensure that the event was a resounding success yet again. Every year that the event is held we take another step towards finding a cure and beating cancer. I was fortunate to be involved in one such fundraiser last Saturday week. One of my constituents, Natalie Watts, held a function at which her long dark locks were shaved. In excess of 80 people attended and Natalie raised a staggering \$7,800. She did a fantastic job. She spent months organising the event and received terrific support from local businesses and the community. Many great prizes were donated and all her family, friends and many local businesses got on board. I congratulate Natalie on the terrific job she did to raise that amount of money for such a worthwhile cause.

Shave for a Cure is a fantastic event. My parliamentary colleague Chris Paterson, the member for Camden, improved his looks by having his head shaved by Minister Jillian Skinner last week. That has been the cause of much merriment, but underneath that is the serious business of raising money to find a cure for leukaemia and other blood cancers. I congratulate everyone in New South Wales who was involved in the event and I congratulate the organisers of Shave for a Cure. As I said, \$138 million has been raised so far. In particular, I congratulate and thank my constituent Natalie Watts for the \$7,800 that she raised. I take great pleasure in bringing this great cause to the attention of the House.

**Mr RAY WILLIAMS** (Hawkesbury—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.40 p.m.]: I acknowledge and endorse the words of the member for Charlestown. On behalf of the New South Wales Government, I acknowledge all the members of Parliament who work hard to raise money in their areas for cancer research. I also acknowledge everyone in New South Wales who plays a significant role in raising money for cancer research. Tomorrow I will join my friends at the Hawkesbury Race Club on behalf of the Leukaemia Foundation. The money raised will be provided to the oncology centre located in the Hawkesbury area. The day is in honour of the Hawkesbury turf growers, who have raised close to \$250,000 through successive fundraising events at the Hawkesbury Racecourse. On behalf of the New South Wales Government, I congratulate everyone who is supporting this worthy cause.

### EAST HILLS SENIORS WEEK EVENT

**Mr GLENN BROOKES** (East Hills) [5.41 p.m.]: On Friday 26 March a successful seniors lunch was hosted in my electoral office. The event was held during Seniors Week, which acknowledges and pays tribute to our seniors across the State. Unfortunately, due to a death in my family, I was unable to attend the luncheon. However, in true senior style, my guests proceeded without me. The senior citizens of the East Hills electorate are not the average seniors group. Their life experience has helped to shape the nation in more ways than one—from building railway lines to Menindee, to serving our nation on the battlefield, to working for the Australian Tax Office for more than 50 years. Mrs Eileen Mavis Fraser was a standout attendee on the day. A fortnight ago she turned 101 years of age. Our seniors have truly helped to give us our distinct Australian identity.

The East Hills electorate is blessed to have such a diverse group of talented individuals. Their passion and commitment to our area is remarkable and it definitely keeps me on my feet. If there is a local issue that needs to be addressed, chances are that one of those seniors will bring it to my attention. Their determination to achieve improvement is, in my opinion, the biggest reason our area holds its value. That value is not only in assets but in the high quality of life we enjoy. Seniors have a rich sense of community ownership. They are unofficial caretakers of our society and its standards. Their tireless efforts are matched only by their experience. The efforts of our youth must also be acknowledged.

It must be said that if it was not for our seniors paving the way, our society would not be here today. Without the knowledge and experience of our seniors, and their ability to pass that knowledge on to younger generations, our futures would not look so bright. We must recognise the assistance that our seniors provide in our communities. The countless hours that they volunteer to care and attend to the wellbeing of others, and the services they have already rendered, has shaped the lives we have today. On behalf of all the people of East Hills I express a heartfelt thank you to all those who attended the afternoon tea at my office. I ask that the thousands of seniors in my electorate continue to contribute to our community for as long as they possibly can.

### WEST RYDE EASTER PARADE AND FAIR

#### ANZAC DAY

**Mr VICTOR DOMINELLO** (Ryde—Minister for Citizenship and Communities, and Minister for Aboriginal Affairs) [5.46 p.m.]: I must again mention the extraordinary community engagement that takes place in my electorate of Ryde. I am constantly amazed by the energy of the many volunteers, whose continuous work produces events such as the recent West Ryde Easter Parade and Fair. Committee members Councillor Artin Etmekdjian, Nora Etmekdjian, John Booth of the *Weekly Times*, Philip Brown from the Church of the Good Shepherd, John Brown from Ryde Rotary, Tony Tang from Eastwood Rotary, Spencer Keast representing West Ryde Chamber of Commerce, and Robyn Boyd from West Ryde Public School must be congratulated on organising an excellent day that recognised Easter and was a family fun day that all enjoyed.

Musical achievement has long been encouraged and celebrated in Ryde. I congratulate the Ryde Eisteddfod Committee, whose dedication and success has seen them celebrate their silver anniversary this year. For 25 years it has celebrated the arts and hotly contested a variety of disciplines including choirs, bands, chamber ensembles, instrumental duos and soloists, ballet and jazz for individuals and groups, public speaking, verse, prose and mime. The eisteddfod holds a special day for the over fifties in the eisteddfod community. In recent years this has become more popular, with some people learning new performing arts skills and others revisiting skills learned in their youth.

The volunteer committee runs like a well-oiled machine. It schedules hundreds of participants, judges and sponsors who create a successful event that is held over a number of weeks. The committee members are Gabrielle O'Donnell, Rosalie Ramsay, Lorraine Reakes, Charles Willcox, Helen Larsen, Roseanna Gallo, Helen Merrick, Brenton Paix, Elizabeth Vardy, Jenny Massingham, Lyn Langtry, Lynette Butler, Maria Wilson, Sheena Caswell, Margaret Miller, Gabrielle Dwyer, Aniko Dobosi, Jon Havier, Alison Tuck, Artin Etmekdjian and Derek McCarthy. I will specifically mention five people whose volunteer commitment has extended the life of the eisteddfod and who are also celebrating their twenty-fifth year anniversary on the committee. They are Edna Wilde, OAM, Dawn Nettheim, Robin McKinnon, Susan Maslen and Paula Clarkstone.

