

|   |                                   |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| ABORIGINAL DISABILITY WORK COURSE .....   | 20862                             |
| ALBURY ELECTORATE COMMUNITY ACHIEVEMENTS .....  | 20861                             |
| ALISON HOMESTEAD MEN'S SHED .....   | 20876                             |
| AUSTRALIAN FEDERATION OF ISLAMIC COUNCILS .....   | 20862                             |
| BATTLE OF CRETE SEVENTY-SECOND ANNIVERSARY .....  | 20879                             |
| BUDDHIST VESAK DAY CEREMONY .....   | 20864, 20864                      |
| BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE .....   | 20806, 20821, 20838               |
| CABRAMATTA HIGH SCHOOL .....  | 20862                             |
| CAMDEN ELECTORATE SCHOOLS .....   | 20866                             |
| COAL INDUSTRY .....   | 20843, 20874                      |
| COMMUNITY RECOGNITION STATEMENTS .....  | 20861                             |
| COURTS AND OTHER MISCELLANEOUS LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2013 .....                                      | 20850                             |
| DEATH OF GERALD BERESFORD PONSONBY PEACOCKE, A FORMER MINISTER OF THE CROWN<br>AND MEMBER FOR DUBBO ..... | 20838                             |
| DISTINGUISHED VISITORS .....  | 20812, 20821, 20837               |
| DRUMMOYNE ELECTORATE FERRY SERVICES .....   | 20872                             |
| FIRST HOME OWNERS GRANT .....   | 20821                             |
| GOVERNMENT SECTOR EMPLOYMENT BILL 2013 .....  | 20857                             |
| GUNNEDAH PAEDIATRIC AND MATERNITY SUPPORT GROUP .....   | 20867                             |
| HAWKESBURY ELECTORATE SCHOOL EVENTS .....   | 20877                             |
| HORNSBY STATE EMERGENCY SERVICE .....   | 20862                             |
| HUNTER PRIMARY SCHOOL TOUCH FOOTBALL TEAM SELECTIONS .....  | 20864                             |
| HUNTER UNITED DIVING CLUB .....   | 20863                             |
| HUNTING IN NATIONAL PARKS .....   | 20838, 20840, 20843, 20845, 20848 |
| INFRASTRUCTURE NSW .....  | 20838                             |
| INNER-CITY EDUCATION .....  | 20846                             |
| JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON ELECTORAL MATTERS .....   | 20836                             |
| KHMER AND CAMBODIAN NEW YEAR CELEBRATIONS .....   | 20862                             |
| LAO NEW YEAR CELEBRATIONS .....   | 20863                             |
| LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL VACANCY .....   | 20806, 20855                      |
| LEN AND MARIE JEFFERY SIXTIETH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY .....  | 20863                             |
| LIVERPOOL COURTHOUSE .....  | 20869                             |
| LOCAL GOVERNMENT CLOSED-CIRCUIT TELEVISION CAMERA SURVEILLANCE .....                                      | 20847                             |
| LONDONDERRY ELECTORATE COMMUNITY GROUPS .....   | 20878                             |
| MARIA SS DELLE GRAZIE FAMILY FESTIVAL .....   | 20863                             |
| MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT STAFF BILL 2013 .....   | 20857                             |
| MENAI ELECTORATE COMMUNITY BUILDING PARTNERSHIP GRANTS .....  | 20868                             |
| NEWCASTLE BUS SERVICES REVIEW .....   | 20806                             |
| NEWCASTLE JUNIOR CAVALIERS CRICKET CLUB UNITED KINGDOM TOUR .....   | 20875                             |
| NORTH WEST RAIL LINK .....  | 20845                             |
| NSW SELF INSURANCE CORPORATION AMENDMENT BILL 2013 .....  | 20853, 20855, 20860               |
| OUR LADY OF LEBANON COLLEGE RUBY JUBILEE .....  | 20873                             |
| PETITIONS .....   | 20849                             |
| PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS .....   | 20865                             |
| QUESTION TIME .....   | 20838                             |
| REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE .....   | 20841                             |
| RETIREMENT OF GRAEME MINETT .....   | 20864                             |
| RETIREMENT OF JOHN BULMER .....   | 20861                             |
| ROSE BAY RELAY FOR LIFE .....   | 20863                             |
| SALVATION ARMY RED SHIELD APPEAL .....  | 20861                             |
| SHELL COVE RAILWAY STATION .....  | 20827                             |
| SHELLHARBOUR CITY COUNCILLORS KELLIE MARSH AND PAUL RANKIN .....  | 20865                             |
| SHELLHARBOUR ELECTORATE COMMUNITY BUILDING PARTNERSHIP GRANTS .....                                       | 20865                             |
| SMITHFIELD BRING IT ON! FESTIVAL .....  | 20871                             |
| SOUTHERN YOUTH AND FAMILY SERVICES .....  | 20880                             |
| STUDENT PUBLIC TRANSPORT CONCESSIONS .....  | 20832                             |
| SUCCESSION TO THE CROWN (REQUEST) BILL 2013 .....   | 20856                             |
| SUPPORT FOR EQUALITY .....  | 20812                             |
| TRIBUTE TO MERV COLLINS .....   | 20864                             |
| TRIBUTE TO PAMELA GRIFFITH .....  | 20875                             |

|   |       |
|---|-------|
| TWIN TOWNS MEALS ON WHEELS FORTIETH ANNIVERSARY ..... | 20870 |
| WALLSEND HERITAGE POSTBOX .....                       | 20861 |
| WOMEN IN LEAGUE .....                                 | 20863 |
| WORK HEALTH AND SAFETY (MINES) BILL 2013.....         | 20851 |

# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Thursday 23 May 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.

## LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL VACANCY

### Joint Sitting

**The SPEAKER:** I report the receipt of the following message from Her Excellency the Governor:

MARIE BASHIR  
Governor Sydney

Office of the Governor  
22 May 2013

I, Professor MARIE BASHIR AC, CVO, in pursuance of the power and authority vested in me as Governor of the State of New South Wales, do hereby convene a joint sitting of the Members of the Legislative Council and the Legislative Assembly for the purpose of the election of a person to fill the seat in the Legislative Council vacated by Mr Eric Michael Roozendaal, and I do hereby announce and declare that such Members shall assemble for such purpose on Thursday the twenty-third day of May 2013 at 3.45 p.m. in the building known as the Legislative Council Chamber situated in Macquarie Street in the City of Sydney; and the Members of the Legislative Council and the Members of the Legislative Assembly are hereby required to give their attendance at the said time and place accordingly.

In order that the Members of both Houses of Parliament may be duly informed of the convening of the joint sitting, I have this day addressed a like message to the President of the Legislative Council.

## BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

### Notices of Motions

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

### NEWCASTLE BUS SERVICES REVIEW

**Ms SONIA HORNER** (Wallsend) [10.04 a.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) notes that the Hunter has had changes in demographics and commuter travel needs since the last bus review;
- (2) notes that public buses are not meeting commuter demands in the Hunter and therefore there is little incentive for Hunter citizens to travel by bus; and
- (3) urges the Minister for Transport to undertake and complete a comprehensive review of Newcastle bus services before the end of 2013.

I am calling on the O'Farrell Government to agree to an expedited review of the Newcastle bus network and for a commitment of funding to implement any changes recommended. As shadow Minister, the Hon. Penny Sharpe said that public transport is the grease in the machine of cities that can make them work. Without public transport our roads would become congested to the point they would become unusable. Supporting public transport use and fighting for much-needed funding for public transport infrastructure is something about which my community is passionate. I believe in the importance of our buses, trains and ferries and all forms of public transport for today and for our future. Unfortunately, there is still a need to fight for improvements to funding in this area because residents across New South Wales and, of particular relevance to me, across the Hunter are too often faced with infrequent services, limited accessible forms of transport and a lack of infrastructure to facilitate the use of the accessible transport that already exists.

Even with its flaws, public transport, and especially the bus service, is an essential resource in my electorate. We all agree that bus use reduces congestion on Hunter roads, drives economic development, reduces

greenhouse gases and makes Newcastle and all of its suburbs, including Wallsend, more liveable. For many locals the existence of Newcastle Buses makes getting an education or having a job possible. It provides their only access to essential services such as medical centres and government assistance programs. Importantly, it reduces isolation by connecting people socially to their family and friends. One in five people in New South Wales has a disability, which means that for one in five people accessible public transport is of utmost importance.

The merits of the buses might seem self-evident to some members: it might appear that I am stating the obvious. However, I am pointing out these potentially self-evident merits because they are so great and the service that buses provide is so important. I believe that recognition of their value is well deserved. Furthermore, it is incumbent upon all of us to support in any way we can this great and crucial public service that assists so many of us. There is one key practical and achievable way that this Government can support public transport in the Hunter. That is by implementing an expedited Newcastle bus network review and making a commitment to provide financial backing for the review's findings.

At times the O'Farrell Government uses the excuse of so-called low patronage for committing fewer resources to public transport. Low patronage on a Newcastle rail line is the Government's defence of its planned removal. If there is low patronage, this is an opportunity to reverse the situation. Low patronage is a sign to the Government that it is not doing enough to promote public transport use or to make the public transport that is already available as accessible, frequent, reliable and affordable as it should be. The Government must meet the public transport needs of the people who use these services and make public transport's use more attractive for those who now do not use it. We know that if it did that the increased patronage would follow.

A perfect example of that process is illustrated by the story of Newcastle bus route 235. In 2010 I successfully campaigned for an extension of route 235 from Wallsend to Maryland. The 2011-12 annual report of the State Transit Authority shows a decline in bus patronage of 0.6 per cent from 2010-11 to 2011-12. During this same period, though, Newcastle route 235 experienced an increase in bus patronage of 6.3 per cent. Evidence shows that if we give people the public transport options they need they will use public transport. A review of the Newcastle bus network is especially crucial, considering the demographic changes that have occurred since the last review in 2007. According to census data provided by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, between 2006 and 2011 there was significant growth in Newcastle's non-central business district suburbs, with more than 4,000 new residents now living in Wallsend, Eleebana, New Lambton, Waratah, Fletcher, Hamilton, Mayfield, Jesmond and Islington.

Along with the suburban population increase, the number of people who use buses is also increasing. According to a parliamentary research profile on my electorate of Wallsend, between 2006 and 2011 there was a 14.9 per cent increase in the number of people using public transport to travel to work. These changes need to be reflected in increased bus frequency and the number of routes that service our growing suburbs. It is clear to me, and I am sure it is now clear to everyone in this House, that Newcastle needs a review of its bus network now. I urge the Minister for Transport to listen to the people of the Hunter when we say that we need the review now; we need it not at an unspecified point in the future but as soon as possible. We need this Government to make a firm commitment to fully fund the recommendations that come out of the review process. Our Hunter commuters will thank the Government, and I will join them.

**Mr GARRY EDWARDS** (Swansea) [10.11 a.m.]: I thank the member for Wallsend for moving this motion. Improving public transport services is a key priority of this Government, as is the revitalisation and transformation of Newcastle, the second biggest city centre in New South Wales. The Government is planning for the creation of new opportunities, better liveability and more growth and development in Newcastle and surrounds. With 12,000 additional residents—an extra 10,000 workers are expected in Newcastle by 2036—we need to start planning for the future. This means creating better ways to allow movement in and around this busy regional centre.

An effective bus network has the ability to play multiple transport roles, from transport in high frequency, major centre connections to local village connections. Buses provide the flexibility to respond to changes in demand and focus transport resources where they are needed most. Our customers are after better services and we are working to deliver them. Bus services in the lower Hunter were last reviewed in 2010. Our customers in the Hunter are using buses more and more to get to their place of employment, their home and their venues of entertainment. Comparing the 12-month period to March 2011 with the same 12-month period to March 2013 shows that patronage on bus services in the lower Hunter, excluding Newcastle Buses, has increased by approximately 20 per cent. In the same periods patronage has increased by 21 per cent in the

Maitland and Raymond Terrace areas, by 8 per cent in the Port Stephens area and by 37 per cent in the Maryland, Edgeworth and Toronto areas. More can be done to encourage an increase in patronage in the Hunter region.

We know that with more reliable, safe and efficient services there will be more reason to use the bus network in the Hunter area. That is why this Government, in conjunction with lower Hunter bus operators, is currently undertaking a review of service timetables. We will examine what can be done better, especially addressing reliability, patronage levels and potential alterations to the existing timetables. Our customers can expect that any changes will be introduced alongside the new rail timetable expected in October this year. The Government's Transport Master Plan sets out a commitment to enhancing bus services in the lower Hunter and within the Newcastle bus system. This is a government that takes its commitments seriously. By the end of the current financial year more than 30 new buses are expected to have joined the Newcastle bus fleet. There are now 122 wheelchair accessible buses in the Newcastle Buses fleet of 171 buses.

All new buses purchased are required to be air-conditioned and have a low floor, stepless entry and allow easy access by the elderly and disabled passengers in wheelchairs. These new buses will have the latest features in passenger comfort and safety combined with a Euro 5 emission standard for high environmental performance. We are doing more than just delivering new buses; we are reviewing and updating bus service planning guidelines to deliver enhanced services that reflect changes in the urban environment and suit our customer needs. We are identifying opportunities to enhance bus services to provide a real alternative to private car use, with a focus on improving travel times, service frequency and comfort to encourage more customers to use our buses.

I assure the House that the Government will continue to monitor bus services across the lower Hunter, especially with respect to changes in land use, residential growth and employment growth. As a government we recognise the importance of making these services accessible to all our customers. Between 2008 and 2011 the estimated resident population of the lower Hunter—covering Newcastle, Lake Macquarie, Port Stephens, Cessnock and Maitland local government areas—grew by about 12,000. Nearly 60 per cent of this growth was concentrated in Maitland, Cessnock and Port Stephens. During this period population growth was highest in the 55-and-over age group. Our population is not only growing; its age profile is shifting. By 2031 20 per cent of the New South Wales population will be over 65 years of age.

This Government is also enabling greater participation for community members through community transport initiatives. We are administering the Home and Community Care Transport Program, which offers transport support to older people who are frail and younger people with disabilities and their carers. The Community Transport Program aims to address the transport needs of those in the community who are disadvantaged by co-ordinating the efficient use of existing transport resources. The Government has increased funding for the Community Transport Program by \$12 million over four years—a 100 per cent funding increase over the period. This will provide people experiencing transport disadvantage with improved access to transport services.

In the 2012-13 financial year additional funding was allocated to community transport operators in the Hunter, including operators who were previously not funded under the Community Transport Program, bringing their total funding for 2012-13 to just under \$900,000. Groups funded under this scheme include: Awabakal Community Transport, Cessnock Community Transport, Coalfields Community Transport, Community Transport Port Stephens, Dungog Community Transport, Lake Macquarie Community Transport, Maitland Community Transport, Manning Valley and Area Community Transport, Newcastle Community Transport, Singleton Community Transport and Transcare Hunter Community Transport. This represents an increase of \$130,420 in Community Transport Program funding this financial year for the Hunter region.

It is clear that the Government is committed to providing better transport services for customers in New South Wales and for people visiting this great State. It has already delivered for the people of the Hunter and the Central Coast by: putting an additional 30,000 seats on the rail network each week for Newcastle and Central Coast customers, completing a major upgrade to Cardiff station, installing new ramps at Hamilton station, working on ramps at Ourimbah, and upgrading stations at Dungog, Scone, Aberdeen, Singleton and Greta. As part of the Long Term Transport Master Plan a Hunter Regional Transport Plan is being developed in consultation with the community. It is an opportunity to identify and consider issues within the region to tailor regional transport planning and priorities to meet these needs.

**Mr GREG PIPER** (Lake Macquarie) [10.20 a.m.]: I begin my contribution in support of the motion of the member for Wallsend by congratulating my friend the member for Swansea on his well-crafted and

well-delivered contribution to debate. He obviously knows his material. The motion of the member for Wallsend is a positive one and contains no criticism of the O'Farrell Government. In my view the Minister for Transport is doing an excellent job in addressing deficiencies within many areas of our transport system, particularly our public transport system, but we have a long way to go.

Public transport use in the lower Hunter has historically been low—somewhere around 4 per cent—and this is attributed to a number of factors, including a lack of public transport culture. Bus routes are regarded as too circuitous and infrequent to attract patrons in great numbers. Put simply, it is easier for people to drive their cars. This is particularly evident in the western and southern Lake Macquarie area, where timetables and schedules do not reflect population growth patterns. In the past when services to new areas have been initiated they have come at the expense of existing routes. This is because attempts to improve the network such as occurred from the 2007 review were done without providing additional route kilometres, even though our residential footprint had significantly expanded.

Motor vehicle transport is all well and good unless you do not have a car or find fuel and parking costs a significant financial burden. That is certainly the case for many economically disadvantaged people in my electorate and no doubt in many other regional electorates. An efficient and reliable bus service is essential to allow these people to get to work, university, shops, medical centres or wherever they need to be on a day-to-day basis. For environmental and practical purposes, we need to make bus travel more attractive for people in the lower Hunter. This is a long-running debate in which there have been many reviews and many reports, each one tinkering with the routes and the way services are delivered; but we are still yet to get it right. This means not just getting the route planning and schedules right but providing suitable facilities for commuters.

Around my electorate there are innumerable bus stops that are little more than a pole in the ground—no seating or weather protection for commuters and little or no lighting. In many cases people alight on the side of a busy main road with no crossing, traffic lights or pedestrian bridge to assist them in safely crossing to the other side of the road. It is no wonder people are reluctant to use bus services when such basic facilities are lacking. The Government needs to adopt a more entrepreneurial attitude in order to build a more successful bus service in the lower Hunter. It needs to listen more closely to what consumers want. It needs to provide a service that is a viable alternative to private travel. In the lower Hunter there are not the same parking and traffic pressures that persuade many Sydney commuters to take the public transport option. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

We are fortunate in my part of Lake Macquarie that the Hunter Valley Buses network, which services the area, is generally of a high standard. No-one will bother catching a bus if it is going to take them three times as long to get to their destination than it would in a car, and this is frequently the case on some of the longer routes in my electorate. For instance, we have a developing system of cycleways in Lake Macquarie that potentially could allow people in more remote parts of the area to connect with primary bus routes, but buses are not bike friendly. There is nowhere to put a bike on the bus and no racks are provided at key bus stops where people can chain their bikes until their return. When we listen to and address commuters' concerns, we end up with a better and more suitable service. As a result of representations and positive response, for which I must acknowledge the Government, we now have relatively good and well-patronised services connecting Toronto, a key population and commercial centre in my electorate, with other major centres and transport nodes.