The community spirit also extends to include the youth of Ryde. Recently the first Flash Coffee was held at Rumbles Cafe in Eastwood Mall. Mr Acting-Speaker, you may well ask: What is Flash Coffee? It is an initiative born from a youth forum that was held in the electorate early this year. It is an opportunity to bring

together locals from our community to visit cafes in a casual setting. By doing so, they support local businesses. This initiative will continue on a regular basis with groups dropping into coffee shops at pre-arranged times across the electorate for good conversation and the opportunity to meet new people and strengthen existing connections. I welcome these opportunities to talk face to face with my constituents about issues that matter to them. I thank the locals who participate and support small businesses.

The commemoration of Anzac Day is fast approaching. I note that the back page of the *Ryde Connector*, my electorate newsletter, featured the schedule of Anzac Day commemorations that will be held in Ryde by the North Ryde and Ryde Sub Branches of the RSL. The artwork on that page was drawn by Robert Ferella, a year 9 student at Marist College, Eastwood. Robert's art received a gold award in the year 9-10 category of the New South Wales RSL Anzac Art Awards. His entry creatively interpreted the topic of the competition, "The Poppy". Ryde has a rich multicultural mix. I congratulate all our schools. Our teachers actively create understanding in our students about the sacrifices of our Anzacs to make Australia what it is today: a country that freely accepts all nationalities, and invites and encourages their contribution to Australia. The Anzac story unifies and unites Australians regardless of their age or background. That rich inheritance is well understood by my constituents in Ryde. The past brings us together and makes us stronger for the future.

### AUBURN ELECTORATE URBAN ACTIVATION PRECINCTS

**Mrs BARBARA PERRY** (Auburn) [5.51 p.m.]: One issue is of great concern in my electorate and I have received much correspondence about it in the past few weeks. Last Saturday, with no warning, the O'Farrell Government announced the establishment of eight urban renewal sites in Sydney, two of which will be in my electorate. These activation areas will "revitalise" existing urban areas across Sydney by building high-rise towers to fit in an extra 171,700 homes in Sydney. Moreover, more than 500,000 new homes are proposed. I note that when the O'Farrell Government came to power it said it would return planning powers to communities. In his media statement on Saturday, Minister Hazzard said that it is time to move away from planners making decisions about development. This was about allowing the market to determine where development should occur.

The documentation relating to how the urban activation precincts are chosen states they may be chosen by local councils or other interested parties. However, I note that it is unclear how it happened that the two nominated precincts are in my electorate. Did the Minister or his department approach landholders, particularly those in Carter Street? I accept that land at Wentworth Point is Roads and Maritime Services land, so I can understand that nomination. But that does not mean I agree with it. The sum of \$50 million has been put towards improving local infrastructure, including parks and community facilities, around the eight renewal sites. I note, as many in my electorate have, the concerns that the money will not go very far. I note also that this has happened before the white paper—which my community continues to await—has even hit our desks.

I turn first to the proposal to turn Wentworth Point into an urban activation precinct. The urban activation precinct comes on top of the current proposed amendment to development controls in Wentworth Point, the Homebush Bay West Development Control Plan 2004. This plan proposes increasing residential spaces in the area by 1,300 additional apartments, developing towers up to 25 metres high in the middle of the Wentworth Point Peninsula, putting in a bridge from Wentworth Point to Rhodes and reducing the size of the bayside park by almost 30 per cent. Auburn council has opposed the plan in no uncertain terms. I have the document with me. The council's reasons are: the lack of strategic justification for additional residential development; the significant reduction in size of the only major public park within the residential precinct; the likely poor design outcomes and residential amenity impacts, such as overshadowing, crowding in local parks et cetera; and transport and traffic impacts.

The council notes that there are already serious issues with congestion and limited transport options at present, and that the bridge will not significantly solve them. The council also points out that there is no inclusion of any community facilities and a noticeable lack of community consultation, and verifiable Wentworth Point community support, for the bridge proposal. Those matters are noted in the council's submission. A plan to increase density, before even examining activating this area, has been resoundingly rejected by the council. It is a matter of grave concern that planning has been carried out in such an ad hoc manner.

I turn to the second precinct at Carter Street, Lidcombe. I have concerns about this area being part of the plan for activation for a number of reasons. Firstly, it goes against the Government's stated plan to ensure that employment stays in metropolitan areas. Changing this area to a high-density residential zone will go

against its current zoning for industrial and business purposes. My electorate has a high rate of unemployment—in fact, one of the highest unemployment rates in New South Wales and throughout Australia—so I wonder why this Government would rezone an area that is creating employment. It is totally bizarre. There are already traffic issues on Parramatta Road and the M4, and this type of precinct will exacerbate those conditions.

More than anything, it is unreasonable for this Government to expect my community to bear so much of the burden of increased density. I note that one of the first acts of the Government was to repeal the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act, which effectively repealed the previous Ku-ring-gai planning body. My community's concern is related to the inequity of the burden it is being asked to carry in comparison with other electorates. It is time to start listening to communities such as mine about the real impact of the zones.

**Mr RAY WILLIAMS** (Hawkesbury—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.56 p.m.]: The member for Auburn raised the inference in her private member's statement that the Government repealed the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act, whereas the Government repealed part 3A only; and that the Government removed land-use controls in Ku-ring-gai to offload increased densities to the Auburn electorate. On behalf of the Government I state for the record that the Government had no such intention and has absolutely done no such thing.

### STRATHFIELD ELECTORATE EVENTS

**Mr CHARLES CASUSCELLI** (Strathfield) [5.57 p.m.]: I acknowledge three wonderful community events that occurred in the Strathfield electorate. The first is a function at the Ashfield Bowling Club to mark the opening, or reopening, or dedication—I am not sure how to describe it—of a heritage-listed lawn. I note that on 15 November 1889 the *Sydney Morning Herald* reported a request to Ashfield City Council to set aside a part of Ashfield Park for its use as a bowling green. The observation was made in the *Sydney Morning Herald* that the council acceded to the request "being impressed that the Park should be a thing of beauty and joy forever". That must have been in the days when the *Sydney Morning Herald* made eloquent comments about community affairs. Ashfield Park is a thing of beauty, and must remain a joy forever.

Urban growth has resulted in a great deal of pressure being imposed on green space in urban areas of New South Wales, especially green space that is used for activities enjoyed by elderly people. The provision of open space for activities is critical to our community's wellbeing. On 17 March 2013 I attended the reopening of one of the heritage-listed lawns following its refurbishment as a result of a grant from the Community Partnership Program. I was excited that during the rededication ceremony I played lawn bowls for the first time in my life—with Mike Wilson, who is the chief executive of the club's board. Unfortunately, I donned the traditional bowling suit, but something went missing in translation in media photographs. I acknowledge the presence at the ceremony of the Mayor of Ashfield and a large number of senior citizens who were participating in a competition. In conclusion, I declare a vested interest. One day I will be old and I will be enjoying bowls, so I want to ensure that the lawn I will be playing on will be up to scratch.

The second event I attended was the Ashfield Carnival of Cultures, which is a wonderful expression of the diversity that exists within our community. It is an annual event that was begun many years ago by a Liberal councillor, Julie Passas. She did a wonderful job in starting the Carnival of Cultures. Ever since then the event has grown in stature. On Saturday 17 March I saw her enjoying the fruits of her labours from so many years ago. The weather was spectacular and many community groups were attracted to the event. Judging by the different aromas emanating from food stalls, I can only guess that Indian, Italian, Korean, Chinese, Lebanese and Greek cuisines were well represented. They were the only ones I could identify from the aromas, but I am sure that there were exhibitors of other nationalities. I thank the Premier for participating in the carnival, which included a citizenship ceremony.

From the number of photographs taken of the Premier with our new citizens, I can only assume that he is very popular with those who will be voting for the first time at the next Federal and State elections. I acknowledge the participation of many Liberal, Labor and Independent councillors in the carnival, and the fantastic representation from our State Government. My personal thanks are extended to major sponsors of the carnival, who truly are community minded and who include Wests Ashfield and the Community Relations Commission as well as the Ashfield Mall, Veolia Environment Services, the *Inner West Courier*, the *Vision China Times*, *La Fiamma*, which is a magnificent publishing company in the Italian community, ecoDesign ecoPrint, Festival Hire and Coates Hire. I offer my thanks to Bunnings Ashfield and Ashfield Cycles for prizes. Well done all.

The third event I attended, with my wife, was a commemoration of 50 years of Lifeline's innovation, connection with and care for our community. It staggered me to know that more than half a million calls were answered last year by Lifeline. What staggered me even more is that the demand is 800,000 calls a year, so there is a gap. The chairman, John Brogden, spoke eloquently of his experiences and the challenge of providing immediate connection between someone in need and someone who can help at all times, day and night. There is a gap that needs to be filled, and this is the mission of Lifeline.

During the function the service of many volunteers was recognised, and I commend each and every one of them. I believe, with apology to the author of John 15:13: Greater love has no one than this, that someone spends their time in service to their neighbours. Lifeline represents that very long list of community services that are delivered by faith-based organisations. The Wesley Mission is simply a demonstration of Christian love for its community. Lifeline is simply faith in action. I recognise the contributions of the late Reverend Dr Sir Alan Walker, Reverend Gordon Moyes, and Reverend Dr Keith Garner to one of the world's most compassionate services.

### **MENAI ELECTORATE CLEAN UP AUSTRALIA DAY**

**Ms MELANIE GIBBONS** (Menai) [6.02 p.m.]: I draw the attention of the House to the impressive efforts of this year's Clean Up Australia Day volunteers in the Menai electorate. Members might recall that it was wet in the lead up to Clean Up Australia Day, but we were fortunate that we were given a clear day to get some work done. I started the day at 8.00 a.m. with a group from Woronora led by Lyn Gillespie. The group members are avid walkers in the area and they notice when the rubbish builds up. Like me, they had become frustrated with it and Clean Up Australia Day was a great chance to get out and pick up some of the garbage that was ruining our local area. We started at the top of Menai Road and walked down to the Woronora Bridge, with the group continuing over and down the other side.

I worked along the Bangor Bypass and gathered a great deal of rubbish. I picked up a shoe and even a pair of undies. I also found a collection of L-plates and P-plates strewn along the bypass, so at least 12 new drivers will have to purchase another set of plates. Driving past later in the day I noticed how much better the area looked after the efforts of the volunteers, and I thank them for their hard work. My next stop was at Thompsons Bay Reserve off Fowler Road in Illawong. I found the location from flags that were flying and by the excited scouts and cubs who were getting ready to get dirty. The cubs were given a talk about the history of the area by local historian Greg Jackson and learnt that Thompsons Bay Reserve was first known as Como Park or sometimes Mallby's Flat.

In the late 1880s people would travel by train to Como and hire rowboats to travel across the Woronora River to Thompsons Bay Reserve for picnics. Unlike today, at that time the area was free from mangroves and weeds and informal cricket games were played on the reserve. A horse and buggy could be taken down to the water's edge from the jetty at Fowler Road. The early settlers built a stone-walled watering hole for the horses that can still be seen. Interestingly, on 20 February 1920 probationary police constable Leslie Worall murdered his wife with his police revolver and hid her body in Thompsons Bay Reserve. Les was caught for this crime, convicted and sentenced to be hanged, but the sentence was subsequently commuted to life in prison.