However, more needs to be done to connect towns and villages within the electorate, such as Wangi Wangi and Rathmines, which, while not remote, are notionally isolated by the poor provision of public transport. The significant drop-off in services on weekends is another real problem for bus commuters in western and southern Lake Macquarie. The Glendale interchange presents a wonderful opportunity to build the public transport network in the acknowledged growth centre of the lower Hunter. Traditionally the bus network has centred on the Newcastle central business district as its hub but this is no longer representative of demand. Part of this motion calls for a new review of the Newcastle bus network, and I agree that this is now timely. It has been six years since the last review and population and travelling patterns have changed in that time. A new review and a commitment to implementing its recommendations would benefit bus commuters throughout the lower Hunter and help convince more people of the benefits of using public transport.

**Mr CHARLES CASUSCELLI** (Strathfield) [10.22 a.m.]: I thank the member for Wallsend for moving this motion. The O'Farrell Government understands that the people in the Hunter want transport services that are more reliable, efficient and frequent, just as they do in all electorates across the State. As the member for Swansea noted, the improvements made to our public transport system under the leadership of the Minister for Transport have been good news for public transport users in the Hunter and across New South Wales. I have

some more good news for the member for Wallsend—namely, the Minister for Transport recognises that buses are a critical component of our transport network and under the Long Term Transport Master Plan buses and bus services have a prominent place in transport planning.

It is not hard to understand why buses play such a critical role in our transport network. They are a practical and cost-effective way of providing public transport to a variety of high-, medium- and low-density environments. They extend the coverage of our public transport network to areas that cannot be reached by rail, and they provide the flexibility to respond to changes in demand to focus our transport resources where they are needed most. As the member for Wallsend noted, demographics play a large part in that. Newcastle Buses currently has a fleet of 171 buses, and 122 of those buses are wheelchair accessible. That represents 71.3 per cent of the fleet and is well ahead of the target set by Disability Standards of 55 per cent of the fleet by 31 December 2012.

By the end of the 2012-13 financial year more than 30 new buses are expected to have joined the Newcastle Buses fleet, thanks to government funding. The new buses will be air-conditioned and have the latest features typical in best-practice bus services in various jurisdictions around the world. In 2011-12 Newcastle Buses carried more than 11.56 million passengers. It operates many services, including 87 routes over a large part of the cities of Newcastle and Lake Macquarie; more than 6,700 timetabled services every week; and more than 1,390 school trips a week on 143 school bus routes.

The Government understands that our customers care about service reliability. Reliability in the services provided by Newcastle Buses was 99.99 per cent in each of the last two quarters of 2012. This was well ahead of target and ahead of the result for the previous 2011 December quarter. It is not only the coverage and the frequency of services but also the reliability of services that matters to our customers. The on-time running performance of bus services is now independently measured by Transport for NSW. The ultimate good news for the member for Wallsend is that Transport for NSW, in association with lower Hunter bus operators, is currently undertaking a review of service timetables. The Government is examining what customers need, what can be done better, how the reliability of services and patronage levels can be increased, and whether any changes should be made to existing timetables and services.

The Government is reviewing and updating bus service planning guidelines to deliver enhanced services that reflect changes in the urban environment and better suit our customer needs. Public transport is not only about buses; attention must also be focused on bus-rail interchanges and other related facilities that promote the use of buses. The Minister for Transport gets it: one need only look at the record of initiatives introduced under the O'Farrell Government. If the member for Wallsend does that I am sure she will be thankful.

**Mr ANDREW CORNWELL** (Charlestown) [10.28 a.m.]: The O'Farrell Government is making a difference in the Hunter region. The Government understands that people in the Hunter want reliable, efficient and frequent transport services. Our customers recognise the important role of bus services in taking us to places of education, work and entertainment and home. Buses are practical and cost effective and provide public transport to a variety of medium-, high- and low-density environments. They extend the coverage of our public transport network to areas that cannot be reached by rail and provide the flexibility to respond to changes in demand to focus our transport resources where they are needed most.

Newcastle Buses has a fleet of 171 buses. I commend the work of the General Manager of Newcastle Buses, Darren Carey, who works closely with all members in the Hunter to ensure that Newcastle Buses delivers the best possible service to the patrons in the Hunter. Of the fleet of 171, 122 buses are wheelchair accessible, representing 71.3 per cent of the fleet. This is well ahead of the target of 55 per cent of the fleet that was set to be achieved by 31 December 2012 by Disability Standards. By the end of the current financial year more than 30 new buses are expected to have joined the Newcastle Buses fleet, thanks to the Government's investment. All new buses purchased are required to be air-conditioned, have a low-floor, stepless entry and allow easy access by the elderly, disabled passengers or people in wheelchairs.

Certainly, a large proportion of patrons who use the buses in Newcastle are elderly or have disabilities. Newcastle has a different bus market to that of Sydney. In Sydney buses are used much more by commuters, whereas the buses in the Hunter are often used by people who simply have no other means of transport. On top of this, the new buses will have the latest features in passenger comfort and safety, combined with the Euro 5 emission standard for high environmental performance. Newcastle Buses carries more than 11.56 million

passengers a year and operates many services, including 80 routes over a large part of the cities of Newcastle and Lake Macquarie, more than 6,700 timetabled services every week, and more than 1,390 school trips a week on 143 school bus routes.

Buses are important in the Newcastle region partly because we have a single rail line that acts as a spine within the region. We have a hilly environment. Newcastle is effectively a flood plain and Lake Macquarie is a separate catchment and they are divided by a large ridge. We need buses as opposed to rail or other services in order to overcome these natural geographical obstacles. The on-time running performance of bus services is now independently measured by Transport for NSW. Transport for NSW, in association with lower Hunter bus operators, is currently undertaking a timetable review of services. We are examining what our customers need, what can be done better, how we can increase reliability of services and patronage levels, and whether any changes should be made to existing timetables and services. All members in the Hunter work closely with their communities to ensure that that is done.

The Government is reviewing and updating bus service planning guidelines to deliver enhanced services that reflect changes in the urban environment and better suit our customer needs. Changes will be introduced alongside the new rail timetable, which is expected in October of this year. We have already added on the rail network an additional 30,000 seats each week for Newcastle and Central Coast customers. The Government is committed to providing better public transport for commuters in the Hunter. I thank the House for its indulgence.

**Mr RICHARD AMERY** (Mount Druitt) [10.30 a.m.]: I commend the member for Wallsend for moving her motion relating to the Newcastle bus review. The motion notes that the demographics of the region have changed since the last bus review and public buses are not meeting commuter demands in the Hunter, and it requests another review before the end of this year. I do not want to argue with Government members who said that the Government is doing a wonderful job in relation to public transport and buses in the Hunter.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I ask members to cease their conversations. The member for Wallsend is having difficulty hearing the member for Mount Druitt, and that is important for her reply.

**Mr RICHARD AMERY:** The motion is reasonable. I do not believe the Government should oppose a motion put before the House by a private member who has made three valid points. First, the demographics of the area have changed since the last bus review. The demographics in all of our electorates are changing; they are changing in western Sydney. I have been involved in the politics and mechanics of several reviews of bus routes within the Mount Druitt region. Those reviews came about from a change in demographics and changes to road construction in the region; sometimes a railway station has become a transport hub and subsequent reviews have recognised those changes. Of course, that is why reviews are undertaken. This motion is consistent with what is happening throughout New South Wales. The member for Wallsend argued most passionately that the demographics and the needs of commuters in the region have changed.

What could be wrong with this motion? Finally, the member urges the Minister for Transport to undertake a complete and comprehensive review before the end of this year, again, because of the changes in the Hunter. Not only did the member for Wallsend argue that, the member for Lake Macquarie recognised that that was a valid point for the member for Wallsend to raise. I believe that the motion should be carried because the demographics in the Hunter region have changed. Government members even argued about changes in bus routes, bus services and the like. Surely all of the debate and the contributions justify a review before the end of this year. I commend the motion to the House.

**Ms SONIA HORNER** (Wallsend) [10.36 a.m.], in reply: The amount of noise in the Chamber this morning was a distraction and took away from the importance of the debate. Perhaps members could be quiet during my speech in reply. I thank the member for Swansea, the member for Lake Macquarie, the member for Strathfield, the member for Charlestown and the member for Mount Druitt for their contributions. A bus review is important. The member for Swansea told us that there will be a timetable review of services in about October this year. We will all welcome that. I encourage Government members to remember this: not only do we want a timetable review, we want to ensure that we look at coverage. We want to ensure that the frequency, access, reliability, affordability and attractiveness of services are considered. We simply do not want the Government to tinker around the edges; that has been done before and it has not been successful.

As requested in my motion, I urge the Government to ensure that the review is comprehensive. I tried to make this as positive as possible and encompassing all sides of the House, because I think we can all work



together to improve commuter access for not only the Wallsend community but also the Lake Macquarie, Swansea, Charlestown and Newcastle communities. Let us ensure that the timetables review is as comprehensive as promised. I agree with the member for Swansea that buses provide a real alternative to cars. I want to ensure that the review will result in more people using public transport in the Newcastle area. Currently, fewer people in Newcastle and the Hunter use public transport than the State average of people who use public transport, and there is a reason for that.

Public transport in the Hunter is not as attractive, accessible, frequent and reliable as it is in Sydney, so let us try to ensure that that changes. I agree with the member for Lake Macquarie that public transport patronage in the Hunter has been historically low, because bus services have often been too circuitous, too infrequent, too inefficient and too unreliable. As the member for Lake Macquarie said, we need to look at ways to boost public transport use. That might mean developing cycleways and ensuring that we have bike-friendly buses to do that. The member for Lake Macquarie also mentioned the importance of the development of the Glendale transport interchange. I agree that that is an excellent opportunity for the Government to show that it is bona fide about improving public transport in the area.

The member for Strathfield talked about the raft of good news, and I am looking forward to that, too. I see that that should come in October with this comprehensive review. The member was enthusiastic and effusive with his support of the transport Minister. I will be supportive of the transport Minister if that comprehensive bus review is attached to good and adequate dollars so that the General Manager of Newcastle Buses, Darren Carey, who is a hard worker and a clever man, can undertake the kind of review that he wants. I agree with the member for Strathfield that service reliability is very important. The member for Charlestown spoke about congratulating Darren Carey, and I agree with him. He also mentioned the extensiveness of the Hunter region and the need for adequate buses to cover the whole of the Hunter. That is an important issue. Finally, I thank the member for Mount Druitt who urged the Government to support the motion to undertake a comprehensive review. He noted that demographics are changing not only in the Hunter but in the whole of New South Wales and as a result we need to look at bus services all over New South Wales. I urge members to support the motion.

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans):** Order! The member for Wallsend had difficulty finishing her statement because of the level of noise in the Chamber. I will not tolerate it. Members who continue to disrupt the proceedings will be ejected from the Chamber.

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

**Motion negatived.**

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans):** Order! I reiterate that the level of noise in the Chamber is far too high.

### **DISTINGUISHED VISITORS**

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans):** Order! I welcome Bishop Gene Robinson, Reverend Ben Gilmour and Malcolm McPherson to the Parliament.

### **SUPPORT FOR EQUALITY**

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) [10.40 a.m.]:** I move my amended motion as follows:

That this House:

- (1) welcomes the Right Reverend Gene Robinson, former Bishop of New Hampshire, and the first openly gay man to be made a Bishop of a major Christian denomination;
- (2) commends the member for Coogee and the Paddington Uniting Church for hosting events during Bishop Robinson's visit;
- (3) notes that expressions of support for equality for same-sex couples and their families have been made by people of various faiths and all sides of politics; and
- (4) notes that not all members of Parliament are supportive of the views expressed in paragraph (3) and calls on this House to respect all views as the community considers these issues.

My original motion, which I introduced some months back, condemned the Australian Christian Lobby for extremist language and for misrepresenting the views of many Christians who, in my experience, largely love and respect the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex [LGBTI] community. In recent days the Australian Christian Lobby has again made headlines, denigrating the suffering of the Stolen Generation by comparing that dark time in Australian history to the current debate about equality for gay and lesbian people. The statement deeply offended many advocates for the Stolen Generation and the gay and lesbian community. However, I do not wish to give this group any more air time. As such, I amended the motion to recognise the leadership and support within faith groups and on all sides of politics. It is significant that the first time that equality and the gay and lesbian community is discussed in this House—

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery):** Order! Members will cease their private conversations and show some respect for the member with the call. During debate on my motion I had to deal with a high level of noise, which was very distracting. I do not care which side the noise is coming from; it is really rude.

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH:** It is very significant that we are having a discussion about support for equality for same-sex couples as part of a motion to welcome Bishop Robinson to this House. I appreciate the Bishop's presence, along with that of Reverend Ben Gilmour. I know some members have been freaked out by my motion. This is not a debate about marriage equality; this is a debate about the way faith groups and all sides of politics have embraced and shown support for the gay and lesbian community. I think that is a very positive and affirming message, and that is why I amended the motion.

I welcome Bishop Robinson to the gallery today, and Benjamin Gilmour, representing Paddington Uniting Church. They are two men who, like hundreds of clergy around Australia and the world, preach acceptance and tolerance of all, regardless of sexuality. I also welcome to the gallery my friend Malcolm McPherson, a proud Christian and the New South Wales convenor for Australian marriage equality. Gene Robinson is the first openly gay person elected, in 2003, as a bishop in the Episcopal Church. He is a senior fellow at the Centre for American Progress. When he was elected bishop he had served as Canon to the Ordinary for nearly 18 years. Robinson legally married his long-term partner, Mark Andrew, in June 2008. In 2009 Bishop Robinson gave the Inauguration Prayer for President Barack Obama, who is also a marriage equality supporter.

During his time in Australia, Bishop Robinson will speak at events in Newcastle, Sydney and Melbourne. His courage as a public gay bishop has had a profound impact on many people around the world who are both Christian and gay. Life is not always easy for them. Not all churches are as accepting as the ones he has led or the Paddington Uniting Church. In fact, Bishop Robinson reminds us that 95 per cent of the discrimination that the gay and lesbian community faces comes from religious organisations. The Paddington Uniting Church, led by Reverend Ben Gilmour who was inducted there in July 2011, is a tolerant, accepting and loving place for the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex community and same-sex couples and their families. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

My motion also acknowledges the member for Coogee who, like Reverend Ben Gilmore and Bishop Robinson who lead the change in their church, has helped lead change from within his party. It is because of the work of supporters like Mr Bruce Notley-Smith and the Hon. Trevor Khan from The Nationals in the upper House that Coalition members are so supportive of the gay and lesbian community. Indeed, members like Malcolm Turnbull, Kelly Odwyer and the Premier have been able to support marriage equality. My experience with faith groups, as a lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex rights activist before joining the New South Wales Parliament, was positively surprising. I have fond memories of walking the halls of Federal Parliament with an army of clergy from Baptist, Uniting and Anglican churches to lobby Federal members of Parliament for reform. Ironically, we would almost always see the likes of Lyle Shelton, the Australian Christian Lobby chief of staff, sitting alone, chasing the relevance he is so quickly losing. I want to place on record the support for the gay and lesbian community from various faith groups and this is best done in their own words. Reverend Bill Crews from the Uniting Church, Sydney, said:

Today in Australia we live in a secular non-discriminatory society. It seems to me that in a secular and non-discriminatory society gay couples should be as free to marry as other human couples.

Father David Smith, an Anglican parish priest in Sydney, said:

From a Christian point of view, marriage is an institution designed to serve two social needs: contribute broadly to social stability; to provide a stable environment for the nurturing of children.

If this is the case then the only questions Christians need to concern themselves with when it comes to the issue of gay marriage are these two: Would gay marriage lead to greater social stability? Would a married gay partnership be likely to provide a more secure environment for the nurturing of the children of a gay couple than an unmarried one? I think the answer to both these questions has to be "yes".

We also know there are various other groups, including the Union of Progressive Judaism, who support this. There are many prominent people of faith who support equality for gay and lesbian people and their relationships and family. They include Professor Kerry Phelps, who married her partner, Jackie Stricker, in a synagogue in New York; Sydney Lord Mayor Clover Moore; former New South Wales Premier Kristina Keneally; Justice Michael Kirby; and international rugby star David Pocock. My motion also acknowledges the support from political leaders, including the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition. The Leader of the Opposition is a proud father of a gay son. He said in 2011:

This is a personal issue for me, not a political one. One of my kids is gay, and I'd like them to have the same opportunities as the other siblings.

It is an issue that is not one I have arrived at based on polls or a focus group, but a personal one as a parent.

This is not a debate about whether people oppose or support marriage equality. I acknowledge there are members on all sides who have different views. This is about the way faith groups and all sides of politics value and accept the gay and lesbian community. I hope we can have a respectful and welcoming debate that does justice to the eminent guest sitting in the Speaker's gallery.

**Mr BRAD HAZZARD** (Wakehurst—Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Infrastructure NSW) [10.47 a.m.]: As Leader of the House I point out that the motion will be the subject of a conscience vote, which has been agreed to by the Coalition, so members will have an opportunity to say what they think about the motion. Obviously, as the member for Sydney has indicated, this is not a motion on gay marriage. That is a matter that Federal and State parliaments around the country will consider at some point, depending on how each of the parliaments approach the issue.

The motion welcomes the Right Reverend Gene Robinson, the former Bishop of New Hampshire, who is present in the gallery. I extend a warm welcome to him as a representative of a Christian denomination but also as a visitor to the Parliament and to our shores from the United States. I note that the member for Coogee and others and the Uniting Church are acknowledged in this motion for supporting and hosting Bishop Robinson's visit. I note the motion also acknowledges there are members of Parliament on both sides of politics who are supportive of the views of the member for Sydney and that there are those who hold contrary views. That is the joy of democracy. There is nothing I can see in this motion at this point that is a definitive statement that would require a yes or a no. Indeed, if members wish to construe it that way it is a matter for them. I cannot see that that is the situation.

I see a motion that extends a warm welcome to a gentleman who is here amongst us to express his views as a liberal. I am quite happy to support the right of all people to express their views on a range of issues, whether religious faith or other human values that we deal with each day. But it must be said again that there are members in this place who have strong views when it comes to the sequitur that may come out of this with regard to marriage issues. They are issues on which members can express their views at an appropriate time. I again express a warm welcome to the Right Reverend Gene Robinson.

**Mr JOHN ROBERTSON** (Blacktown—Leader of the Opposition) [10.54 a.m.]: I support this motion and in so doing I acknowledge the presence of Bishop Robinson in the gallery. The member for Sydney referred to comments that I made some time ago. I take the opportunity to elaborate on those comments because they are significant. I want to talk more about my story than my son's story. One of the things I think all parents want for their kids is for them to grow up in a society that is accepting, embracing and respectful. The likelihood of my son being gay became apparent to me very early in his life. I was not terribly concerned about that for myself but I was very concerned for him. I was concerned about how he would be treated in the wider community and at school and the sorts of attitudes that might be directed towards him.