Members of the Menai Wildflower Club had arrived bright and early to set up and to put out markers so that we could find our way to the clean-up site via a long, winding bush walk. Luckily, it was low tide, which enabled us to move freely amongst the mangroves to remove plenty of plastic, general rubbish and heaps of glass. We moved carefully through the mud, avoided low-hanging branches, found many crabs and had an enjoyable time while making the area look better than it had in a long time. My mum's gumboots came in handy and I was quickly nominated to wade in the puddles to pick up chip and chocolate wrappers. The scout leaders were amazing at organising their cubs to keep them safe and to clean up the area thoroughly. One of the cubs, Lachie, removed an old, waterlogged lifejacket that could never have saved a life. I ended up pretty muddy and finished the day by cleaning the mud from my clothes and my car, but at least I had mum's gumboots, so getting stuck in the mud was not as bad as it may otherwise have been.

I love the community spirit of Clean Up Australia Day. While the Menai Wildflower Club set up and provided a barbecue to thank their members and the cubs for all their hard work, the Woronora Bushfire Brigade came along to lend a hand by collecting the rubbish and taking it away by boat. I wholeheartedly thank them for their efforts. We would all have been terribly wet and tired if we had had to carry it all back up the hill to the road. I learnt a little more about the Woronora Bushfire Brigade while I was there and how the volunteers work together to help many areas, not only Woronora.

My next clean-up spot was at Sandy Point, where more community spirit was shown as many locals came out to lend a hand to make their area clean and tidy. I went down to the cul de sac at the end of Bingara Drive and removed rubbish that had accumulated since the last clean up a year ago. The locals are finding that they are collecting less and less rubbish as the years go by, which is a sign that they are making a true difference to their environment. I thank the organisers and everyone else who gave their time on the day. My final stop was with the Harris Creek Environment Group at Holsworthy, where I was joined by two more helpers, Danielle Brown and Paulene Radley. The Harris Creek Environment Group had been working amazingly hard for several hours on a hot and muggy day.

The members had already pulled five mattresses from the bush around Holsworthy train station and we found another one wet from the rain that fell the previous night. It was not a pleasant job to remove it, but the team expended their energy and was successful. Going to four different areas made me appreciate the variety of sites in our community—from main roads to a bay of mangroves, to small communities, to a train station surrounded by bush. I thank everyone who gave their time and energy. It was hot and sweaty work, but the effort expended is still evident as I pass by these sites nearly a month later. I hope it continues to be evident for a long time.

### PARRAMATTA ELECTORATE SCHOOLS

**Dr GEOFF LEE** (Parramatta) [6.07 p.m.]: I draw to the attention of the House the outstanding work of the school principals in the Parramatta area and commend the tireless dedication and outstanding contribution of all our educational leaders. The schools of Parramatta are renowned for their excellence in fostering a strong learning environment and remain in high demand in no small part due to the inspiring leadership of these principals. Lynne Goodwin, principal of Arthur Phillip High School, heads a popular and dynamic city school in the heart of Parramatta. I commend Principal Goodwin for her commitment and dedication. She presides over more than 1,500 students, 90 per cent of whom are from non-English speaking backgrounds and more than 40 different cultures. Ms Goodwin's achievements include the consistent delivery of a comprehensive curriculum for diverse groups of students that ranges from top line extension maths to many vocationally oriented courses.

Highly motivated newcomer Tony D'Amore is principal of Oatlands Public School. He is proud of his school's idyllic setting, with its large, grassy play areas, well-established trees and attractive gardens and a large covered outdoor learning area, and his students, 65 per cent of whom come from a non-English speaking background. Oatlands Public School is a Positive Behaviour for Learning school and has strong literacy, numeracy and technology programs, highly qualified and dedicated staff and a caring school community, offering students the best opportunities for success and personal wellbeing. I commend Principal Kitty Guerin of Our Lady of Mercy College, Parramatta, for her dedication and commitment to her school—a school with a proud Mercy history and tradition over the past 122 years. The college provides an excellent technology-rich academic education in an environment in which the girls are well cared for and provided with additional opportunities to develop their talents with a wide range of co-curricular options. Principal Keryn Hinchcliffe of Rydalmere East Public School should be proud of her school's reputation. A parent recently wrote:

Rydalmere East Public School is the best little school in the district. Dedicated and supportive staff, beautiful grounds and happy kids.

I commend Ms Hinchcliffe for fostering such a wonderful learning environment and a strong sense of community. I commend Principal Jonathan Cannon and Headmaster Russell Bailey of Redeemer Baptist School for their dedication. They are rightly proud of their Christian world view of education that not only delivers exceptional academic results—including Board of Studies Gold Awards in literacy and International Grand Awards in science—but also fosters an enduring community spirit. Many of the students become friends who continue to share with staff their post-school journey of serving friends and neighbours with virtue and excellence. I commend Principal Susan Middlebrook of Tara Anglican School for Girls for her hard work and dedication. The school community is rightly proud of its academic achievements. Last year two of the year 12 students were placed on the honours list, having achieved more than 90 in all their subjects, and the school dux, Anja Samardzic, achieved an Australian tertiary admission rank of 99.85. Ms Middlebrook stated:

It is our joy as educators to help them to understand these possibilities and watch them grow as they come to understand their full humanity.

Sister Marlene Chedid of Our Lady of Lebanon College is a source of inspiration for many of us in the community. Her tireless work as principal of Our Lady of Lebanon College and her constant involvement in the community through her parish work are why she is so highly regarded in the community. Sister Chedid was also

the recipient of the New South Wales Local Woman of the Year Award 2013 for Parramatta. I am also delighted to note that Our Lady of Lebanon College is celebrating its 40-year anniversary this year. I wish Sister Chedid and the school every success in their celebrations. Principal Dominique Splatt of Parramatta High School has been a strident advocate for the school and should be commended not just for her dedication to the students and school community but also for her commitment to making this year's centenary celebrations a great success. The school plans a series of events to commemorate its 100 years of outstanding service to public education.