This motion has changed significantly to the original motion put on the *Business Paper* by the member for Sydney. In speaking to the motion, I would like to make one comment about my concern as a parent in relation to my son and the way he would be treated during his life. I found it offensive in the extreme that my son would be compared to a Nazi. The painting of an unpleasant picture of people because they have a different view or they are different in some way is completely unacceptable. No member of this Parliament should tolerate such labels being applied to people.

I speak today not only as a parent but also as a member of Parliament. We all have a responsibility not to tolerate the labelling of people because they are different. The Parliament legislates against discrimination so that people are accepted regardless of their situation. This is a personal issue for me, and I know it is a personal

issue for those who hold alternate views to mine. I accept that other members hold vastly different views to mine. But I ask that in any debate, not just in this debate, we do not use extreme terms to label people because the use of extreme terms encourages ignorance and ignorance encourages intolerance. Ignorance allows situations to escalate beyond a point that any member of this Chamber, regardless of the views they hold, would want to see.

For many members, this is a very contentious debate. This debate requires respect and due regard for all views. As I said, there are members who hold vastly different views to mine. I would never ridicule them for holding such views or seek to label them with derogatory or offensive terms because they have a right to express their views. Likewise, we should never seek to silence people with different views from participating in a debate on this issue or in discussions in the wider community. Most of all, we should never, under any circumstances, tolerate anyone being labelled with extreme tags simply because they do not hold the same views as we hold or live a lifestyle that some people may consider inappropriate.

**Mr CHARLES CASUSCELLI** (Strathfield) [10.58 a.m.]: I will make a short contribution to debate on the motion moved by the member for Sydney. I agree with the comments of the Leader of the Opposition about avoiding extreme language. Differing views are put forward by groups in our society, not only faith-based groups or those with secular views but also families in particular circumstances. I believe that we should respect all views. The motion states that we should respect all views but then goes on to condemn a group that has an opposing view. The member for Sydney uses the language of condemnation: "condemns the Australian Christian Lobby".

**Mr Alex Greenwich:** Point of order: The member for Strathfield is speaking to the wrong motion. I amended the motion specifically to take out the word "condemns".

**Mr CHARLES CASUSCELLI:** I was present when the member for Sydney moved his motion. I heard what the member said. When he spoke to the motion he used those words.

**Mr Alex Greenwich:** I used those words to indicate I was removing them from the motion.

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Horner):** Order! The member for Strathfield should have resumed his seat when the member for Sydney sought the call. What is the member's point of order?

**Mr Alex Greenwich:** My point of order is relevance. I am happy to check *Hansard*, but to avoid any confusion I amended the motion. I do not wish to condemn anyone who has an opposing view to mine, including the Australian Christian Lobby.

**Mr CHARLES CASUSCELLI:** I withdraw my earlier comments regarding the member for Sydney's use of the word "condemnation". I misheard what was said and the context in which it was said. I am a member of several faith groups. I have listened to people from the Australian Christian Lobby and I have listened to many leaders of different faith groups in my electorate speak on this subject. I can say without exception that when we talk about our gay and lesbian brothers and sisters we talk about them with affection and love. We are compelled by our faith to love our neighbours, regardless of their personal circumstances or lifestyles. I have heard those sentiments expressed when I have attended many forums with my family, who are active in our faith community. From time to time there are extremist views. I support any motion that says we should temper our language, our attitude and our actions to ensure that we do not create division in our community.

I belong to a faith community that has a view about particular lifestyles. It is a given that we may love the people but we may not like their lifestyles. When we talk about matters of conscience that are pre-eminent in our thinking and our actions we should be able to express personal views in the manner we choose without attracting condemnation, so long as we respect one another as human beings. Anything that can be done to ensure that we do not create division is a good thing. We often speak about equality without knowing exactly what we are talking about; it may mean different things to different people. When we talk about this issue, first and foremost we should remember that we are human beings who must coexist and that we have different views that are good for both sides of the argument.

**Ms CARMEL TEBBUTT:** [11:01 a.m.] I support the motion, as amended, moved by the member for Sydney. I appreciate the member for Sydney's desire for this debate to be about the support of faith communities for same-sex couples and for this debate to be conducted in a respectful way. I acknowledge the presence of the Right Reverend Gene Robinson in the gallery. I understand this is a sensitive issue and that there are strong

views for and against legalising marriage for same-sex couples. My view is that if two people love each other and they want to express that love through marriage they should be able to do so. People's sexuality should not be a barrier to getting married. I do not think Government members should judge whether the love between a heterosexual couple is more worthy of or entitled to certain rights than the love between a same-sex couple. The inability of same-sex couples to marry has been the focus of much discussion and debate in recent times. I have heard from many same-sex couples about the anguish and dismay they suffer when they are discriminated against in this way. I quote from a letter from a constituent:

Dear Carmel,

My same sex partner and I have been living together in a loving relationship for 15 years. We have seen many of our friends who can legally marry get married and now we are well-wishing our nieces and nephews as they get married. We have bought many presents and given much relationship advice along the way. It would mean so much to my partner, myself, our parents and our extended family and all our friends if we were to have the right to marry.

Many couples who have children have also pointed out that they believe their children will benefit if they are able to marry. Recently New Zealand became the fourteenth country in the world and the first in the Asia-Pacific region to legalise same-sex marriage. There is much support amongst the Australian community for same-sex marriage. According to Australian Marriage Equality, 62 per cent of Australians believe same-sex couples should be able to marry, and the number of people supporting marriage equality has steadily increased since Australian Marriage Equality commenced the polling. As this motion points out, polling by Galaxy Research found that 53 per cent of Australians who identify as Christians support marriage equality. We know that same-sex marriage is legal already in many countries, including The Netherlands, Canada, Spain, Portugal and Argentina. I am not persuaded by the argument put forward by some that we should not change the definition of marriage and that same-sex couples should find a different way to celebrate their love and commitment.

I prefer the explanation put forward by Australian Marriage Equality that it is about expanding the current definition to embrace those who have been excluded. We make much of our desire to be a tolerant, diverse society, free from discrimination, yet we know that gay, lesbian and transgender people still experience significant discrimination. For young people this can be particularly acute when they are going through puberty as they contend with challenges in a world that, in part, does not support their sexuality. They may experience rejection and be misunderstood by parents and friends, which can make their life tough. We can make the journey easier by removing discrimination in relation to the rights of same-sex couples to marry. Providing the legal right for same-sex couples to marry takes nothing away from heterosexual couples, yet it gives so much to same-sex couples. I commend the member for Sydney for bringing this motion to the House.

**Mr KEVIN CONOLLY** (Riverstone) [11.05 a.m.]: I make a brief contribution to the debate on marriage equality moved by the member for Sydney, which I do not support. I welcome the Right Reverend Gene Robinson to the Parliament, just as we welcome any visitor who attends to observe the workings of democracy in New South Wales. The main intent of the motion is in-principle support for same-sex marriage. Indeed, some members have made their views clear and have put their views on the record, as they are entitled to do. I will do the same. I support traditional marriage, as defined in the Federal Parliament, as being exclusively between a man and a woman for life.

I am proud to support traditional marriage because I believe that is the best environment in which children can be raised. Social good arises from that form of marriage, which predates the Parliament of New South Wales, or the Parliament of Australia. It predates most institutions in human society, but it is based on the natural order of things. If this motion were carried today, it would imply that this Parliament supports same-sex marriage; some people would interpret it that way. I do not want to leave the community with that impression. I believe that marriage in its current form should be protected. The definition that we have is the definition that is in the public's interest and, therefore, I continue to support that definition. I do not support this motion.

**Mr JAMIE PARKER** (Balmain) [11.08 a.m.], by leave: I speak in strong support of this motion moved by the member for Sydney which does not provide in-principle support for marriage equality and does not send a message about marriage equality. The motion is welcome and highlights the support on this issue from prominent people from all sides of politics and different faiths. I welcome the Right Reverend Gene Robinson, the former Bishop of New Hampshire, who is a significant guest. I acknowledge Reverend Ben Gilmour from the Paddington Uniting Church, and Malcolm McPherson, the Convenor of Australian Marriage Equality.

I suspect that the Balmain Uniting Church is similar to the Paddington Uniting Church to the extent that it has an open, loving and committed church community. I have had a great deal to do with the Balmain church,

and I particularly acknowledge Reverend Nicole Fleming and the leadership team of Les MacDonald, Ben Lorsch and Frances Milne. They have had a very powerful influence. They have been instrumental in creating an accepting church and developing positive views towards gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex people in our community.

As members know, I was the Mayor of Leichhardt, an area that has a strong lesbian history. In 2008 the council funded the production of a lesbian and gay history of the area. I recommend it to members because it details the contribution that gay and lesbian people have made to our community. We should all recognise that contribution in our communities. I must also note the Indigenous gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender community and the Sister Girl Symposium Identifying People held at Boomalli Aboriginal Artists Cooperative in 2009, which the council supported. The contribution made by people in the gay and lesbian community is as diverse as the contribution made by others in the community. It embraces all elements and we should recognise that contribution. The symbolism of this welcome is important. In 2010 Leichhardt Council flew the rainbow flag above the town hall for the first time.

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery):** Order! The member for Balmain will be heard in silence.

**Mr JAMIE PARKER:** I must address the issue raised by the member for Riverstone and others. This is not a motion about marriage equality; I wish it were. The Greens member for Melbourne in the Federal Parliament has introduced the Marriage Equality Amendment Bill 2012, which he hopes will be endorsed. I know that this is a sensitive issue and I commend the member for Sydney for being so flexible with his motion. The original motion is dramatically different to the motion we are now debating, which notes that not all members of Parliament support these views. I do not think one can be more moderate than that. While I acknowledge that some people are concerned about this issue, this is a respectful motion about valuing and respecting people, recognising a distinguished guest and accepting that people hold different views. The Greens' view on this is well known and I am not plugging it. This motion is respectful and it deserves our support.

**Mr BRYAN DOYLE** (Campbelltown) [11.12 a.m.], by leave: I oppose this motion and support the view of my friend the member for Riverstone. This motion challenges the traditional understanding of the definition of marriage. In my inaugural speech I spoke about the importance of values, service and durability. One of the values that I uphold very strongly is a belief in traditional marriage as a bond between a man and a woman. Traditional marriage has been, is and always will be the foundation of our community. I am fortunate to have been raised in a large, loving family and to have been married for 27 years. One of the greatest honours we enjoy as members of Parliament is writing a congratulatory message to married couples on significant wedding anniversaries. Only last weekend I had the honour of attending a sixtieth wedding anniversary celebration. This motion must be read against the background of moves to challenge the traditional understanding of marriage.

**Mr Alex Greenwich:** Point of order: My point of order relates to relevance. The member has clearly not read the motion. He is speaking to a motion that he has made up. I assure members that this motion is not about marriage equality.

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery):** Order! The debate has been fairly flexible. However, I ask the member for Balmain to address the amended motion. I do not need any assistance from the member for Hawkesbury.

**Mr BRYAN DOYLE:** I draw the attention of members to paragraph (4) of the motion, which notes that not all members support the views expressed in paragraph (3). That is incorrect because the majority of members oppose this motion and support the traditional understanding of marriage and will continue to defend it.

**Ms ANNA WATSON** (Shellharbour) [11.15 a.m.], by leave: I also welcome Reverend Gene Robinson and I support this motion. Like all other parents—I am the mother of two children—I have considered what I would do if one of my children were gay. How would I feel? I would not love that child any less and I would expect society to treat that child in the same way that it would treat any child. The New South Wales Anti-Discrimination Act 1977 lists a number of things that cannot be the subject of discrimination, including marital status, religion, race and sexual preference. By opposing this motion, members are opposing an Act of Parliament.

This motion notes three things. Most importantly, it asks the House to note that "expressions of support for equality for same-sex couples and their families have been made by people of various faiths and sides of

politics". That is all the motion says. I find it hard to believe that that could be offensive to anyone. We are not talking about gay marriage; we are not talking about anything other than the fact that same-sex couples and their families should enjoy the same support that is enjoyed by everyone else in our society. As a parent, I would expect nothing less if either one of my children were gay; I would treat them the same. At the end of the day we want our children to be with people who love and support them, regardless of their job or anything else. This issue should be debated and I welcome this motion. Again, I fully and absolutely support the wording of the motion. I ask all members opposite to read it before making a contribution to the debate.

**Mr ANDREW ROHAN** (Smithfield) [11.18 a.m.], by leave: I have no problem with anyone's sexuality. I respect everyone as human beings. The vast majority of my constituents are Christians. There is also a wide range of other faiths in my electorate. From my communication with constituents over the years I know they strongly support the traditional view of marriage, that is, marriage is between a man and a woman. I also share and support that view. When we look at human beings and all creatures we know that nature has selected a male and a female to reproduce so that the human race will continue. I support the traditional view that a marriage is between a man and a woman and that is why I will be opposing this motion.

**Ms LINDA BURNEY** (Canterbury) [11.21 a.m.], by leave: As an Aboriginal person and one of the First Peoples I formally welcome the bishop to this country and to our Chamber. It is wonderful to have him in attendance. I congratulate the member for Sydney on moving this motion and on being flexible and willing to change the wording of the original motion in an attempt to embrace everyone's views. It is disturbing to have a debate about equality, respect and recognition of the Uniting Church and other church leaders of various faiths and from both sides of politics for same-sex couples, gay, lesbian and transgender, as stated by the member for Marrickville.

Like the Leader of the Opposition I have an extraordinarily beautiful boy who has just turned 30 years old and who is proudly gay. He wants in his life exactly what every other son and daughter want in their lives, that is, remarkably, to have a mortgage in a few years—I have tried to talk him out of that but he is very determined to have one—to have a long-term loving relationship, which he has, and to be a father one day. Those things are what we want for all of our children. He is a kind and wonderful son. This motion is about showing respect, as the member for Shellharbour said, and about what is enshrined in law. The unfortunate reactions of some members who have spoken in this debate show that they are not really focussing on the spirit and intent of this motion moved by the member for Sydney. We live in a democracy. On many occasions in this Chamber I have heard members who have spoken to this motion talk about recognising diversity, which is one of the strengths of this country.

That diversity is not just about cultural diversity but it is also about diversity of views and beliefs and about love and experience. For me politics is about recognising everyone. As members of Parliament our job is to properly respect and represent the people who put their trust in us. The member for Sydney clearly said that he recognises that people have different views, which is remarkably important for everyone to keep in mind when they vote on this motion. The member for Sydney also recognised an eminent church leader who has come to this country to share his views, and to have dialogue with other Christians and other people of faith here. The member for Sydney has commended the member for Coogee and the Paddington Church for hosting Reverend Robinson. The member for Sydney is providing an opportunity for people to consider their view in relation to this matter. This is not a debate on gay marriage; those who have portrayed it that way are too opportunistic. I support and welcome this motion.

**Mr DAVID ELLIOTT** (Baulkham Hills) [11.25 a.m.], by leave: I represent an area that is often described as the Bible belt. I know that many people in my electorate have firm views on this matter and on the broader debate of gay marriage. I highlight that probably not one member of this House does not have a gay or lesbian relative, close friend or loved one. But as members of Parliament we must put our personal emotions aside and address motions like this in an objective and transparent manner. I am opposed to the motion for a number of reasons. The member for Canterbury used the word "disturbing". I think this motion is disturbing because it sets a precedent that for some reason we need to embrace, engage or acknowledge leaders and individuals in the community because of their sexuality. Paragraph (1) of the motion highlights the fact that His Grace, the former Bishop of New Hampshire, is the first openly gay man to be made a bishop of a major Christian denomination. I do not know what that has to do with his role as the Bishop of New Hampshire. I would hope that any person in a leadership role would perform that role without fear or favour or, indeed, without any reference to their sexuality.

**Mr Greg Piper:** He would have been run out of the church not that long ago.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Members will refrain from interjecting. All members will have an opportunity to speak to the motion.

**Mr DAVID ELLIOTT:** It is called tolerance. I also highlight that this motion calls on us to express our support for equality for same-sex couples. I cannot in all good conscience say that I support same-sex couples while that whole debate relates to same-sex marriage. If we endorse paragraph (3) of this motion, by inference we will be supporting same-sex marriage. It is a dangerous precedent for us to suggest that anything other than this debate is not going to lead to a further debate on same-sex marriages. I also highlight that paragraph (4) of the motion notes that all members of Parliament support the views expressed in those three paragraphs, which, in all good conscience, I cannot say I do. Same-sex marriage needs a much stronger public debate. In my electorate no public debate is occurring on it. When the matter was raised in the Federal sphere not long ago only one person in my electorate who I doorknocked raised it with me. Most of my constituents are concerned about carbon tax, unemployment, the economy and educating their children. I do not think that we are respecting their wishes, views and desires to improve New South Wales by spending time on it.

**Ms Anna Watson:** Point of order: My point of order is relevance, under Standing Order 129. I ask that the member for Baulkham Hills be asked to return to the leave of the motion.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I absolutely insist that members have the opportunity to express their views on this matter, and that they do so without interjections. A broad-ranging debate has been allowed on this motion.

**Mr DAVID ELLIOTT:** I note that no-one from this side of the Chamber has interrupted those who have a different opinion to mine.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! That will not happen while I am in the chair.

**Mr DAVID ELLIOTT:** I am a practising Anglican. I respect His Grace. I respect the position that he held and I suspect that his understanding of Christianity would certainly concur with my view. But I just do not, and I cannot, in all good conscience support the motion.

**Ms NOREEN HAY** (Wollongong) [11.29 a.m.], by leave: I will make a brief contribution to the debate, although I had not originally intended to do so. After speaking with the member for Sydney earlier this morning it was my intention to support the motion. I was initially concerned that I might be wedged into taking a position on same-sex marriage. I too add my congratulations and welcome to the Right Reverend Gene Robinson. As a practising Catholic I acknowledge the very dedicated work of leaders in the Christian community. I am confident that many in this place would hold similar views to mine on same-sex couples. I support same-sex couples having legal access and equality under some form of civil union but I have an issue with the question of same-sex marriage. I was happy to support the motion of the member for Sydney if that issue was excluded.

I respect and love many different people with many different views and from many different faiths—and those who suffer injustice. To my mind there is no question that same-sex couples suffer incredible injustice. That needs to be rectified and cannot be supported. Whilst wanting to wholeheartedly support same-sex couples, like many others in this place, I do not want my beliefs—particularly my deep-seated religious beliefs—to be put on the line. I changed my mind about speaking because I believe some of the contributions that have been made in this debate should have been ruled out of order. The motion did not mention same-sex marriage yet a number of the contributions almost solely put on record support for same-sex marriage.

I am now left in a position that should I support the motion I would be recorded in the *Hansard* as being supportive of those contributions in relation to same-sex marriage, which I am not. I am now forced into a position of having to vote against the motion. I can assure the member for Sydney that I would have supported his motion but for the contributions that have made about same-sex marriage. I reiterate my support for the Right Reverend Gene Robinson. I think it is wonderful that the Reverend, who is openly gay, can go about the business of preaching the word of God and be welcomed and loved. I extend those comments to all those in same-sex relationships.

**Mr RAY WILLIAMS** (Hawkesbury—Parliamentary Secretary) [11.32 a.m.], by leave: I make a brief contribution to debate on the motion of the member for Sydney. I am informed that it has been agreed that paragraphs (3) and (4) will be removed from the motion. I will support the motion on the basis that paragraphs



(3) and (4) will be removed from it but I will vote against the motion if they are not. The wording of paragraph (3) concerns me, in particular the words "expressions of support for equality for same-sex couples". I have the greatest of respect for all people in society regardless of background, race, religion, colour or gender. I respect every person and every person's rights; however, to respect the equality of same-sex couples construes in that context that I support the marriage of same-sex couples, which I do not.

I was raised in a loving family by a mother and father who taught me to respect every person on this earth regardless of their background, race, religion, colour or gender, but I will only ever support the marriage of a man and a woman. I, like the member for Baulkham Hills, represent a huge area: it probably has the largest number of families producing the largest number of children in New South Wales. Those people respect the sanctity of marriage and it is my belief that they do not support same-sex marriage. As members of Parliament, from time to time we are called upon to place our views, based on our values, firmly on the record. We were elected by the people of New South Wales to vote on their behalf in this place—including the students who are seated in the public gallery.

I respect every member who has made a contribution to this debate this morning. In fact, I have more respect for those who have had the strength and courage of character to place their views on the record on this issue. No doubt some members will be hopeful that a division is not called because they would not want to place their views on the public record. I am more than happy to do that. I have the courage of my convictions to stand in this place and vote in a manner that befits my values and in a way that I believe my community would want me to vote. I repeat that I will support the motion on the basis that paragraphs (3) and (4) will be removed but I will vote against the motion if they are not.

**Mr NATHAN REES** (Toongabbie) [11.35 a.m.], by leave: All of us in this place recognise the fundamental principle of equality before the law. That principle has endured in the Westminster system for hundreds of years. As discomfiting as it may be for some of us based on our personal views on matters of values and spirituality and so on, we cannot pick and choose when we are principled. All people are equal before the law, and that includes the Marriage Act. I support the motion.

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH** (Sydney) [11.36 a.m.], in reply: By leave, I move:

That the motion be amended by leaving out paragraphs (3) and (4).

My motion has clearly hit a nerve today. I respect the views of the members for the electorates of Smithfield, Riverstone, Campbelltown and Strathfield and those other members who spoke in opposition to my motion. I had hoped this would be a respectful debate in which we acknowledged that there are people of faith who support the gay and lesbian community, and in which we acknowledged the impact of the Premier's support for marriage equality and the profound support of the Leader of the Opposition for marriage equality and the gay and lesbian community. I thought we could do that; we could not. I welcome the support of both sides of the House for that part of the motion welcoming the Right Reverend Gene Robinson as the first openly gay bishop to this House. This is a great sign of respect from both sides regardless of whether or not members support the motion. Support for the equality of the gay and lesbian community has been lacking in debate from those opposite. I will now read the Premier's words onto *Hansard*:

My view—a view that I've come to in recent years—is that as a Liberal who believes that commitment and family are one of the best ways in which society is organised, I support the concept of same-sex marriage.

Bishop Robinson is not the only person of faith who supports this reform; a number of people of faith do. He has led the way. I can assure those members who thought this was a debate on same-sex marriage that we will be having that debate at a future time. I can also assure my supporters that that debate is coming. In that time I am sure the hearts and minds of members will change, because it has been my experience in this place that all members are reasonable. I am made to feel very welcome in this place. The fact that the member for Coogee and I are gay is not, I think, an issue for anyone. We greatly appreciate the respect we are shown. I also appreciate that the Parliament recognises Victor as my husband. This is a momentous occasion as the House comes together to welcome Bishop Robinson. He is an eminent person. I ask Government members who thought that the motion was about marriage equality and who spoke against marriage equality: Where were your bishops? Where were your priests? Where were your reverends? I had mine. This item has been on the *Business Paper* for a while.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! There is no need to interject at this stage. The member for Monaro and the member for Hawkesbury will come to order.

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH:** On behalf of the Sydney electorate I welcome to New South Wales, to Sydney and to this Parliament Bishop Gene Robinson.

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

**Amendment agreed to.**

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

**Motion as amended agreed to.**

## **BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

### **Postponement of Business**

**General Business Notice of Motion (General Notice) No. 2489 called on and postponed on motion by Ms Noreen Hay.**

## **DISTINGUISHED VISITORS**

**The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser):** Order! I acknowledge in the gallery the Hon. Lloyd Coleman, who was a member of the Legislative Council in this Parliament.

## **FIRST HOME OWNERS GRANT**

**Ms NOREEN HAY** (Wollongong) [11.43 a.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) notes that due to the Government's cut to the first home buyers grant young people are being increasingly excluded from the housing market;
- (2) acknowledges that the latest Australian Bureau of Statistics data showing loan approvals to first home buyers is at a new 20-year low, attributable to the cut of the grant; and
- (3) demands the Government support young families across New South Wales, particularly in Wollongong, by reinstating first home buyer grants and stamp duty exemptions to enable them to get a step closer to the great Australian dream of owning their own home.

To own our own home is apparently the great Australian dream. Young couples in particular dream of being able to purchase a house, a unit or a townhouse to set up home together, and perhaps even start a family. But this great Australian dream is slipping further from the grasp of first home buyers, be they young or old, thanks to the O'Farrell Government. In January this year the number of home loans taken out by first home buyers in New South Wales, according to a report in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, had plummeted following the O'Farrell Government's decision in the 2012 budget to axe the \$7,000 grant for those buying existing properties. I point out that usually first home buyers buy existing, older properties because that gets them on the ladder; then when they have achieved some capital growth they resell and buy something that is perhaps new or being built.

Australian Bureau of Statistics data had shown that only 988 loans for first home buyers were approved in December, down from 1,383 loans in November, which marks a new 20-year low. In another blow to young families, the average loan size for first home buyers also increased by \$13,300, to \$321,600—the highest on record. We may hear arguments that interest rates are currently low, but there is a reason for that: the current economic environment. Nonetheless, low interest rates or not, \$321,600 for a first mortgage is a significant amount of money for a young couple. The fall came despite the Government replacing the grant with a \$15,000 incentive for first home buyers of newly built dwellings in a bid to kickstart the apartment market.

The Government, in its wisdom, saw this as the answer to stimulating the housing market. I distinctly recall thinking that this is just another Government failure, considering that housing finance figures for the previous November were the lowest since February 1992. In his wisdom—if one could call it wisdom—the

Treasurer decided to introduce a new grant of \$15,000 for first home buyers who purchased newly built dwellings or off-the-plan properties worth up to \$650,000, with the grant to drop to \$10,000 from 1 January 2014. That decision and the axing of stamp duty exemptions for first home buyers of existing homes from 31 December 2011 left no doubt that the Government had abandoned first home buyers.

Effectively, it meant that the O'Farrell Government had locked first home buyers out of the property market with the cuts to stamp duty exemptions and first home buyer bonuses. Of course, the Government stated in its defence that everything would be okay and its actions would put the much-needed zing and affordability back in the housing market. However, what really happened was that the O'Farrell Government created the worst environment in 20 years for first home buyers trying to enter the housing market. It means that first home buyers purchasing an existing \$500,000 home in December 2012 were forced to pay up to \$24,990 more than they would have paid only a year earlier because of the O'Farrell cuts.

The Leader of the Opposition was so disturbed by the Government's decision that he initiated a housing affordability summit, bringing together business and union leaders, planning and construction experts, academics and community organisations to discuss how best to combat the housing affordability crisis in New South Wales. Some families have already reached the point where they simply cannot afford to ever buy their own home in Wollongong and the Illawarra, and unfortunately the number only looks set to grow. I call on the Government to support our young families, particularly those in Wollongong, by reinstating first home buyer grants and stamp duty exemptions to enable them to get a step closer to the great Australian dream.

I remind the Government that as this becomes more and more difficult, and the adage of supply and demand is applied, there will be a bottleneck. Those who usually sell their properties to first home buyers will be unable to sell or move on and, therefore, unable to purchase perhaps larger homes. That will stagnate the market even further. I believe the answer is to do everything in our power to assist young people to get that first step up in the housing market. In my opinion we should give them that assistance by reinstating the first home buyer grants particularly and stamp duty exemptions. Hopefully, that would enable them to get a step closer to that dream. Then, hopefully, that will ignite the housing market, thereby benefitting us all.

**Mr RAY WILLIAMS** (Hawkesbury—Parliamentary Secretary) [11.50 a.m.]: I lead on behalf of the Government and state at the outset that we will oppose this motion. I know, as someone who was faced in the early 1980s with having to purchase my first home, the importance of home availability. I may have received a stamp duty concession—nothing more—when I purchased my first home, but when I looked for a home in the early 1980s one important factor was that there was a choice of home styles available that I could purchase and therefore get my foot into the market. Going back to the policies of the former Government and its first home buyers scheme, which was available to everybody, it was recognised that house prices increased while that incentive applied. As a Government we have chosen to take a responsible measure and apply our first home buyers grant only to the purchase of new homes. Why have we done that? I will explain it in detail.

**Ms Noreen Hay:** Why put it out of the reach of young people?

**Mr RAY WILLIAMS:** I acknowledge the unintelligent interjections from the other side of the Chamber, but I state for the record that our Government has undertaken some very sensible and proactive measures working within the means of our budgetary constraints in very challenging times, having been left a \$5.2 billion shortfall by the previous Government.

**Ms Noreen Hay:** Point of order: Relevance. This whole furphy about them getting a black hole when they came into government—they got in with a triple-A—

**The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser):** Order! I remind the member for Wollongong that she will have an opportunity to respond to members' comments. I ask the member for Wollongong not to take frivolous points of order. The member for Hawkesbury has the call.

**Mr RAY WILLIAMS:** Vexatious and spurious points of order are all we get from the bleating and whining Opposition members, who are just the rump left over from the former Government. Why is that the case? I will tell members why.

**Mr Guy Zangari:** Talk to the motion.

**Mr RAY WILLIAMS:** I will relate my comments perfectly to this motion, thank you, member for Fairfield. Under the former Government we had the lowest home commencements in the last 50 years of this

State. If a product is not available on the market, regardless of whether buyers are first home buyers or otherwise, demand outweighs supply and we get a vastly increased commodity price on homes. That is exactly what happened. We had very high home prices and young people in particular could not get into the market. People could not move up the market because they could not afford to buy homes. Home prices increased because of the simple supply and demand failure that was left by the previous Government. This Government did the reverse. We have recently announced the implementation of up to 170,000 new homes across the Sydney metropolitan area. That will sustain not only our current population but our populations into the future.

The O'Farrell-Stoner Government is focused on the most effective ways to improve the housing sector, which performed at the back of the pack for many years under the previous Government. We oppose the motion, as it fails to recognise the simple principle that if you boost housing supply you make housing more affordable for people who want to buy their first homes. We have targeted first home buyer assistance because data shows that the incentives introduced in 2008-09 had the effect of making house prices higher across New South Wales. The fact is that the average mortgage for a first home buyer in New South Wales increased by around \$20,000 during that period. In other words, the subsidy being offered by the former Government to first home buyers simply pushed house prices beyond the reach of new home buyers. These are not just my words—

**Ms Noreen Hay:** What have you done? Cut it out altogether?

**Mr RAY WILLIAMS:** Let me quote someone that the Opposition would know. These are also the words of the former adviser to Premier Keneally, Cassandra Wilkinson, who acknowledged in the *Australian* newspaper on 9 January 2013 that providing first home owner grants to boost housing supply raised prices instead of reducing them. They were the words of the adviser to the former Premier, Kristina Keneally. Australians for Affordable Housing said in the *Australian Financial Review* on 14 June 2012:

The \$7000 grant has been in place since 2000—that's 12 years. There has been no substantial change in the rates of home ownership since then and, in fact, a very sharp increase in how much home owners are borrowing.

That means that prices had increased and people were forced to borrow more. Under our Building the State package the first home buyers grant was increased to \$15,000 for new homes from 1 October last year. Stamp duty concessions for the purchase of a home valued at \$550,000 provide a benefit of \$20,000. That is a total benefit of \$35,000 to persons purchasing a new home for up to \$550,000. That is a very clear incentive and an increase on the rebate that was offered under the previous Government. As we have stated categorically, the reason we have focused our attention on the purchase of new homes is to assist the construction industry, because so many areas of employment rely on the construction of homes.

**Ms Tania Mihailuk:** That is right—after the developers.

**Mr RAY WILLIAMS:** I apologise to those in the gallery for the unintelligent interjections from the opposite side of the House. Those unintelligent interjections do nothing for the quality of debate in the New South Wales Parliament and I apologise to those people in the gallery who have given up their day to come and listen to some high-quality debate and instead get unintelligent interjections. In closing, the incentives by the New South Wales Government will support all homebuyers, particularly young homebuyers. I am very proud to be a member of this Government that is delivering to people, not just talking about what we are supposed to do. I welcome the people in the gallery today.

**Mr GUY ZANGARI** (Fairfield) [11.57 a.m.]: I support the motion of the member for Wollongong and thank her for bringing the motion forward. The ability of young couples and families in New South Wales to own their first home has never been so grim. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, there was a drop in the number of first home buyers between February and March of this year. Finance for first home buyers as a percentage of total dwellings is at the lowest it has been since May 2004. The great Australian dream of owning the family home is fast becoming nothing more than a dream, a remnant of the past. Property prices in New South Wales have skyrocketed and are now comparable to real estate prices in New York, Tokyo and Zurich.

This Government certainly has not helped. Instead of providing greater assistance to struggling mums and dads or young couples wanting to buy a house to raise a family, it decided to take the rug from under their feet. Access to the first home buyers grant has been tightened. Stamp duty exemptions have been taken away. This Government has taken away the ability of home owners to apply for a grant of \$7,000 to buy an existing

dwelling. This means that young couples and families will have to move to the outskirts of the Sydney basin in order to get some assistance from the Government to purchase their first home. For many families who grew up in the inner west, the south west and western Sydney it would mean settling at the fringes of Sydney in the Campbelltown and Camden areas or the outskirts of north-west Sydney close to the Hawkesbury towns of Windsor and Pitt Town. The National Housing Supply Council's report on housing supply and affordability key indicators found that New South Wales had an estimated shortfall of 89,000 dwellings.

I commend the motion moved by the member for Wollongong, Ms Noreen Hay, because it touches on an issue that is important for not only the people of Wollongong but also those of the Illawarra, and it resonates through New South Wales. I will put it into perspective for couples in my electorate of Fairfield. We have the largest number of migrants in New South Wales—refugees are coming into our area—and they are trying to achieve the Australian dream but it is now being taken away from them. If they want to invest in, say, an ex-Housing Commission home costing \$250,000 or \$300,000 in Villawood or Yennora they cannot get any help from the Government. The Government has forced them to move further out, whether to Middleton Grange or West Hoxton, where they have no family support and no access to the support networks that are in place in Fairfield. This situation resonates strongly for my constituents and I know the member for Wollongong supports what I am saying. This is a bad policy from a bad government.

**Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Menai)** [12.01 p.m.]: I am pleased to speak on the motion relating to the First Home Owner Grant. I thank the member for Wollongong for the opportunity to share this Government's strong commitment to first home buyers. This Government is committed to helping as many young people as possible—in fact all people—to buy their first home. We are also encouraging growth in the building industry through more incentives for people to consider new homes for the very first time by making them affordable. The housing sector underperformed for many years under those opposite. When we were elected we made a commitment to do something about the housing slump and encourage more people to get into their own home. Let us look at the facts. During the final five years of Labor, New South Wales had the lowest growth of new dwellings per capita in the nation, according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

The Government opposes this motion because it was under Labor's watch that supply did not keep up with demand, making housing even more unaffordable for families across New South Wales. Let us look at some more facts. When the New South Wales Liberals and Nationals left office in 1995 more than 57,000 new homes were approved that year. In the last five years under those opposite housing approvals averaged below 30,000. The O'Farrell-Stoner Government has taken the necessary action to ensure grants and concessions provided to homebuyers boost supply to make housing more affordable for those trying to get into the market. As someone who worked in the real estate industry and grew up amongst it I know the value placed on purchasing one's first home.

**Ms Noreen Hay:** Of course you do.

**Ms MELANIE GIBBONS:** I did. I am very proud of it. In almost every case it is the most significant purchase people make and it is achieved after months or years of saving for a deposit.

**Ms Noreen Hay:** You've got real estate in the family.

**Ms MELANIE GIBBONS:** I do have real estate in the family. I know what I am talking about.

**The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser):** Order! I ask the Clerk to stop the clock. Whilst this Chamber is renowned for its robust debate, I point out that Opposition members were not interrupted by interjections when they were speaking. I remind the member for Wollongong that she will have an opportunity to respond to comments made in this debate. I ask her to remain silent and to make her responses in the form provided by the House. The member for Menai will be heard in silence.

**Ms MELANIE GIBBONS:** My role in the real estate industry was basically finding people new homes. That was what my job was about—finding for people their very first home; and I loved it. Menai was a growing environment and seeing the excitement on people's faces as I handed them the keys for the very first time was a wonderful feeling. It is heartwarming to know as I drive past their homes that those families are growing and enjoying our area. The centrepiece of last year's budget was the Building the State package to boost housing construction. It remains the most generous first home buyers scheme in the nation for new homes. There is now a grant of \$5,000 to all non-first home buyers of new homes up to \$650,000. This means that under the new package first home buyers of new homes worth \$550,000 will be up to \$19,245 better off.

This Government has invested half a billion dollars in additional infrastructure to accelerate delivery of up to 76,000 new housing lots in New South Wales. Thanks to these changes, the New South Wales housing sector is now finally showing signs of life. Grants to first home buyers of new homes have since increased by an average of more than 100 a month in the first three months of Building the State compared to the same period last year. Additionally, approvals for construction and purchase of new dwellings are up 28 per cent through the year and up 8 per cent on the decade average. Again, those figures are from the Australian Bureau of Statistics housing finance data. I have spoken to some of my local agents about how this is working for them.

**Ms Tania Mihailuk:** Dad.

**Ms MELANIE GIBBONS:** No, my father is not in real estate any more. I have seen the new developments in Georges Fair, Voyager Point and Pleasure Point. I am really thrilled to see the housing market finally going again.

**Ms TANIA MIHAILUK** (Bankstown) [12.05 p.m.]: It is interesting to hear members opposite quote real estate views but I would like to quote the individual who heads the Real Estate Institute of New South Wales. Members might like to hear some of Christian Payne's views on the current Government's strategy in relation to home owner grants. He said:

The strategy of the government to direct first-home buyers towards new property is flawed because it suggests demand is the issue, when in fact supply is the issue.