I commend all the principals for their dedication to their students and recognise that they are pivotal to Australia's future prosperity. Each of the principals puts the students first, and understands and recognises that learning should be about the students. As a former teacher I acknowledge the importance that education plays in building future prosperity. Teaching requires ongoing dedication and commitment, and it requires a continued focus on students and on the best ways of delivering ever advancing learning outcomes.

### SMITHFIELD ELECTORATE SPORTSWOMEN ACHIEVEMENTS

**Mr ANDREW ROHAN** (Smithfield) [6.12 p.m.]: I commend the achievements attained by passionate young women across New South Wales who have put in an immense amount of effort to break through the glass ceiling of sport and to make our State and country proud. I am honoured to speak about inspirational young women in my electorate of Smithfield such as Anne-Marie Medcalf, a 14-year-old Abbotsbury local who has gone above and beyond with her tennis abilities. She has won the Gosford Junior Open under-16s girls' singles titles and has represented Australia in tournaments in New Zealand. Needless to say, her six-day-a-week training regime paid off when she was ranked in the top 20 in New South Wales.

I introduce also 19-year-old Nicola Bolger, another achiever in the field of soccer, who scored the first goal in Sydney FC's winning game against Melbourne Victory in AAMI Park. When she is not smashing our opposing States on the field she is undertaking university study at the University of Western Sydney, which is admirable considering how difficult it is to juggle education and extracurricular activities. Like Nicola, Cecil Hills resident Georgia Rowntree has accomplished amazing feats at a very young age. I am proud to say that this 17-year-old has represented Australia as a team captain in Brazil and Argentina. Georgia enthusiastically plays for the Sutherland Sharks in the New South Wales Women's Premier League and the Western Sydney Wanderers squad. These are some of the main reasons why she was chosen as the Fairfield Council sports achiever of the year—something I wholeheartedly support.

I would go so far as to say that Georgia is a prime role model for young women, in that she accomplishes extraordinary things in a sport that historically is dominated by men. I further applaud the determination of the Western Sydney Wanderers soccer team, who played against Sydney FC in its last game. This match brought 1,500 supporters of the Wanderers, creating an intense and amazing atmosphere. It is wonderful to see the rising focus and support of women's teams in a male-dominated sport. Netball, a female-dominated sport, is continuing to show growth in my electorate. I am delighted to say that the Bossley Park Sports Club netball players are celebrating their twenty-fifth anniversary this year. They are joining with Liverpool City Netball Association. Our netball players will be joining one of the Liverpool City Netball Association's 14 clubs in competition and they will be registered along with more than 1,600 players in their new club. I wish them all the best with their new association.

On a related note, I point out that physical activity should be an important part of every Australian's lifestyle. Frequent exercise and recreation are cornerstones in developing a healthy mind and a healthy body. As Australians we are fortunate to be able to take part in a multitude of sports, from tennis to swimming to soccer. Despite this I am sad to report that Australia is ranked fifth in the world's obesity rates. I believe that only physical activity and exercise can combat that. Frequent exercise has been proven to prevent obesity and it also aids with weight control. In addition, physical activity halves the risk of coronary heart disease, lowers the risk of diabetes, keeps cholesterol and blood pressure low and also improves mental health.

Recent figures show that 65 per cent of the population over the age of 15 engage in physical activity for recreation, exercise or sport. While I am relatively pleased to report those statistics, I am compelled to point out the differing results between male and female participation—an estimated 66 per cent of males engage in physical activity compared to a slightly lower rate of 64 per cent of women. In 2006 the identical survey was taken. Both genders were recorded to be at a level of 66 per cent participation in exercise. When I compared the results it was evident that while male participation remained steady, female participation dropped by 2 per cent. Despite this being a small margin in an otherwise solid percentage, it is important to take action so that this tiny variance does not snowball into a bigger number.

## NORTHBRIDGE CENTENARY CELEBRATIONS

**Ms GLADYS BEREJKLIAN** (Willoughby—Minister for Transport) [6.17 p.m.]: Today I am pleased to refer to the Northbridge centenary celebrations. Last weekend the inaugural Northbridge games were held to commence the centenary celebrations. I commend all those community organisations involved in the celebration events, which culminated in a number of community activities. In particular I congratulate the Northbridge Progress Association for the most recent edition of its newsletter, *The 202*, which features a wonderful summary of the history of the suburb and describes how it came into existence.

The theme for the Northbridge centenary celebrations is "Yesterday, today and tomorrow". As I mentioned earlier, the centenary sporting games were held last weekend. Throughout the year events will include a photo exhibition, lunch at various venues around Northbridge and an exposition of the history of the suburb. I congratulate the organising committee of the Northbridge games: Rachel Hill, Judy Mills, Peter McNair, Heidi Richards, Darryl Sullivan, Rachel Balfour, Mary Robinson, Peter McDonald, Robyn McDonald, Dean Crawley, Sarah Brennan, Mark Brennan, Kristi McHutchison, Kerri Chittenden, Katie Gapaillard and Tracey Cahill.

I was invited to attend the closing ceremony, which was attended also by a number of distinguished guests, for example, the Federal member for North Sydney, Joe Hockey, who grew up in Northbridge and who was able speak anecdotally about growing up in the suburb. Former Prime Minister Bob Hawke attended in his capacity as a local resident of Northbridge. Many residents took a great deal of pleasure in seeing Mr Hawke out and about in the suburb. In addition, the Mayor of Willoughby, Mr Pat Riley, and a number of councillors attended. I was pleased to be amongst the guests and to make a contribution to a very successful day.