Mr Payne went on to say:

... the government needed to recognise that first time buyers, who are typically younger people, required special assistance to enter the NSW market.

What we want to see is affordable property and therefore the current strategy of directing first-home buyers to new property has not achieved what [the Government] wanted. In fact it has adversely affected the volume of property transactions. Therefore it is imperative that the first-home buyers incentive for the purchase of existing property be reintroduced.

That is what the head of the Real Estate Institute of New South Wales is saying. It would be interesting to know how many members opposite—possibly the member for Menai—relied on the First Home Owner Grant of \$7,000 that the Labor Government introduced. A total of \$4 billion worth of grants was provided by the former Labor Government to assist housing in this State. Also, \$3 billion worth of stamp duty exemptions were provided by the former Labor Government to assist people to purchase their home so that they would not go entirely broke. We know that the vast majority of people with mortgages are spending more than 50 per cent of their income to pay them off and there is no doubt it is becoming harder and harder to purchase in the Sydney metropolitan area and regional areas.

This Government also introduced the Regional Relocation Grant to relocate people from metropolitan Sydney, Wollongong and Newcastle to regional New South Wales. That has been an utter disaster. What the Government should have done was to assist areas such as Wollongong. I pay tribute to the member for Wollongong for highlighting the issue. There is no doubt that young people across regional New South Wales and in western Sydney are suffering. It is difficult to enter the market. The Government expects people to buy new properties off the plan and it has suggested that certain pockets of land in north-western Sydney be available for new homes but they are nowhere near public transport, amenities or services. People want to live near services and public transport.

Let us wait for the North West Rail Link to be built before the Government decides to engineer planning to provide for new properties where there are no services or facilities to assist the occupants of those properties. The Government has got it wrong. It is a great travesty of justice that people wanting to enter the market have been deprived of this grant. It is always difficult to enter the market, but who are people relying on? They are relying on their parents and grandparents for assistance, which makes it much harder for people to purchase their own homes. The Government should take advice from the Real Estate Institute of New South Wales and reinstate the First Home Owner Grant.

**Ms NOREEN HAY** (Wollongong) [12.09 p.m.], in reply: I thank the member for Hawkesbury, the member for Fairfield, the member for Menai and the member for Bankstown for their contributions to debate on the motion. The member for Hawkesbury stands up to speak but knows not what he is talking about. That is

nothing new. He tries to defend the Government against the fact that it is making it more difficult for young couples to own their first home. As is common for Government members, he denies that those who need the most help are the least likely to receive assistance from the Government. As usual, the member for Hawkesbury sought to blame the former Labor Government. I want to place on record that they did not come into government with a big black hole.

**Mr Gareth Ward:** Yes, we did—\$5.2 billion.

**Ms NOREEN HAY:** They came into government with a triple-A credit rating. The fact that their Treasurer mislaid \$1 billion is no-one's fault but their own.

**Mr Gareth Ward:** Point of order: That is a lie and the member for Wollongong knows it. The former Labor Government left a \$5.2 billion deficit.

**The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser):** Order! There is no point of order. I call the member for Kiama to order. I have asked that members be heard in silence.

**Ms NOREEN HAY:** The member for Fairfield said this is a bad policy from a bad government, and he is spot on. I am prepared to forgive the member for Menai a little because she also knows not what she is talking about—the member for Hawkesbury has had too much influence on her. Thanks to the former Labor Government, the member for Menai benefitted from a housing grant. I am not going to ask how many properties the member for Hawkesbury owns.

**Mr Gareth Ward:** How many did Matt Brown have?

**Ms NOREEN HAY:** The member for Kiama should not try to defend the Government by speaking rubbish. He was not here for the debate so he should not get involved in it now. Does the Government and its members want to help first home buyers? No. Will that affect young people in particular? Yes. The Government continues to defend a tax on the most vulnerable. For instance, yesterday it reduced compensation to child victims. The Government's attacks on the most vulnerable in our society continue on a daily basis, yet the member for Hawkesbury and the member for Menai seek to defend it.

I thank the member for Bankstown for her contribution. She referred to statistics that support the argument that the Government could reinstate the grant and exemptions that will assist young people to move into their first home and get the housing market moving. The former Labor Government did not cut the grant; it introduced the grant and provided special assistance that would help young people enter the housing market. The Government's answer to fixing the problem of housing supply is to put pressure on demand, thereby ensuring that young people do not have the opportunity to own their own home because they simply cannot afford it. That is supply and demand in reverse. I commend this motion. The Government needs to get its act together and reinstate the grant and exemptions that will enable young people to move closer to the Australian dream of owning their own home. The Government should stop making excuses and stop trying to defend itself against the indefensible.

**Question—That the motion be agreed to—put.**

**The House divided.**

**Ayes, 22**

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

**Noes, 60**

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

**Question resolved in the negative.**

**Motion negatived.**

**SHELL COVE RAILWAY STATION**

**Mr GARETH WARD** (Kiama) [12.23 p.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) congratulates the Minister for Transport on committing to the Shell Cove Railway Station; and
- (2) condemns the Opposition for failing to deliver on a new station for the Shellharbour area in spite of making a commitment when in government in 2001.

I acknowledge in the gallery Ric Smith and a group from my electorate who are interested in supporting development and jobs in the Illawarra. I thank them for coming to Parliament to meet the Treasurer. I also acknowledge my good friend comrade Arthur Rorris, who is also in the gallery. Arthur is the secretary and treasurer of the South Coast Labour Council. We would rather have him as a member of this place than some of the members opposite. Unlike the set-up shop opposite—who are a sop to the union movement—he is a true defender of workers' rights.

*[Interruption]*

Arthur would not behave like that in this place. He is sitting quietly watching the disgraceful rabble opposite. This motion is about delivering transport in my region. I am delighted that Mr Smith is in the gallery today because, like me, he is in favour of any initiatives that generate jobs and support growth in the Illawarra. Of course, that is what the Shell Cove railway station is all about.

**Ms Anna Watson:** It had been established.

**Mr GARETH WARD:** I was waiting for an interjection from the member for Shellharbour. We have the cast of Gilligan's Island opposite. There is the Skipper and Mary Ann. Who is Gilligan? I think that is the member for Blacktown. This motion is about supporting public transport in the Illawarra. Members opposite announced in 2001 that they would deliver what they called Flinders railway station. Who was in government then? I think it was the members opposite. They were in government in 2001, 2002, 2003 and so on until 2011.



They had 10 years in which to deliver that railway station. When I was elected to this place in 2011 I acknowledged that there was growth in the Shellharbour area and that that meant the Government needed to invest to provide better access to public transport.

I lobbied the Minister for Transport, and subsequently the Minister, the then mayor of Shellharbour, Councillor Kelly Marsh and I announced the construction of Shell Cove railway station. The name of the station has been a matter of dispute. Because the Labor Government was not able to deliver the project, members opposite are trying to divert attention by getting excited about what it is called. I will demonstrate the quality of the member that the people of Shellharbour have elected. During a private member's statement given at 7.00 p.m. on Tuesday the member for Shellharbour said:

Earlier today the member for Kiama showed that he cannot seem to work out whether he is a New South Wales member of Parliament, a Federal member of Parliament, or a local councillor. He is all over the place like a free-range chicken that is pecking at everything.

At least my head is still connected; I am not running around like a chicken with its head chopped off. That is what we see from members opposite, and particularly from the member for Shellharbour. She cannot work out whether she is a union official or a member of Parliament, or whether she still lives in the Sutherland shire or at Shellharbour. I will enlighten the House about what her constituents are saying. As members know, the *Illawarra Mercury* offers its readers a wonderful service by allowing them to make comments. Sam, a constituent of the member for Shellharbour, took advantage of that and stated:

Memo ... Anna Watson your mob had 10 years to deliver a station in this growing area, another failure of a useless government that we all had to put up with. Along come the Libs, the station now in motion & the name will be Shell Cove station. Anna ... get over it.

I could not have said it better. This Government is delivering. We deliver real action and members opposite deliver failure—again and again. A pattern is developing. They are obsessed about the name of the station. I point out that the station is not moving; it is on the same site that it was when members opposite were in government. The difference is that this Government will deliver it for workers, families and young people who are trying to get work. We want to open up the Shell Cove area and we know that accessible public transport is important in that regard.

The new Shell Cove railway station will be modern, safe and accessible. It will include two platforms and platform canopies, an elevated footbridge, stairs and lift access, and a small station building housing electrical and communications services. It will also have closed-circuit television surveillance, lighting and a footbridge to provide access between platforms. Access will also be via stairs and lifts. In addition, it will have a 105-space car park, including four disabled spaces. Of course, car parking has been an issue in the Illawarra. I am delighted to remind the House that this Government will be providing an extra 230 car parking spaces at Oak Flats railway station. Did the Labor Government provide car parking spaces when it built a police station at Oak Flats? No, it assumed that police officers would teleport to work. As a result of that oversight commuter car parks have become congested. In response this Government is providing \$5.7 million to upgrade the car park and work will commence in June.

The member for Shellharbour said on local radio that I have ruled out this announcement more times than a cold plate of pasta, but she has reheated more than stale old Chinese. Construction will include an interchange comprising two bus bays, four kiss-and-ride spaces, a taxi zone and bicycle racks, and a new access road connecting the station to the existing road network from Piper Drive off Dunmore Road. The former Labor Government had 10 years to deliver, but it failed miserably. The Coalition is investing \$770 million into upgrading stations right across the network to make them accessible. The Illawarra has done so well out of that with upgrades at Albion Park and Gerringong, which has recently been completed and opened; new car parking at Kiama, Oak Flats and Moss Vale; and upgrades at Dapto and Wollongong. This Government is serious about investing in public transport, while those opposite have factional divisions and infighting. What did they deliver for the Illawarra other than a hell of a lot of pain? I commend the motion to the House.

**Ms ANNA WATSON** (Shellharbour) [12.30 p.m.]: I am delighted to speak to this motion moved by the member for Kiama, who is Illawarra's free-range chicken: he is all over the place pecking at everything. Recently he pecked at the Mayor of Shellharbour city council for having the absolute tenacity to support nurses at Shellharbour Hospital who are seeking a fair go to extend patient-to-nurse ratios, a matter to which I will refer later. I will clarify a few facts in relation to Flinders station. The member for Kiama has been busily misleading the people about Labor's record. Labor decided to build the new Flinders station mainly because the cost-benefit analysis concluded that the upgrade to Dunmore station would be far too costly.

It was easier and more cost-effective to build a new station. As the member for Kiama said, in 2001 the need to build Flinders station was identified; it was always predicted on growth and population in Flinders suburbs. When the population warranted a new station the Labor Government started to draw up the necessary plans. Mr Ward, the free-range chicken and the Liberal candidate for Kiama, had to be dragged kicking and screaming to support the construction of the new Flinders station just weeks before the March 2011 polling day. On behalf of the Labor Government I had already committed to build it. In fact, the former member for Kiama and I turned the first sod with local identities from Flinders who had been instrumental in campaigning for the Flinders station, giving a clear indication that, if re-elected, Labor would commence construction on the station.

**Mr Gareth Ward:** You were not there.

**Ms ANNA WATSON:** I was there. I have the public record to back up my stand. For instance, Wave FM reported on 9 February 2011 under the heading, "Opposition matches commitment to Flinders Station":

The State Opposition has committed to complete the \$35 million Flinders Railway Station near Shellharbour, if finances permit after the March election.

The Government has started work on the station foundations with local candidate Anna Watson providing a cast iron guarantee it will be completed under Labor.

**Mr Gareth Ward:** Point of order: Standing orders require the member for Shellharbour to cite the source from which she is quoting. I ask her to identify the source.

**The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser):** Order! I ask the member for Shellharbour to identify the document from which she is quoting.

**Ms ANNA WATSON:** I have already identified the source. The news report is still on the Wave FM website, if members opposite are interested. I was very happy with this commitment because it meant bipartisan political support to construct the new Flinders station regardless of the election result. But, despite the self-congratulations of the member for Kiama, the Flinders station remains 12 months behind schedule. Last April the member for Kiama and the Minister for Transport indicated that planning documents were to be released to start the public consultation process in the middle of last year. Those documents were only released after I started drawing attention to the fact that they were very late and in contravention of the timetable set by the Government. I always upset the member for Kiama whenever I raise this matter.

But the Government has form—he has done the same with the Oak Flats station car park—and his announcement is, in his words, more reheats than a plate of pasta. The same applies to upgrades to Dapto station—delayed again despite the Government's timetable. Finally, I draw the attention of members to the classic manoeuvre of any incoming government to rename something in order for it to be claimed as the original proponents of it. It is as old a tactic as the Romans. Earlier this year the member for Kiama decided he would change the name of Flinders station to Shell Cove. No public consultation was undertaken except with his mate the former Liberal Mayor of Shellharbour, Kellie Marsh.

The member for Kiama has been busily trying to convince everyone since then that the renaming of the Flinders station to Shell Cove station was a done deal and we should all move on. But the fact is that it is not a done deal at all, and I have highlighted that in an article published in today's edition of the *Illawarra Mercury*. The member for Kiama—acting like a free-range chicken—thinks he can get away with pecking at anything. He will not get away with renaming the Flinders station as if he is a Roman Caesar. The Geographical Names Board of New South Wales will determine the name of Flinders station following public consultation with the people of Shellharbour city and the people of Flinders.

**Mr LEE EVANS (Heathcote)** [12.36 p.m.]: Shell Cove railway station—what is in a name? I have heard some excellent presentations from the member for Kiama and the member for Shellharbour. Is it Shell Cove or is it Flinders?

**Ms Anna Watson:** Flinders.

**Mr Gareth Ward:** Shell Cove.

**Mr LEE EVANS:** I prefer the railway station that will be delivered, and that is called Shell Cove. After 10 years of backwards and forwards is it in, is it out, will we build it, will we not, artists impressions and a brochure we have seen nothing from the Opposition. The Opposition is well known in this House for taking credit for this Government getting on with the job and putting shovels in the ground—

**Ms Anna Watson:** Labor started it.

**Mr LEE EVANS:** Yes, you had a brochure on it and it was fantastic, but let us build it. How many years were those opposite in government?

**Mr Gareth Ward:** Sixteen years.

**Mr LEE EVANS:** Those opposite were in government for 16 years and now they ask who will open Shell Cove railway station and cut the ribbon. The answer is that the member for Kiama will cut the ribbon. A motion on the *Business Paper* relates to that old chestnut the Unanderra railway station. The Labor Government had 16 years to budget for and build it, but it was not until the Coalition came to government that it became a major issue for the member for Wollongong, who wants it built straightaway. Those opposite had 16 years to build it, yet I understand that the member for Wollongong is demanding that the Government build the Unanderra railway station. She said it should be the first cab off the rank and it must be built. I am sorry, but it is too late to shed crocodile tears and cry over spilt milk. I will stand shoulder to shoulder with the member for Kiama when he opens Shell Cove railway station. I believe the patrons of the railway station will finally see a government working for them instead of one working for itself. I commend the motion.

**Mr RYAN PARK** (Keira) [12.39 p.m.]: I hate a lot of things about being in opposition, as all of us do, but my greatest hate is when the incoming Government takes credit for projects that were a vision of the former, Labor Government and were commenced as result of the hard work of former, Labor members of this place. That is democracy, but it is difficult not to be part of a debate in which we have the member for Kiama and the member for Heathcote taking credit for a project they did not commence. Can they take credit for a Regional Relocation Grant that removes people from Wollongong to Shellharbour, from Yallah to Albion Park and gives them \$7,000? Of course they can take credit for that—a wonderful economic policy.

Can they take credit for the downgrading of Bulli Hospital? Of course they can take credit for that—also a wonderful economic policy. Can they take credit for selling off a port asset for multiple billions of dollars above what they thought and then giving us \$100 million? Of course they can take credit for that. But the member for Kiama and the member for Heathcote should not take credit for infrastructure that was commenced as a result of the hard work and lobbying of the member for Shellharbour and the former member for Kiama in the lead-up in the last election, which ensured this station will be built. I will celebrate the day when the Shell Cove railway station is built. I am passionate about public transport and I strongly believe in it. Indeed, I was instrumental in getting that fantastic Gong Shuttle for the region.

This is one of the tough things about being in opposition. When someone asks me if I like my job I always say, "I like my job, but I hate being in opposition." No doubt those on the other side are going to roll out and celebrate Labor commitments, policies and plans. I hope we can all celebrate the day when the Shell Cove railway station is built. I commend the member for Shellharbour for making sure that the member for Kiama and his colleagues are held to account in delivering this infrastructure. Shellharbour is one of the fastest-growing regions on the eastern seaboard, along with the South Coast. It certainly needs this type of infrastructure. Shellharbour is probably the second or third best electorate in New South Wales. I support the member for Shellharbour in her advocacy on behalf of her community.

**Mr GARETH WARD** (Kiama) [12.43 p.m.], in reply: I thank the members for the electorates of Shellharbour, Heathcote and Keira for their contributions to the debate. The contribution of the member for Heathcote was that of an inspired individual who knows what he is talking about. I cannot say the same about those who sit opposite. I describe the member for Keira as a one-trick pony because in every debate we have, whether we are talking about putting a man on the moon or the Shell Cove railway station, in pops the Regional Relocation Grant—it is a recurring theme. I cannot accuse my friend the member for Shellharbour of being a one-trick pony; she is a three-trick pony. The first trick is the naming of a station that those opposite failed to deliver; the second is those opposite having had 16 years to deliver the Albion Park bypass; and the third is those opposite reducing services at the Shellharbour hospital when they were in government, including maternity services. Those opposite talk about nurse ratios, but that agreement was signed off by those opposite when they were in government, and the O'Farrell Government has committed to it.

Indeed, 4,000 additional nurses have been employed since we have been in office. It is all about the follow through. Those opposite spoke about great Labor projects. I am sure the mining tenements would have been a great Labor project to Eddie Obeid—that might be what they were talking about. But I am talking about a project that the O'Farrell Government is funding. Labor first announced this project in 2001, but it did not deliver it for 10 years. I take issue with the claim that it was only Councillor Kellie Marsh who supported the name change. Mr Brian Longbottom, the Chairman of the South Coast Regional Tourism Organisation, and his members also believed that having a name change from Flinders to Shell Cove was appropriate. We have the Shell Cove subdivision and the Shell Cove marina. That is not to take anything away from the people of Flinders. In fact, the people of Flinders will have a station built in exactly the same location.

Labor is trying to have one awful fight about a name change to cover up a different dispute about its lack of delivery. The O'Farrell Government is investing in the region, including funding of \$86 million for a new elective surgery unit at Wollongong Hospital; funding of \$14 million for the Wollongong Cancer Care Centre and a commitment to new and improved cancer services at Shoalhaven Hospital; the \$25.8 million car park at Wollongong Hospital; funding of \$820 million for the Princes Highway; and upgrades to stations such as Albion Park, Kiama, Oak Flats, Moss Vale, Dapto and Wollongong. The member for Keira and the member for Shellharbour spoke about the port lease—I love it when they do that. So opposed were they to the port lease that they wrote to the Government telling us how to spend the money. They do not want the money, but they do want the money; they do want the money but they do not want the money. They cannot have it both ways. They now want a slice of that pie too.

All the projects we are talking about now were great Labor projects. Labor had such great vision that it did not do any of it. Those opposite cannot be believed. The O'Farrell Government and the Minister for Transport are committed to investing in public transport. Unlike those opposite, I frequently use public transport to come to Parliament House. I am proud to talk to my constituents who use the public transport network. What are the people of Flinders and Shell Cove most happy about? Not the debate started by the member for Shellharbour to cover up her embarrassment but having a station by 2014 that will service their needs. It is a great achievement for this Government and there are many more to come.

**Question—That the motion be agreed to—put.**

**The House divided.**

**Ayes, 60**

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

**Noes, 20**

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

**Question resolved in the affirmative.**

**Motion agreed to.**

### **STUDENT PUBLIC TRANSPORT CONCESSIONS**

**Mr GARETH WARD** (Kiama) [12.57 p.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) congratulates the Minister for Transport on making positive changes to students with respect to public transport concessions;
- (2) acknowledges that the Minister and the Government have granted travel concessions to students working part time; and
- (3) commends the Government for extending concessions to people with disabilities who are studying part time.

For a number of years there were anomalies in transport concessions, which various governments tried to resolve. I am delighted that the Minister for Transport has listened to the concerns of young people. I remember being a bright-eyed and bushy-tailed Young Liberal raising these matters at Young Liberal conferences.

**Ms Robyn Parker:** Now you're just bushy-tailed.

**Mr GARETH WARD:** I thank the Minister for her interjection. She always looks lovely; she looks particularly lovely today.

*[Interruption]*

The member for Myall Lakes looks pretty good as well.

**Mr Richard Amery:** You should have gone to Specsavers.

**Mr GARETH WARD:** As I have said before, I can always smell the Opposition Whip before I can see him. I commend this motion because under longstanding rules full-time tertiary students had to attend day classes and could not be employed if they were to be eligible for transport concessions. Recently the Minister for Transport said that full-time university, TAFE and private college students who are employed or otherwise receiving an income and those who are enrolled in evening classes will become eligible for transport concessions. There are a number of categories under which this Minister has extended transport concessions. I am pleased that the Government has done so, because for a number of years students were disadvantaged because of concessions and rules in place that did not meet the changing nature of workplaces and study. Those undertaking postgraduate research at universities were also included.

The eligibility criteria for travel concessions have been around for many years and simply did not reflect how people live and study today. We need a common-sense approach. Most people need to work casually or part time while they study to support themselves, and under the old eligibility criteria those who worked were not actually eligible for a transport concession. These days tertiary institutions are offering classes at night so students can balance their study commitments with a casual or part-time job. It is ridiculous that in 2013 we would provide incentives for people not to have a job and study as well. The requirement to be attending day classes meant that students doing higher degrees by research at universities were also ineligible for concession fares, even though they had to travel to campus each day and were studying full-time hours. It is our hope that these changes will take some of the financial pressures off students who are working hard to educate and support themselves and contributing to the economy. These changes will also make it easier for institutions to understand and administer concessions, cutting unnecessary administrative red tape.

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

**JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE OFFICE OF THE VALUER-GENERAL****Report: Land Valuation System—Report on the Inquiry into the Land Valuation System and the Eighth General Meeting with the Valuer-General****Question—That the House take note of the report—proposed.**

**Mr MATT KEAN** (Hornsby) [1.01 p.m.]: I am delighted to speak to the report on the inquiry into the land valuation system and the eighth general meeting with the Valuer-General. I commence by saying that the recommendations made in this report are the most comprehensive overhaul of the valuation system in New South Wales, and it is long overdue. The report makes 29 recommendations that go to the heart of what our valuation system should be: a system that the public can have confidence in whereby fairness and the treatment of landowners is paramount to delivering the outcomes required.

We believe that the valuation system is in need of a paradigm shift. We believe that treating landowners fairly and respectfully is a complementary—indeed necessary—element of an effective and impartial valuation system. Accordingly, the committee recommends a new process for objections and compulsory acquisitions that affords landowners procedural fairness, a rules based approach to valuation methodologies and a new governance framework that replaces the Valuer-General with a Valuation Commission. The committee also recommends three-year averaging of council rate valuations to dampen the material and significant volatility in the valuation system.

In this inquiry we took over 130 submissions. We conducted public hearings right across the State. We travelled to rural and regional New South Wales, as far as Mudgee. We went to Hornsby where we saw that decisions of the Valuer-General affect not only individuals but entire communities. They affect families and they affect the compensation that people receive when the Government uses that extraordinarily coercive power to compulsorily acquire people's properties. The Valuer-General's powers extend to setting the compensation that people receive. What we saw during this inquiry was an instance where a cut-and-paste job was used to determine the compensation people received. The financial wellbeing of these people was determined by a job that in the committee's view was not done properly.

I take this opportunity to put on the public record my thanks to the people of Leppington, particularly Frances Vumbaca and Koula Rafailidis, who had the courage to come forward and tell their story. By telling their story we were able to shine the spotlight onto a system that is letting people down and is going some way to undermining the public's confidence in valuations. Let us not forget that the valuations people receive determine the taxes they will pay. They determine the council rates that people will pay. We saw instances of extreme volatility in valuation, potentially creating a council rate lottery, which we do not want to see. That is why we have recommended averaging valuations over three years, not unlike how land tax is determined in this State, because we think that landowners—taxpayers—should be able to predict the taxes they will pay. Extreme volatility in valuation makes that task very difficult.

We think that landowners should be able to predict and that the valuations they receive should be transparent. It is not good enough that the valuations are opaque. It is not good enough that people cannot understand how they are assessed. This has led to a situation where people feel that valuations are a dark art, an inexact science, and that raises concern across the community. We want a system that people can have confidence in, and they will have confidence in it if they can understand it, if they can see how it is working, if that volatility is dampened. Subsequently they can have confidence in the taxes that they pay. Recently I saw the Valuer-General respond to some of the committee's recommendations or some media around the committee's work. I refer to a *7.30 Report* program on the ABC last week.

The Valuer-General posted a statement on the *7.30 Report* website saying that the valuation system continues to be regarded as one of the leading benchmark mass valuation systems in the world. Try telling that to the people of Hornsby who received a valuation of \$26 million for a disused quarry, which was well in excess of what they believed it should be, and they were not afforded the right to put their case, to respond to information which adversely affected their position. Try telling it to the landowners of Leppington who had their valuations done in 2008 and again in 2010 with exactly the same valuation despite a major change in the zoning in the interim period. Try telling it to people who have not been afforded a fair hearing, who have not been able to see the methodology of their valuation, who were not treated with the respect, dignity and fairness to which they should be entitled. The committee made recommendations to address all of those things. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

I place on the public record my appreciation for the hard work of all committee members. The 29 recommendations, which focused on improving the fairness, integrity and equity of this system, were made in a bipartisan manner. Members from the Labor Party, the upper House and lower House, from The Nationals and from the Liberal Party came together to bring about the change required to give the public confidence in this State. Politics were put aside and the focus was on ensuring that we could have a world-class valuation system, that we could have a valuation system and taxes which the public could have confidence in.

I thank all committee members for giving up their time to make sure that we got the results that the public wanted to see. I acknowledge my deputy chair, Mr Scot MacDonald, the member for Cessnock, Clayton Barr, the member for Port Macquarie, Leslie Williams, the Hon. Adam Searle in the upper House and the Hon. Eric Roozendaal, who is no longer a member of Parliament. All members contributed greatly and brought their experience to bear in making this report possible. I thank the hardworking committee staff. They were asked to deliver a very detailed report in a very short time and they worked exceptionally hard to make that a reality.

I thank Helen Minnican and Rachel Simpson. John Miller was exceptional. He was new to the committee but his addition to the committee staff brought about a real change. The committee staff could not do more to help us when John Miller came to the table and I am very appreciative of that. I take this opportunity to thank Jessica Falvey and acknowledge her work. She is a new member of the committee staff and she worked exceptionally hard and did an incredible job. She is an exceptional staff member and should be commended. Jenny Whight had the unenviable task of doing all the administrative work on this committee, and she was exceptional. Jenny liaised with all the offices and set up meeting times and so on, and I thank her. I thank the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly for her confidence and support in making this report happen.

The recommendations in this report require legislative change. I implore the Government to take them on board and adopt them. I also implore the Valuer-General to accept the recommendations and to work with the committee to ensure we have a valuation system in which we can all have confidence. Finally, I thank Professor Sourdin, who is the Director of the Australian Centre for Justice Innovation, and Mr Stephen Lancken, director of Negocio Resolutions. Their evidence in supporting our recommendations around procedural fairness was excellent and the basis on which we made a number of recommendations. This committee report goes a long way to addressing the issues we had relating to the fairness of the system, the integrity of the valuations received and the efficiency of the system. The 29 recommendations were made with those principles in mind and they will go some way to making sure the valuation system in New South Wales is world class and that the public can have confidence in it.

**Mr CLAYTON BARR** (Cessnock) [1.12 p.m.]: It is with pleasure that I speak on the "Report on the inquiry into the land valuation system and the eighth general meeting with the Valuer-General". As noted by the chair, problems in the valuation system were recognised. To be fair and honest, we do about a million valuations a year: three million over a three-year period. I think the great majority of people in New South Wales can have confidence that they are getting a pretty fair deal. Certainly analysis of the trends shows that valuations are proceeding quite nicely. We discovered that when there are exceptions, be it by error or through other factors driving land valuations in a certain region or district, the system was not able to catch them and prevent a problem arising. Ultimately that has been demonstrated by the work we have done.

Many of the recommendations are about putting safeguards in place and providing the opportunity to double check and for people to be better informed and more aware of how a valuation came about. It is also about providing the opportunity for people to question or test the valuation system. If we can achieve that it will be a fantastic outcome. The great majority of valuations seem to be pretty fair and equitable, and that is recognised. I also recognise that in practice the valuation process is largely outsourced. In particular, I draw on our experience in the Mudgee region, where the farmers we spoke to were good enough to take us out onto their properties. As we looked across the hills and valleys they were able to point out things to us. They kept on referring to the person in their region who used to do their valuations. They said he had a lifetime of experience.

This person was able to recognise the different types of land and its quality—whether it was grazing land or crop land and which types of grasses would grow at different elevations, whether things would grow on the north, south, east or west side of a hill, and whether the soil was underlain by rock. This local knowledge cannot be underestimated, because I think that is how the valuation exceptions can be avoided. The reality today is that the work is contracted out to somebody and they travel from town to town, village to village and region to region and they might not have any real affinity with local knowledge of or background understanding of what has happened in that area. That is a real problem and we have identified it as such. The Valuer-General is now charged with the responsibility of making whatever changes need to be made to fix that. It certainly needs to be fixed. That is one of the ways we can avoid the valuation exceptions.

Another matter I want to raise is the impact on local councils. When valuations are wrong, particularly when property is overvalued and later scaled back, it leaves an enormous hole in incredibly tight budgets, because local councils rely so heavily on rates. Every local council in New South Wales has an incredibly tight budget, and when we are talking about budget holes of \$2 million, \$3 million, \$6 million or potentially \$10 million the impact is just incredible. Councils should not find themselves in this position. Again, the recommendations that have been put forward hopefully will address that. They are recommendations for the Valuer-General and recommendations that we will need to address in this Chamber. I acknowledge the incredibly hardworking chair of the committee. I do not know how he got through all the work. I have three folders full of information, most but not all of which I have read, but he has read every single word. The committee staff was brilliant.

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS** (Port Macquarie) [1.16 p.m.]: I am pleased to commend the report of the Joint Standing Committee on the Office of the Valuer-General entitled "Land Valuation System—Report on the inquiry into the land valuation system and the eighth general meeting with the Valuer-General", dated May 2013. I was privileged to be a member of this joint standing committee and very pleased to have the opportunity to contribute to the hearings and some very detailed discussions leading up to the tabling of this report. Whilst the committee identified a number of substantial concerns, I hope that a cooperative relationship will be maintained with the Office of the Valuer-General, with the aim of delivering the best valuation system possible for the benefit of all stakeholders.

The committee undertook a number of site visits as was mentioned, and whilst I was unable to join my colleagues on these occasions, the case studies certainly highlighted the need for careful consideration of various aspects of our valuation systems. Site visits to Hornsby, Broken Hill and Mudgee revealed issues associated with compulsory acquisition valuations and rating and taxing valuations and specifically raised concerns with the committee around transparency, procedural fairness, the engagement of individual landholders in the valuation process, dispute resolution and the restrictive nature of the appeal process largely relating to costs.

I highlight the objection process and dispute resolution, because constituents in our electorates will be very supportive and welcoming of these proposed changes. They make some real improvements to our current objection system. I highlight recommendation 11, which includes some minimum standards and the introduction of a new valuation mechanism. It suggests, for example, that landholders should be entitled to make submissions to the review and landholders should be entitled to a conference after they make their submission to the review. Certainly those witnesses who attended the hearings and were named by the chairman highlighted why we need that process in place.

Landholders should be given 30 days to make any further submissions, and if they do so they should be entitled to a conference to discuss those submissions. If a landholder makes further submissions on any material in the preliminary valuation report the submissions should be considered and the landholder should be provided with written reasons for accepting or rejecting the submissions after the conference. The report also notes that the conference referred to could be in the form of an oral conversation, by telephone or maybe even online. I point out that this recommendation is complemented by recommendation 14, which suggests that the Government establish a dispute resolution system to supplement the processes I have outlined.

We identify that this could mean adding more conferences to the process, adding an independent chairperson to a conference or perhaps including a case manager separate from the valuer. All of these suggestions will mean constituents and landholders will feel they have a much fairer system in place in New South Wales. I commend the Chairman, the member for Hornsby, for his determined efforts and his extensive work to ensure the timely presentation of this report as well as the considered detail and background information and the extensive engagement he provided to committee members throughout the entire process. As other members of the committee did, I thank the staff for their cooperation and ongoing advice during our discussions and in the preparation of this report.

**Mr JOHN WILLIAMS** (Murray-Darling) [1.18 p.m.]: It gives me great pleasure to speak on the tabling of this much-needed report. From time to time we need to monitor how independent agencies of government carry out their work. There is no doubt that when the committee reviewed the evidence in preparation of this report that a situation was highlighted in Broken Hill that was primarily driven by a mining company named Perilya. The property's valuation did not reflect the level of revenue that could be generated from that property. As a consequence the intervention of the Land and Environment Court through the appeal



process was required to establish that the valuation was out of order for this mining company. The decision has had and will have ongoing long-term impacts on the community of Broken Hill, which will be affected by the initial valuation and repayment of rates to Perilya.

The people of Broken Hill need to be mindful of the importance of the mining company to its community. It needs to continue, and we want it to have a long and healthy life. It was noted that the company, which had made a \$1 million net profit, was requested to pay in excess of \$1.8 million in rates for the year, which is a crazy arrangement. I understand the complexity of providing rates for commercial properties. Some of the recommendations in the report will provide an insight for the Valuer-General to appreciate the impact of the valuations that are provided for some of those areas. It will allow him to focus on the impact of a bad valuation in a certain area. I compliment the chairman of the committee, the member for Hornsby. When the situation in Broken Hill arose he was happy to speak with the affected company, investigate the circumstances and understand firsthand what the community of Broken Hill was facing. He also held committee hearings in Broken Hill to assist it with its work.

Councils need to send rates notices with confidence. Some of the committee's recommendations will remove the swing backwards and forwards that occurs and that causes a lot of angst when there are large variations in rates from year to year. I have been engaged with farmers in my electorate who have been affected by this swing in valuations. Even though adjustments have been calculated for their overvalued properties the farmers have still suffered increased rate penalties during the process. We need to fix the swings. The committee has provided the option for the Valuer-General to take on those recommendations. I would like to think that we have confidence in the work of the Valuer-General in New South Wales and that the commercial and residential properties in New South Wales are valued in a correct manner.

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

**Report noted.**

#### **JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON ELECTORAL MATTERS**

##### **Report: Review of the Parliamentary Electorates and Elections Act 1912 and the Election Funding, Expenditure and Disclosures Act 1981**

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

**Mr JAI ROWELL** (Wollondilly) [1.23 p.m.]: I am pleased to give this take-note speech on behalf of the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters, the third report of the Fifty-fifth Parliament. This report reviews the Parliamentary Electorates and Elections Act 1912 and the Election Funding, Expenditure and Disclosures Act 1981. All members of this place understand the importance of this Act. I testify to the hard work of not only the committee members but also the committee staff to produce the report. This inquiry has featured lengthy consultation from a broad field of contributors. The committee sought the views of those who administer elections, those who contest them, and those other organisations and individuals who hold an interest in our electoral laws. A number of distinguished academics took part in the public hearings, and I recognise the contribution that they have made.

From this consultation process a clear theme emerged: the main principles of our democracy remain valid; however, the legislative framework through which they are given effect require attention and modernisation. It is the belief of the committee that this modernisation can be achieved by way of a new electoral Act for New South Wales. The Act covers the conduct of State elections and the regulation of campaign finance and expenditure. Furthermore, the administration of the new Act should be undertaken by a single statutory corporation. It must be recognised that many of the findings of this committee reflect and indeed are consistent, to an extent, with the findings of the former committee on electoral matters when it was chaired by the member for Lakemba and it had a majority comprising members on the opposite side of the House.

The report was handed down in 2010 in an attempt to explore options to modernise these Acts. The make-up of the electoral matters committee of the Fifty-fourth Parliament was vastly different from the make-up of this one, yet there is a consistency in many of the findings, particularly in relation to the issue of campaign finance reforms. The recommendations of this committee strive to achieve the goal to have a legislative framework that clearly and concisely defines the roles and responsibilities of electoral participants and electoral administrators alike. This was a core tenet of our initial approach and has been echoed throughout our investigations and

consultations, and now in our recommendations. Before I refer to these recommendations I provide some context for this report. The New South Wales Electoral Commission [NSWEC] stated that the Parliamentary Electorates and Elections Act and the Election Funding, Expenditure and Disclosures Act were in need of an overhaul, as a series of ad hoc amendments to the Acts over time had rendered them out of date and overly complicated.