I place on the record my gratitude to many local residents, some of whom have lived in the suburb for decades, who gave us their recollections of significant events that had occurred in the community. Keeping in mind the theme of the centenary celebrations, "Yesterday, today and tomorrow", we must remember the history of Northbridge and pass it on to successive generations that will grow up in that suburb. When the first advertisement was published by a tramway company advising people that land was available in Northbridge, it is interesting to learn that the suburb was named by the tramway company that owned most of the land at the time. One of the advertising gimmicks that was meant to induce people to buy land was, "Northbridge is only three miles from the GPO. It is naturally shielded from the dust and smoke of the city."

One hundred years later, that statement is still true. Northbridge, which is a fantastic suburb, is a stone's throw from the central business district but Northbridge residents still enjoy very pleasant surroundings. Progress Association members and their predecessors obviously have gone to great lengths to ensure that the suburb is preserved. I congratulate Mr Cootes, the newly elected president of Northbridge Progress Association, and Pam Clifford who recorded the history of the local community. In the most recent addition of *The 202* she went to great lengths to detail the history of the suburb.

The Northbridge Centenary Games were a great success and the organising committee spent many long hours putting them together. Indeed, the success of the games has spurred many people to consider making this event a permanent feature of the local community. On occasions such as this it is opportune for the community to come together in addition to the dignitaries that I mentioned and sporting heroes such as Laurie Daley and Phil Waugh. Laurie Daley, who is still a local resident, contributes a great deal to the community. We are blessed in Northbridge to have many people who not only care about the community but also give to others. In that way they will ensure that successive generations value everything that the Northbridge suburb has to offer and realise their full potential when growing up in such a nice area.

## DHARAWAL NATIONAL PARK ANNIVERSARY

### ST GEORGE HOSPITAL FUNDING

**Mr MARK COURE** (Oatley) [6.22 p.m.]: As we reach the halfway point of this four-year term it is great to be here today to inform the House of two notable achievements. All members would agree that these are notable achievements not just for my community but for the entire State. One is the celebration of the first anniversary of Dharawal National Park, formerly Dharawal Conservation Reserve. Last week I joined with locals to celebrate that anniversary. Last year's declaration of the national park was an exciting victory for interested people in my electorate, surrounding electorates and indeed across the State. The victory will ensure preservation of the land and the maintenance of its rich cultural heritage for future generations.

I acknowledge the Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage, the Hon. Robyn Parker, who, with the Premier of New South Wales, announced the declaration last year. I acknowledge the hard work of the former shadow Minister for the Environment when the Coalition was in opposition. I thank the Hon. Catherine Cusack, who did a substantial amount of the work during that time. When I was a candidate I was a strong advocate for this national park and when I was a councillor on Kogarah City Council I expressed my clear wishes that Dharawal should be a national park for the benefit of future generations.

Last year I was delighted to invite residents to participate in the celebrations and again last week to celebrate the first anniversary on 26 March 2013. Dharawal National Park has much to offer people of all ages, including bushwalking, photography walks and the many bug searches offered near Darkes Forest. I acknowledge the New South Wales Government's commitment to providing the much-needed funding for Dharawal, including funds directed to important environmental, cultural and educational programs to protect the park and promote its significance, especially to the Dharawal Aboriginal people. I understand new signage and visitor information shelters have been erected and that work will commence on the boardwalk and lookout at the scenic Maddens Falls.

I ask members from all sides of the Parliament to trek out to Dharawal National Park to take advantage of this lovely park and its fantastic views. It should be noted that at the Wedderburn end of the park contracts will soon be awarded to construct a disabled access lookout, tracks to enable visitors to enjoy the views of O'Hares Creek, the headwaters of the Georges River. Indeed, the Georges River flows through a number of electorates and is one of the largest rivers in New South Wales. Plans are afoot for a new car park, picnic tables, public toilets, walking tracks and viewing platforms to encourage more visitors to enjoy the beautiful Dharawal National Park.

The second notable achievement is that today work commenced on the much-needed St George Hospital emergency department and today I was joined by the Minister for Health, Jillian Skinner, the Premier of New South Wales, Barry O'Farrell, and the member for Rockdale in attending an occasion that has been many years in the making. I acknowledge the doctors, nurses and staff who were involved in the project and who helped it come to fruition. I congratulate the Premier and the Minister for Health on allocating \$39 million for the new emergency department which potentially will result in an additional six floors for future projects, an expanded waiting triage area at the entrance, satellite imaging, an emergency medical unit, an acute adult area for 34 beds, an adult fast track zone, 12 treatment spaces and five resuscitation bays.

The upgrade will result in double the capacity of the existing emergency department, which will move from Kensington Street, where it has operated for many years, to Gray Street. This was a significant funding announcement and today work commenced on the project. As I said in the media, we promised this project in opposition, we are funding it and now we are building it. It is an exciting time for St George Hospital. I note that this is one of the biggest funding announcements and projects for St George hospital in a long time. The previous extension to St George Hospital was opened in 1993 by the then Minister for Health, Ron Phillips. *[Time expired.]*

### **SHELLHARBOUR HOSPITAL FUNDING**

**Ms ANNA WATSON** (Shellharbour) [6.27 p.m.]: Yesterday I presented staff members of the Minister for Health with 500 petitions signed by constituents in my electorate supporting calls for the New South Wales Government to provide substantial funding in the upcoming 2013-14 budget for the upgrade of Shellharbour Hospital which is located in the heart of my electorate. I am grateful to the polite staff member in the Minister's office who accepted my constituents' petitions. Shellharbour Hospital was built in 1986 under the Wran Labor Government. In that year there was also the first flood of new residents in the Shellharbour municipality, as it was then known. Across the road from Shellharbour Hospital, the new Shellharbour Square shopping centre was being built. It was the first major new suburb of Balarang.