The regulations that govern our electoral system are vital to our democratic rights and responsibilities. It was pertinent then that the committee identify and coordinate the issues, where possible, that contribute to the current state of the Act in a bid to modernise it. The committee received evidence across a broad range of issues, which are grouped in the report under the following categories: terms and structure of the Parliamentary Electorates and Elections Act; role and functions of the New South Wales Electoral Commission; enrolment and voting; local government elections; offences and penalties under the Parliamentary Electorates and Elections Act; terms and structure of the Election Funding, Expenditure and Disclosures Act; role and functions of the Election Funding Authority [EFA]; operation and effectiveness of recent campaign finance reforms; and public funding of local government election campaigns.

In light of this, the report reflects in detail the stakeholder views of the Parliamentary Electorates and Elections Act. These fell broadly into two parts. The first was that which proposed fundamental reform of the Parliamentary Electorates and Elections Act and its amalgamation into one electoral Act for New South Wales, covering conduct of State and local government elections, including regulation of campaign finance and expenditure. The new Act will consist of plain English legislative principles to be determined by the Parliament, with the legislative machinery to be implemented by the New South Wales Electoral Commission as a trusted integrity agency of the State. The second was the views of those who did not propose wholesale reform of the Act but submitted that either particular sections should be amended or that particular sections of the Parliamentary Electorates and Elections Act should be retained in their current form.

The terms of reference were drawn to ensure a thorough investigation, rich in consultation, to encourage a holistic consideration of the facts and opinions held by the various stakeholders involved with the Parliamentary Electorates and Elections Act. A full list of the terms of reference can be sourced at the start of the report, which stipulates the areas of focus by the committee. Public hearings were held and from them the committee produced 26 recommendations, which can be perused within the report. I encourage all members to read it. The committee's next task is to report on its inquiry into the 2012 local government elections. That will be the committee's fourth report during this Parliament. It is hoped that the work of those inquiries will do much to ensure the good health of our democratic processes as we progress toward the 2015 State election and the subsequent local government elections. On behalf of the committee I thank the individuals and organisations who made submissions to the inquiry and who gave evidence at the committee's public hearings.

I extend the committee's appreciation to the Electoral Commissioner and the staff of the Electoral Commission for their input into the inquiry and for their ongoing contribution to the committee's work. I particularly appreciate the valuable advice that they have offered to me in my role as chairman. On a personal note, I thank my committee colleagues—the Hon. Dr Peter Phelps, Gareth Ward, Daryl Maguire, the Hon. Robert Borsak, Andrew Fraser, the Hon. Trevor Khan, the Hon. Amanda Fazio, Paul Lynch, and the Hon. Peter Primrose—for their enthusiasm and the insight that they brought to the inquiry. I also thank the secretariat staff for their assistance in the conduct of this inquiry and in the preparation of the committee's final report. I greatly appreciate the efforts of those who worked on the report, namely: Rachel Simpson, Jenny Whight, Meike Bowyer, Millie Yeoh, Jonathon Elliott and the ever-patient Rohan Tyler. The staff are truly remarkable and I thank them for their valuable work and ongoing support of the committee and me as chairman. I commend the report to the House.

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

**Report noted.**

*[Acting-Speaker (Mr John Barilaro) left the chair at 1.30 p.m. The House resumed at 2.15 p.m.]*

#### **DISTINGUISHED VISITORS**

**The SPEAKER:** I welcome to the Speaker's Gallery staff from the National Parliament of the Solomon Islands and the Bougainville House of Representatives who are on secondment to the Parliament of New South Wales as part of twinning arrangements between our Parliament and theirs. They are accompanied by staff from the Parliament of Vanuatu.

**DEATH OF GERALD BERESFORD PONSONBY PEACOCKE, A FORMER MINISTER OF THE  
CROWN AND MEMBER FOR DUBBO**

**The SPEAKER:** It is with regret that I have to inform the House of the death on 23 May 2013 of the Hon. Gerald Beresford Ponsonby Peacocke, a former Minister of the Crown, who served as the member for Dubbo from 19 September 1981 to 5 March 1999. On behalf of the House, I extend to the family the deep sympathy of the Legislative Assembly in the loss sustained.

*Members and officers of the House stood in their places as a mark of respect.*

**BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

**Notices of Motions**

**Government Business Notices of Motions (for Bills) given.**

**QUESTION TIME**

*[Question time commenced at 2.23 p.m.]*

**HUNTING IN NATIONAL PARKS**

**Mr JOHN ROBERTSON:** I direct my question to the Minister for the Environment. Given that the New South Wales Game Council is advertising that it will be issuing free recreational hunting licences this weekend at the Shot Expo in order to promote hunting in New South Wales national parks, can the Minister explain how public safety can be guaranteed when licences to hunt are now being handed out for free?

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

**Ms ROBYN PARKER:** As I have informed the House on a number of occasions, the Supplementary Pest Control Program in national parks is subject to an ongoing, stringent risk assessment. The reason an evaluation of the Supplementary Pest Control Program in national parks will not be commencing until—

**Mr Michael Daley:** Point of order: With respect, I think the Minister has misunderstood the question. The question is not about shooting in national parks.

**The SPEAKER:** Has the Minister completed her answer?

**Ms ROBYN PARKER:** Yes.

**The SPEAKER:** The Minister has completed her answer. There is no point of order.

**INFRASTRUCTURE NSW**

**Mr CRAIG BAUMANN:** I address my question to the Premier. How is the Government improving infrastructure planning and delivery to public infrastructure for the people of New South Wales?

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL:** I thank the member for Port Stephens for his question and for his interest in improving infrastructure not only in his electorate but also across the State. In July Infrastructure NSW will turn two, and its first two years have been nothing short of a success. Infrastructure NSW was intended to assist in delivering the critical public infrastructure the State needed. It was established as an antidote to a legacy that those opposite left us after their 16 long years in government. That was a legacy that saw billion dollar infrastructure projects such as the CBD Metro planned on the back of an envelope and announced simply for political purposes—it was never built but still cost us more than \$500 million. It was a legacy of budget overruns and delays; a legacy such as the Epping to Chatswood Rail Link, which was originally meant to run from Chatswood to Parramatta, was only half delivered at double the original price; and a legacy of Sydney missing out on much-needed Commonwealth funding to deliver the infrastructure projects that would support additional jobs across this State.

Compare that with the legacy to date of Infrastructure NSW. First and foremost was the delivery of the State's twenty-year infrastructure plan—a plan that has received unprecedented community support and that the

Government is implementing. Apart from those opposite, who else anywhere in this State opposes WestConnex or the Bridges for the Bush programs? Infrastructure NSW has also enabled us to take the best possible funding infrastructure submissions to Canberra. Testament to this is that the looming Federal election campaign is not about which Infrastructure NSW projects should be funded; it is about how much each side is prepared to commit to those projects: a big tick for Infrastructure NSW. Its success has also been in the commencement of the major projects that this State's economy needs, especially the Sydney International Convention and Exhibition Centre.

This project will significantly add to the economic growth and jobs that exist across this city—a project that those opposite ignored for too long when in government, despite their own expert advice. As Infrastructure NSW approaches its second birthday it also moves into a new phase of its operation. Now that the State's long-term infrastructure plan has been developed the focus needs to be squarely on the timely and fiscally responsible delivery of those projects. The Government wants Infrastructure NSW to help develop across the whole of government the strong delivery skill sets needed to turn plans into reality. We want to ensure that through Infrastructure NSW this State continues to lead the nation in the use of innovative infrastructure financing and funding solutions to do just that.

In February this year the Chairman of Infrastructure NSW, Nick Greiner, advised me that with the delivery of the first fully funded five-year infrastructure plan in next month's budget, and as Infrastructure NSW has matured into a new role, it was a natural time for it to transition to new leadership. Therefore I advise the House that Mr Greiner has indicated that he will step down as the inaugural chairman at the July Infrastructure NSW board meeting. Given the huge challenges the Government inherited in coming to office, developing a long-term infrastructure plan was never going to be easy, but thanks to Nick Greiner's skills, especially his great strategic thinking, and the support of his board and the Infrastructure NSW staff, that goal has been achieved.

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

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL:** I can advise the House that I will be recommending to Cabinet that Graham Bradley be the new chair. Mr Bradley is one of Australia's most respected and experienced non-executive directors and is well-known to many people across this Parliament. He is a former head of the Business Council of Australia, Chairman of HSBC Australia and a member of the global board, and a former managing director of Perpetual. With his background in finance, management consulting and the law, he brings to the table the right skills to steer Infrastructure NSW through its next stage. Mr Bradley will take over after the July board meeting. In recent months the board of Infrastructure NSW has been considering its forward work plan and where best to focus its efforts in the future. One of Graham Bradley's first items of business will be to bring this work to government. I also want to advise the House that I have received the formal resignation of the chief executive officer of Infrastructure NSW, Paul Broad.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Opposition members will come to order.

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL:** Subject to the approval of other jurisdictions, he will now become Chief Executive Officer of Snowy Hydro.

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

*[Extension of time granted.]*

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Opposition members will come to order and cease interjecting. The member for Canterbury and the member for Maroubra will come to order.

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL:** Paul has been a loyal servant of this Government and is a rare individual who forewent a private sector salary to contribute his bit to fix New South Wales.

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

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL:** However, in his new role his skills will not be lost to this Government or to the Victorian and Federal governments. I am pleased to inform the House that I have appointed Jim Betts, the former Victorian Secretary of Transport, as an interim chief executive officer pending the conclusion of a

merit-selection process to fill this position long term. Mr Betts has a track record of working with government and the private sector to deliver better transport services to the public. I wish Nick Greiner and Paul Broad the best for their future endeavours. I know that their skills will not be lost to government.

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

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL:** I welcome Graham Bradley and Jim Betts into their roles, and look forward to working with them to make New South Wales number one again.

### HUNTING IN NATIONAL PARKS

**Ms CARMEL TEBBUTT:** My question is addressed to the Minister for Primary Industries. What approval did the Minister give to the Game Council to offer free recreational hunting licences to encourage amateur shooting in New South Wales national parks?

**Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON:** As to the precise question, I will seek supplementary information and come back to the House on that. Pest animals such as rabbits, foxes, wild dogs and feral pigs are among the greatest threats to primary production and biodiversity in New South Wales. They have the ability to drastically reduce productivity.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Members will come to order. An Opposition member asked the question and Opposition members should listen to the answer in silence.

**Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON:** They have the ability to drastically reduce productivity and on-farm incomes of the State's 40,000 commercial farmers. The Government cares about our farmers and productivity, unlike members opposite, who could not give a rat's about farmers in this State.

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

**Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON:** In New South Wales feral animals cost agriculture an estimated \$70 million in lost production every year.

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

**Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON:** These impacts are felt by our primary industry sector across New South Wales, from Casino in the north through to Corowa in the south, out to Broken Hill in the west and everywhere in between. Indeed, our beef, wool, lamb and goat producers are among the worst affected. I have now received advice on the original question. I am advised that the recreational hunting licence is not free; therefore, the question is based on a false premise. While I am on a roll, I point out that we have just emerged from a decade-long drought and we are returning to improved seasonal conditions. But as we have done that we have witnessed an increase in pest pressures, especially with wild dogs and pigs. Feral pests and animals do great harm to our national parks by destroying habitats and flora and fauna, impacting on about 40 per cent of all threatened species.

**Dr Andrew McDonald:** You do not believe this. You don't believe a word of what you are reading.

**Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON:** Members opposite better believe it, because they are eating the produce from our farmers' hard work. They should appreciate every farmer in this State. Have members opposite ever seen photographs of sheep with their guts and throats ripped out as a result of attacks from wild dogs and feral animals, which do not recognise boundaries?

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Opposition members will come to order.

**Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON:** Wild dogs and feral animals do not know if they are in a national park or a State forest or on private property. They do not know the boundaries.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I call the Leader of the Opposition to order. He will cease interjecting.

**Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON:** Members opposite should wake up and realise where their food comes from.

**Mr Jamie Parker:** Amateur hunters don't work.

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

**Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON:** Members opposite, whether they are in Balmain, Campbelltown or other Sydney suburbs, have a lot to learn, but in the country we know all about this. We live this every day. Feral pests and animals do great harm to our national parks. They destroy habitats and flora and fauna, and they impact on about 40 per cent of all threatened species. This Government currently spends \$20 million each year on feral animal control in our national parks and forests, and on farms and Crown lands. There is no easy solution. We need an integrated, coordinated and strategic approach to tackling pest animals. The Government's decision to introduce a supplementary pest control program into national parks will complement and augment existing activities.

The shooting of feral animals in national parks is not new; it happened under the Labor Government. An integrated approach using volunteer services, given the amount of money the Government currently spends in this area, can only help to address the terrible problems caused by these vermin. This is a safe and logical move based on past success in dealing with similar issues in our State forests. For seven years Game Council licenced hunters have been removing game and feral animals from declared State forests under a world-class management system. In all that time there have been no fatalities or serious injuries in New South Wales involving hunters or the public. Licenced hunters must be accredited and insured. They must have written permission that includes local maps and detailed conditions on each occasion that they hunt on public land, and they must cover all of their own costs. I can confidently say that New South Wales has the tightest regulations in the country governing hunting on public land.

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

**Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON:** In the seven years since public land hunting in New South Wales commenced we have seen licenced hunters remove more than 91,000 game and feral animals, involving more than 80,000 hunting days. I thank them for the wonderful community service they provide to the farmers of this State, who are responsible for our food production and for keeping members opposite fed. The success of this operation so far undermines the ongoing scaremongering of the Opposition and The Greens about the effectiveness of the program. As with declared State forests, the focus is on removing unwanted introduced animals such as foxes, feral pigs, feral goats, rabbits, wild dogs and hares—creatures only The Greens could love. The national parks program, however, will have a wider range of controls in place. A system of zoning has been developed. [*Time expired.*]

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Members will come to order. There are too many audible private conversations in the Chamber.

**Dr Andrew McDonald:** It was Barry's fault.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I think the member for Macquarie Fields was partly to blame for those conversations. The member should come to order and not argue with the Speaker. It is disorderly.

## REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE

**Mr KEVIN ANDERSON:** My question is directed to the Deputy Premier.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Members will find themselves out of the Chamber without being placed on three calls to order if there are any further interjections during questions asked and answers given.

**Mr KEVIN ANDERSON:** What is the Government doing to rebuild regional economies and any other related matters?

**Mr ANDREW STONER:** I thank the member for Tamworth for a very good question. As members know, the Government is committed to regional communities and we are backing that up with real action. As members are now happily aware, yesterday I visited Glen Innes. For the benefit of members opposite, Glen Innes is a town in Northern Tablelands, not the name of a second rower for the Manly Sea Eagles.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Canterbury has had her final warning.

**Mr ANDREW STONER:** In Glen Innes I had the pleasure of announcing funding—

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

**Mr ANDREW STONER:** I know that members opposite are not interested in regional New South Wales but the rest of us are. At Glen Innes I had the pleasure of announcing funding of up to \$1.6 million for the upgrade of Glen Innes Airport to provide for a new airline training facility.

**Mr Nathan Rees:** Like a chairman's lounge.

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

**Mr ANDREW STONER:** I will get back to the member for Toongabbie later. The funding is for infrastructure upgrades at the airport to allow this flight training facility to proceed. That will inject millions of dollars into the local economy and support up to 400 jobs between construction and the ongoing full-time jobs at the air training academy, along with jobs in aircraft maintenance, fuel distribution and so on. Real jobs and real regional development. Government members deliver for regional New South Wales. Compare that to members opposite, who did nothing for regional New South Wales for 16 long years. But suddenly they seem to have woken up to regional New South Wales, because they have been throwing everything they have towards their campaign for the Northern Tablelands by-election.

Indeed, almost all of the 10 Australian Labor Party frontbenchers have visited the electorate, and while they have been there they have been misleading the good people in Northern Tablelands. I have already spoken in the House about the member for Blacktown being spotted reading that notable tome, "Life in Opposition", at Armidale airport. It was covered brilliantly on page 7 of the *Armidale Express* on the day following his visit with the fantastic headline, "Labor fails to win over rural voters". Yesterday the shadow leader in waiting—

**Ms Linda Burney:** Where is Jock Laurie?

**Mr ANDREW STONER:** Aren't you interested in this?

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

**Mr ANDREW STONER:** Sourpuss.

**Dr Andrew McDonald:** Point of order: I refer to Standing Order 73. I spoke about this yesterday. This is unacceptable in any workplace. Madam Speaker, I ask that you ask the Deputy Premier to withdraw his remark and to stop name-calling. It is not acceptable in any workplace in the State. It is harassment.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I was unable to hear what the Deputy Premier said because of the level of noise in the Chamber.

**Dr Andrew McDonald:** Every member in the House heard the remark. I ask that you ask him to withdraw it.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Macquarie Fields is persistent. The member for Macquarie Fields will resume his seat.

**Dr Andrew McDonald:** I will not sit down until he withdraws the remark.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Macquarie Fields will resume his seat. I did not hear what the Deputy Premier said. Does the Deputy Premier wish to withdraw his remark?

**Mr ANDREW STONER:** If the member for Macquarie Fields is offended by it, I will happily withdraw and refer instead to the embittered member for Canterbury interjecting once again.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I have warned the member for Canterbury on several occasions to cease interjecting.

**Mr ANDREW STONER:** Yesterday we had the shadow Leader in waiting, the Hon. Luke Foley, up in the Northern Tablelands railing against coal seam gas. The only problem is that there is no coal seam gas activity or development in the Northern Tablelands. We also had Labor claiming that Guyra Shire Council is not happy with the \$1.3 million that this Government has provided to upgrade Guyra Road, as announced by the Premier during his visit. However, the mayor, Hans Hietbrink, tells us that not only is the money welcome but that the timing of the money for 2015-16 is perfect because it enables the council to better manage the project. We had the shadow Minister for Health unveiling Labor's plans to downgrade Glen Innes and Inverell hospitals to multipurpose service status, only then to deny it. They are all over the place, all over the shop.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Macquarie Fields will cease shouting.

**Mr ANDREW STONER:** More mistruths from Labor, showing they have not learnt the lessons of the last election. [*Extension of time granted.*]

I thank the member for Tamworth for requesting an extension. The member for Tamworth is interested in regional New South Wales. Going back to the Northern Tablelands by-election, whilst the campaign run by the Labor Party has been far from a textbook campaign, there is no doubt, as I said earlier, that it has thrown absolutely everything at this weekend's by-election. Most of their front bench has visited the Northern Tablelands, including the Leader of the Opposition, the member for Liverpool, the member for Marrickville and the member for Macquarie Fields and six of the seven shadow Ministers in the other place. There is one notable exception: the man best known for advising the last Labor Premier to shut down the Parliament—remember that—and for spreading porkies for political gain about school kids with guns. I refer to one Walt Secord, who obviously is putting his money on an abysmal vote for Labor, unlike the member for Blacktown, who has a lot of skin in the game when it comes to Labor's eventual vote.