In fact, at the time the new hospital was based in the electorate of Kiama. Fast forward nearly 30 years and Shellharbour Hospital is now meeting the needs of a massive population increase—65,000 people living in Shellharbour city and those in the Illawarra region. After 16 years of Labor governments improved services have been provided at Shellharbour Hospital. For example, in 2009, \$7 million was provided for a 20-bed mental health rehabilitation unit and \$3.2 million was provided for a new child and adolescent day unit. A family centre was provided along with \$4.3 million for a renal dialysis unit. In addition, \$4.1 million was allocated towards the construction of the child and adolescent mental health inpatient unit and \$4 million was invested in the emergency department and pathology centre of Shellharbour Hospital.

At the same time Labor governments also invested in a range of new services, including the home birthing service and expanded midwifery clinic. The number of doctors and nurses also increased under Labor governments—from 83 in 2007 to 95 in 2010, and from 164 to 181 respectively. During this time it should not be forgotten that the Labor governments—State and Federal—invested \$14.1 million in a new cancer care centre at Wollongong Hospital and \$34.8 million for a cancer care centre at Nowra. I place these two investments by Labor governments on the record because the New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Government seems to like taking all the credit but it never gives appropriate acknowledgment. Labor's record can be contrasted with the record of the former Greiner Liberal Government when health services in the Illawarra were slashed—and we are all aware of that fact.

Between 1988 and 1995, under Nick Greiner's administration, the Wollongong cancer centre site was the biggest duck pond in Wollongong. Labor governments opened and built new hospital services but the last Coalition administration closed down hospitals, such as the David Berry Hospital. As the population continues to increase in the region—particularly in my electorate—there is a need to continue to re-examine and reassess the range of services required to meet the health needs and expectations of our local communities. I was pleased with the health services plan released by the Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District late last year. Under the plan Shellharbour Hospital will become a major metropolitan hospital providing a range of expanded secondary acute medical services to the southern Illawarra region. Although we do not yet know the final investment required until the clinicians report and asset management plan are completed mid-year, the upgrade of Shellharbour Hospital could cost up to \$250 million.

The new plan says that Shellharbour Hospital can become a regional rehabilitation hub providing enhanced acute geriatric care for our elderly, enhanced diagnostic capability and expanded gastroenterological, neurology, ear, nose and throat, ophthalmology and urology services. The plan also proposes additional paediatric, child and family protection services. This will mean less travel to other hospitals to see health professionals. It also will mean more doctors and nurses, and more jobs for auxiliary staff, such as cooks, cleaners and wards people. Providing health services is one of the most expensive calls on the New South Wales budget. Providing up to \$250 million in a new investment to upgrade Shellharbour Hospital will be no small task and may take several years to complete, but a start must be made in the New South Wales Government's upcoming budget in June. My constituents hope this will be the case. I have written to the Minister for Health on behalf of my constituents and the 500 petitioners. I hope we will see some good news in the 2013-14 budget.

### **SYDNEY MARDI GRAS POLICING**

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH** (Sydney) [6.32 p.m.]: Large numbers of constituents and visitors to my electorate have contacted me about the well-publicised policing incidents that occurred after the Mardi Gras parade, which highlighted a number of other concerns about policing at Mardi Gras events. This is especially disturbing given the history of violence targeted at lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex [LGBTI] communities. While only a handful of formal complaints have been made to date, I understand that more than 40 people contacted agencies, such as the Inner City Legal Centre, the Lesbian and Gay Anti-Violence Project, the Gay and Lesbian Rights Lobby and the Redfern Legal Centre, for advice and support to make complaints about policing at this year's festival. Those reports included heavy-handed policing, aggressive language, failure to respond to concerns about safety, public strip searches, large-scale drug detection dog operations treating everyone as criminals, and police comments on clothing and appearance.

One issue that raised many concerns was the large police presence preventing people from crossing Oxford Street, even after the parade had finished, when the priority always should have been on protecting the community. Mardi Gras organisers, the Roads and Maritime Services and police have identified that this caused many issues and indicated their commitment to ensuring it does not happen next time. Large-scale events such as the Mardi Gras parade require policing by consent and recognise that police and the public need to work together to mitigate incidents and ensure a safe and enjoyable evening is had by all. While I do not condone offensive language, it is time to discuss what it is in its justification to confine and charge people. Additionally, police officers should not prevent witnesses from observing and filming incidents. Some people have commented that the change of name from the Police Service to the Police Force undermines the growing police customer service focus and does no justice to the strong focus on relationship building.

This can be seen especially with inner-city police commands, which have built a strong partnership with residents, including lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex communities. This good relationship was evident with police recognising the community's concerns and committing to working together to fix problems. The Minister for Police's response to the Mardi Gras incidents deserves to be commended. He met

with me and Mardi Gras organisers immediately after the incidents came to light and committed to a thorough and fair investigation, which has commenced already with the NSW Ombudsman being involved directly. The Minister and the Commissioner of Police followed up with a further meeting last week. The Surry Hills commander and the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex corporate spokesperson, Donna Adney, have been responsive and fronted up to hear criticism and look for solutions at a recent forum I organised with Mardi Gras organisers and the Gay and Lesbian Rights Lobby.

All police officers should treat lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex community members with respect. My forum identified the need for better training and education of all police officers about these communities and other minority groups. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex community members should contribute to this training and work directly with police. Many concerns related to drugs policing, with allegations of public strip searches and searches without reasonable suspicion of possession. Reports were made of all Mardi Gras event patrons being treated with suspicion and many being publicly humiliated. While drug detection dog operations are seen as a visible response to illegal drug activity, I am concerned that often they are an ineffective approach that undermines harm minimisation strategies by encouraging low-level drug users to ingest large amounts of drugs as the dogs approach.

I call on the Government to review drug policing strategies and focus its resources and efforts on stamping out dealing and trafficking. It is time to start a community conversation about drug law reform and evidence-based drug strategies. There is significant community concern about how complaints are investigated, and a significant misunderstanding about the role of the Ombudsman. Many people want an independent body that does more than make recommendations but ensures that officers who assault citizens are dismissed. A large number of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex community groups have started a petition addressing these serious concerns about inherent conflicts with internal police investigations.

They say police should not be investigated by police. We need a complaints system that both police and the community can trust. I call on the Government to review the system to ensure investigations are prompt, thorough and fair, with necessary action taken and reported to the community. The Ombudsman needs sufficient resources to oversee all serious complaints and report promptly, so that the community can see that justice is done. I will continue to work with police and Mardi Gras organisers to make sure future Mardi Gras events are safe and well managed. I will call on the Government to review and properly fund the complaints and oversight systems to ensure all citizens are treated fairly and with respect.

### **HAWKESBURY ELECTORATE EVENTS**

**Mr RAY WILLIAMS** (Hawkesbury—Parliamentary Secretary) [6.37 p.m.], by leave: I advise the House of recent events in the Hawkesbury area. A wonderful new initiative has commenced in two of my local schools, Maraylya Public School and Pitt Town Public School, known as the Active After-school Communities Program. This program, in conjunction with the Greater Western Sydney Giants Australian Football League [AFL] players, is helping children access sports through healthy outdoor activities. Last Friday I was joined at Maraylya Public School by Active After-school Communities Program representative Rebecca Webb and Western Sydney Giants players Sam Reid and Tim Mohr, who conducted a coaching clinic at the school. The opportunity for this program to be implemented into Maraylya Public School was in response to a written request sent by two of its students, Lucas Rando and Jayden Colgan.

Principal Stuart Gaffey spoke in glowing terms of the initiative displayed by Lucas and Jayden, given that the program has been keenly embraced by many students at the school and is proving very successful. This program provides primary school children with access to free sport and other structured physical activity programs that may then lead students to joining a local sporting club in their area. It is a wonderful program that not only will improve the fitness of schoolchildren but also will boost access to local sporting clubs. I encourage other schools in my area and across New South Wales to get involved in this very worthwhile program.

On Tuesday 26 March I met the Commissioner of Police, Andrew Scipione, together with Premier Barry O'Farrell to welcome the New South Wales Government's delivery of its \$3.5 million election commitment for an additional 25 mobile police command vehicles. I am pleased to advise the House that the Hawkesbury electorate will be the beneficiary of one of these new high-tech police vehicles, which will be located in the Hills Local Area Command, which covers areas from Castle Hill in the east to Wisemans Ferry in the north-west of my electorate. This important new police resource will provide a high-visibility police presence in crime hotspots or high-traffic areas and assist police on the streets. Mobile command vehicles effectively are a mobile police station that officers can use to conduct searches and interviews and execute warrants.

A high visibility police presence is the best way to combat crime. These new mobile command vehicles will provide that increased visual police presence and will be greatly welcomed in our area. Each command vehicle is equipped with a location-specific radio with a mobile data terminal to access police databases, a television monitor, digital message boards and an interview room. The Hills Local Area Command will receive a mobile command vehicle in the first rollout. I take this opportunity to thank the Minister for Police and our Premier for these valuable new resources. I extend my appreciation also to Andrew Scipione, our Commissioner of Police, and to every member of the NSW Police Force who put their lives on the line every day in order to protect our families and communities.

Last Sunday 24 March I visited the Kurrajong-Comleroy Historical Society at Kurrajong together with my wife, Wendy. The society's members had visited Parliament the preceding week and invited me and the member for Londonderry, Bart Bassett, to visit the society's open day to view the display of the many exhibits it has collected. The society was formed in 2001 and is dedicated to researching, recording, preserving and promoting the heritage of the Hawkesbury district.

The society now has what I believe to be the best example of railway memorabilia anywhere in this State. Every piece of historic railway equipment from New South Wales and across the country has been lovingly restored and preserved in a privately owned building at Kurrajong, including some very historic typewriters which I encourage the member for Mount Druitt to view as soon as he can. I was reminded of the failure of a former Premier who would not commit to providing a suitable area and building to restore these historic New South Wales rail items, which must be preserved on behalf of future generations. I commend the society for its work in preserving the history of the Hawkesbury and, in particular, the significant railway heritage of this country. I look forward to continuing to support the society in the future.

On Monday 11 March I attended the grand opening of the new Kellyville Girl Guides hall extension, which was funded under the Community Building Partnership program. President Donna Collins and District Leader Cheryl Selbourne were present at the opening. The hall, which was built by local builder Michael Dolly, will provide twice the space previously available to the guides. This is but one of the many examples of value-for-money community improvements that the O'Farrell Government remains committed to providing. I acknowledge the work of outgoing President Michelle Lincoln, who originally contacted me regarding financial support for the hall extension, and Treasurer Keith Drewery, who put the plans together for the extension.

On Saturday 9 March I attended a special breakfast on behalf of International Women's Day, organised by Gai Timmerman of the Hawkesbury Soroptimist Society. The function was held in the Ted McCabe Function Centre at Hawkesbury Race Club, Clarendon, and was attended by hundreds of hardworking, high-achieving women from the Hawkesbury. On Friday 22 March the Minister for Roads and Ports made a brief visit to the Hawkesbury. The Minister met with the member for Riverstone, the member for Londonderry and me to discuss the important upgrading of Windsor Bridge. The Minister and his dedicated staff have made a considered commitment to providing this important infrastructure and I thank them for their attention to this project.

Recently I was given a photograph of the Windsor Bridge which was taken in 1879 from the western side of the Hawkesbury River looking east. That photo shows the original road corridor to the bridge on the north-western side of Thompson Square—the exact location of the proposed new bridge. When the bridge is constructed it will return Thompson Square to its original size and shape as depicted in that historic photograph. I gave this photograph to the Minister. This work is further proof of the New South Wales Government's commitment to protecting the unique heritage of the Hawkesbury.

**Private members' statements concluded.**

**The House adjourned, pursuant to standing and sessional orders, at 6.42 p.m. until  
Tuesday 30 April 2013 at 12 noon.**

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