A couple of other shadow Ministers did not visit, for the same reason. I refer to the member for Maroubra and the member for Toongabbie. They have not been spotted within cooee of the Northern Tablelands. No doubt they will be more than happy to point the finger of blame at the member for Blacktown should their abysmal campaign deliver a commensurate result. On Saturday the people of the Northern Tablelands will vote to have a voice in a strong and stable government that is delivering on behalf of regional New South Wales. Should that be the case and Adam Marshall is supported, they can rest easy knowing that there will be more Nationals— [*Time expired.*]

### HUNTING IN NATIONAL PARKS

**Ms LINDA BURNEY:** My question is to the Minister for the Environment. Why has the Government's own draft risk assessment explicitly ruled out requirements for amateur hunters to demonstrate their accuracy on a shooting range and a mentoring program for inexperienced shooters, as occurs in South Australia?

**Ms ROBYN PARKER:** Clearly, I have to explain it over and over again to those opposite. The risk assessment process is continuing in order to mitigate any factors, as occurs with any new risky activity in a national park environment.

**Ms Linda Burney:** Risky?

**Ms ROBYN PARKER:** Risky activities such as bushwalking and kayaking and all sorts of other activities in national parks. The supplementary pest control program is also part of the process. The Game Council governance is currently under review and a supplementary pest control program will not commence until following completion of that review.

### COAL INDUSTRY

**Mr GARRY EDWARDS:** My question is directed to the Minister for Resources and Energy, Special Minister of State, and Minister for the Central Coast. What would be the impact on jobs and electricity prices if the coal industry were shut down?

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Government members will come to order. I call the member for Kiama to order.



**Mr CHRIS HARTCHER:** I thank the member for Swansea for his question and acknowledge that in his electorate alone 1,650 jobs are engaged in the coal industry. The coal industry has been a key pillar of our economy for 200 years. It provides energy, exports, jobs and investment. It has been the foundation stone of what was once a great political party, the Australian Labor Party. The industry provides New South Wales \$1.3 billion in royalties and it employs, directly and indirectly, 125,000 people. That means 125,000 families are dependent upon the coal industry. The Government of New South Wales supports a strong coal industry. The Government supports the coal industry workers and their families.

In contrast, let me state this. Last Monday night I addressed a major conference of the mining industry in the Hunter. I was accompanied by that excellent fellow the member for Cessnock. At the same time the Leader of the Opposition was addressing a rally also in the Hunter area. The Leader of the Opposition acknowledged that the industry faced threats, one of those threats being the Australian Labor Party. At the time that the Government was supporting the industry, the Leader of the Opposition went to the Hunter and joined with whacky zealots to attack it. But do not just accept what I have to say: what I have to say is from the perspective of a member of a government that supports jobs. Today the head of the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union, one of the great left-wing unions in New South Wales, had this to say about Mr Robertson's remarks:

I think he was a fool for going there ...

He completely stuffed up the answer.

It gets better. Mr Maher said that John Robertson's policy of closing down the coal industry "has a snowflake's chance in hell" of "ever seeing the light of day".

**Ms Linda Burney:** You have been following Cate Faehrmann too much.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Canterbury will remove herself from the Chamber.

**Mr Chris Hartcher:** Was that the sourpuss? One, two, three.

**Mr John Robertson:** Withdraw that remark.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I direct the member for Canterbury to remove herself from the Chamber until the conclusion of question time. I have warned her several times and given her several chances.

*[Pursuant to sessional order the member for Canterbury left the Chamber at 2.48 p.m.]*

**Mr John Robertson:** Point of order: I refer to Standing Order 73. I know that the Minister likes to use up the time in this manner. But once again there has been a concerted effort by those on the other side to continually call the member for Canterbury by an inappropriate name, and this time the Minister—

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

**Mr John Robertson:** Standing order 73, as I said at the outset.

**Mr CHRIS HARTCHER:** It is over. She has gone. You do not have to back her any more.

**Mr John Robertson:** I actually asked him to withdraw the remark, Madam Speaker.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I caution the Minister about using inappropriate terms and remind him of the standing orders relating to elected officers.

**Mr CHRIS HARTCHER:** I will return to the remarks of the general president of the union.

**Mr Richard Amery:** Point of order: Standing Order 75 applies even when the comment is directed towards a woman member of Parliament.

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

**Mr CHRIS HARTCHER:** The general president said—this is a good one: "Quite frankly, the New South Wales parliamentary wing of the party, until they're more than a cricket team I won't worry." Until they

number more than a cricket team the union will not worry. He went on to say Labor was all about jobs and "any leader that doesn't recognise that won't last very long". These comments were not made by a member of the Liberal Party or The Nationals they were made by the head of one of the big unions in New South Wales. *[Extension of time granted.]*

What is at stake here is jobs. What is at stake here is 125,000 jobs. What is at stake here is the New South Wales economy, and 90 per cent the State's electricity depends on coal. What is at stake here is the port of Newcastle, which is the world's largest coal-exporting port. The Leader of the Opposition is prepared to put all of this on the altar of political expediency simply to satisfy the whacko Greens of this world. Let us look at some Labor electorates. The member for Wallsend has in her electorate 2,000 people directly employed in the mining industry. The member for Cessnock has in his electorate 9,600 people directly dependent on the mining industry for jobs. Every member who represents an electorate in the Hunter Valley, such as the Minister for the Environment—

**Mr Ryan Park:** What about me?

**Mr CHRIS HARTCHER:** You are not from the Hunter Valley, mate. Do not put your hand up. Every member with an electorate in the Hunter Valley now knows that the Labor Party, through its leader and the Hon. Luke Foley, had a plan, as announced by the Leader of the Opposition last weekend, to develop a strategy for 2015 to close down the coalmining industry. Once the great Labor Party—it was once a great party—stood for the workers and coalminers in this State, but no longer. Not one single member on that side of the House—

*[Interruption]*

Not one single Opposition member, including the member for Cabramatta and his special car park out at Cabramatta, represents the workers of this State. *[Time expired.]*

#### HUNTING IN NATIONAL PARKS

**Ms ANNA WATSON:** My question is to the Minister for the Environment. Given that hunting in South Australian national parks has had to be suspended after someone was shot—and that State has tougher restrictions on amateur hunters than the Minister is proposing—can the Minister guarantee that no-one will be shot in a New South Wales national park?

**Ms ROBYN PARKER:** I refer to my three previous answers on this issue.

#### NORTH WEST RAIL LINK

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET:** My question is directed to the Minister for Transport. What progress is the Government making on the North West Rail Link?

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** I thank the hardworking member for Castle Hill for asking me that question. It has been a very significant week in terms of delivery of the North West Rail Link. I was delighted to announce another major milestone that will have a positive impact on this project and on everybody living in north-western Sydney, as well as all of Sydney for many generations to come. This week the New South Wales Government has received planning approval for the project's second and final environmental impact statement. This is a significant achievement and I thank my colleague the Minister for Planning for facilitating that. It is a monumental milestone for this project. It means that we now officially move to full construction phase from planning phase, something members opposite do not know about. They planned everything but did not construct anything. This will mean that residents will see construction activity along the length of the rail line in coming months.

We are now busy preparing for the first tunnel boring machines to be in the ground by the end of next year. Those opposite spoke about the project for a decade but delivered nothing. I am sure all members will be pleased to know that so far we have issued 27 tenders and 46 key contracts in relation to this project. That is progress. As we move along with this project not only are we pushing ahead, we are also listening to the community. I will give some examples. The first environmental impact statement process, which was approved in September last year, gave the green light to build the 15 kilometres of tunnels, undertake the station excavations and start work on the four kilometre sky train. Following community feedback on our first environmental impact statement we were able to amend our plans.

The number of stations went from six to eight, the number of commuter car parks increased from 3,000 to 4,000 and we secured the future of the Castle Hill Showground, which I know means a lot to members of the north-west community. We also made sure that we eased disruption to Norwest Boulevard during construction by moving Norwest station slightly and we made a commitment to reduce the size of the Cheltenham construction site by more than 2,000 square metres. That was in the first environmental impact statement. We listened to the community and worked with the community to deliver those benefits.

We listened again when we took the second environmental impact statement to the community. We received more than 300 submissions and following community feedback I am pleased to announce that the project will include a review of proposed bus access to and around the new Cherrybrook station and realigning the design of Bella Vista station. It will ensure improvements to Old Windsor Road. The Department of Planning and Infrastructure has included a number of conditions of approval such as a review of bus and vehicle access options for Cherrybrook station with the objective of reducing potential impacts on local roads near the station. That follows significant feedback from local residents. Another condition was to design the rail line so that it operates within appropriate noise and vibration levels at all existing and approved developments, which is in line with community expectations.

As a result of our listening to the community these improvements will ensure the potential impacts during construction and the operation of the project are managed within acceptable community standards. Again, critically, I am pleased to say our focus is now firmly on construction. We have gone through those vital planning stages and we are now getting on with the construction. That is why we have been communicating with the local community to say that over coming weeks and months there will be fencing construction work around worksites, new access roads will be built, new traffic lights will be installed and there will also be demolition works. In particular, these works will be undertaken at Castle Hill, Cherrybrook, Rouse Hill, Bella Vista and the showgrounds.

One of the conditions of approval includes ensuring traffic management plans are in place during construction, and we are doing this. Those opposite are desperate to know the starting date of the project. They keep saying there is no start date. They have even put out brochures about when the project is starting. That is because they have not experienced a project going from the planning stage to construction stage. This week brought back some bad memories when I was reading the last of the former Labor Government's nine or 10 transport plans. [*Extension of time granted.*]

The last of their glossy brochures included plans for the North West Rail Link and the South West Rail Link. It also included an upgrade as part of the package to parts of St Leonards to Chatswood. The total cost of those projects in their document was estimated at \$9.5 billion. In the next 10 years they had allocated only \$2.7 billion for the North West Rail Link and the South West Rail Link. On that reckoning, it would have taken 30 years to build the north west and south west rail links. In contrast, members on this side of the House are getting on with the job. This week marks a significant milestone. If Opposition members went to the north-west, they would witness the flurry of activity. They would also see the early works that have been going on for months, and those works will ramp up. The Leader of the Opposition scoffs, but his own council supports this project.

**Mr John Robertson:** I support it.

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** It has taken him two years, but he now supports the project.

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

**Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN:** I do not take his comment seriously. My strong message to the community is that whilst we are entering an exciting phase of this project, we acknowledge that disruptions will exist and we will work with the community to mitigate and minimise those disruptions. I thank all community organisations and individuals who have made submissions on the environmental impact statements and I thank the Minister for Planning for granting approval of these important environmental impact statements.

#### INNER-CITY EDUCATION

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH:** My question is directed to the Minister for Education. He should not worry, I is not a gay question.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Members will come to order.

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH:** Will the Minister inform the House of his Government's commitment to inner-city education, including whether proposals to increase the local intake at Sydney Boys High School in year 7 will be considered, given an increase is supported by the school's headmaster, the parents and citizens association, and the local community?

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI:** I advise the member for Sydney that the Government is extremely committed to inner-city education and providing the support and accommodation that inner-city schools require, as well as addressing the capacity issues to which the member has referred. I am aware of the proposal by Sydney Boys High School that its local intake into year 7 be increased. This morning, together with the member for Oatley and the Premier, I had the pleasure of visiting the Georges River College Peakhurst campus. The Government continues to rebuild schools across the State. That project at Peakhurst cost more than \$5 million. I had constructive conversation with the acting principal, who said that it was refreshing for the school to have a say in the design of its gymnasium. That did not happen under the former Labor Government's communist style of centralisation. The member for Liverpool loves it, but the schools do not.

This Government is allowing communities to have a say. I spoke to Dr Kim Jaggar, Principal of Sydney Boys High School, about the proposal in strange circumstances. I was playing tennis with a good friend of mine, David Deep, who is the tennis coach at the school. The principal wanted to have a chat to me about this issue, so we ducked in to say hello. Sydney Boys High School is one of 48 selective schools in New South Wales that has a common selection criteria based on academic merit. Applicants for selective high school entry into year 7 must complete an intensive test consisting of reading, writing, mathematics and general ability components.

**Ms Noreen Hay:** You'd fail.

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI:** I probably would. It is a very difficult test, and so it should be. An applicant's primary school provides a score out of 100 for English and mathematics. These scores are scaled and aggregated with the test scores to form a profile score. Places are offered in order of the profile score, which ranks all candidates in relation to each school they applied for. However, each of the selective high schools has the flexibility to set its own selection criteria for years 8 to 12. The Principal of Sydney Boys High School has asked for discretion in year 7. I emphasise to principals that this Government takes a different approach to the former Labor Government in supporting government and non-government schools.

If they think a process ought to be changed, they can ask the Government, the Minister for Education or the Director General and we will consider it. We will never say no out of hand. We will listen. I am not suggesting that the answer is going to be the one that the principal is looking for, but if the principal has good ideas then we listen to them. Many of the reforms we have instituted so far have come from listening to their suggestions. We have changed the procurement process for schools. Previously it was a cumbersome process whereby individual schools had to go to the department's website to buy products up to the value of \$5,000. Those products can now be bought locally. It does not just save time, it is a huge boost for the school and it is great for local businesses in those communities. There is pressure on inner-city schools, as there is on schools on the North Shore.

**Dr Geoff Lee:** Parramatta.

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI:** And in Parramatta and other parts of New South Wales. Glebe Public School has seven spare rooms and Marrickville High School has 31 spare rooms. I am not suggesting it is easy for parents to shift their children to different schools. The difficulty is that the vacant space is not always where the demand is. A couple of inner-west schools have vacancies. The Government is committed to inner-city education as well as to education throughout the State. We will consider the proposal put forward by the Principal of Sydney Boys High School and we will continue to make the best improvements for students across this State.

#### **LOCAL GOVERNMENT CLOSED-CIRCUIT TELEVISION CAMERA SURVEILLANCE**

**Mr GARETH WARD:** My question is directed to the Minister for Local Government and Minister for the North Coast. What is the Government doing to ensure that New South Wales councils can once again use closed-circuit television camera systems for crime prevention?

**Mr DONALD PAGE:** I thank the member for Kiama for his question and his strong interest in this subject. He will be pleased with the swift action that the New South Wales Government has taken to ensure that

local councils can continue to use closed-circuit television cameras to assist local police to catch criminals who operate in public places. I also thank Madam Speaker in her other role as the hardworking member for South Coast and also the hardworking member for Kiama for their combined efforts and strong commitment to this issue. Closed-circuit television surveillance was under question this month following a decision by the Administrative Decisions Tribunal relating to the use of closed-circuit television cameras by Shoalhaven City Council in the Nowra central business district.

A private citizen believed that the cameras were an invasion of his privacy and complained about the cameras being used to record his image. He pursued the matter, which was ultimately heard by the Administrative Decisions Tribunal. The Administrative Decisions Tribunal ruled that the cameras contravened privacy laws by collecting and storing personal information and that the council had not demonstrated that the cameras were necessary to deal with crime. The Administrative Decisions Tribunal required Shoalhaven City Council to "refrain from any conduct or action in contravention of the information protection principle or a privacy code of practice." The council then took an administrative decision to turn off all the cameras. I make it perfectly clear that the Government is committed to protecting the safety and wellbeing of the New South Wales community. This includes ensuring that police have the necessary tools to fight and investigate crime.

Police often partner with local councils to keep local communities safe. The system in Nowra provided a live stream of images to the Nowra police station. The footage was viewed by officers on duty who were able to monitor and respond to incidents. The system had widespread community support, and assisted police in their investigations and in laying charges and also gave a sense of safety to the public in the central business district. It has also acted as a strong deterrent against criminal behaviour. Closed-circuit television technology is vital in keeping communities safe, and the Government wants to ensure that councils can use it. It was very disappointing to hear today that The Greens in the other place have moved a disallowance motion with regard to the Government's regulation. In doing so, they are protecting criminals and exposing the community to potential crime and violence.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I cannot hear the Minister's response. Members will come to order.

**Mr DONALD PAGE:** It is disgraceful that under the guise of privacy protection The Greens want to cloak criminals in anonymity. I urge the member for Balmain and other members of The Greens to stand up for their communities and to fight for the safety of people throughout the State. We have seen countless examples of this technology being used to fight crime both in Australia and overseas. In dealing with the tragic murder of Jill Meagher in Melbourne, police used closed-circuit television footage to track down and bring the perpetrator to justice. Closed-circuit television was also an essential tool in tracking down the Boston marathon terrorist bombers. It was only with the assistance of closed-circuit television footage that the community was able to identify and support the authorities in their investigations. Alcohol-fuelled violence in Byron Bay in my electorate has become a serious problem, especially late at night. Closed-circuit television cameras would be an invaluable tool in apprehending the perpetrators.

I am very pleased that Tony Abbott has announced that a Federal Coalition Government will allocate \$50 million to councils around the country for the installation of closed-circuit television cameras to assist in crime reduction. That is a welcome announcement. I also thank my colleague the Attorney General for the swift action he has taken to amend the Privacy and Personal Information Protection Regulation Act 2005. On 17 May I issued a ministerial circular assuring all councils that closed-circuit television cameras are here to stay. The circular advised that councils can continue using closed-circuit television cameras to assist local police in preventing and dealing with crime in public spaces. The Government is also taking all the necessary steps to ensure that privacy requirements are being met. [*Extension of time granted.*]

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

**Mr DONALD PAGE:** We must maintain the right of people to enjoy public spaces without the threat of crime and violence. That is why the O'Farrell-Stoner Government acted quickly to ensure that closed-circuit television technology can continue to serve the public of New South Wales and assist the NSW Police Force to identify and track offenders.

## HUNTING IN NATIONAL PARKS

**Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON:** It was such a joy to be asked a question about rural affairs earlier that I feel I must add to the information I have already provided. The Game Council offers free licence testing,

and people will be able to sit the test at the Sporting Shooters Association Expo that will be held this weekend in Melbourne rather than go to a Game Council office or their local club. The test is normally open book and it is offered free of charge at Game Council offices, although shooting clubs generally impose a fee. It is important to note that this is not new; it was introduced by the former Labor Government.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Keira will stop shouting.

**Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON:** It was not introduced to cater for shooting in national parks; it was introduced to cater for pest control both on private property and in State forests.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I remind the Leader of the Opposition that this is not the time to argue. Government members will come to order.

**Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON:** This is not a free licence offer; licences cost \$75 a year. The fee is not waived.

**Question time concluded at 3.12 p.m.**

### **PETITIONS**

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

#### **Sydney Electorate Public High School**

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

#### **Walsh Bay Precinct Public Transport**

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

#### **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**.

#### **Slaughterhouse Monitoring**

Petition requesting mandatory closed-circuit television for all New South Wales slaughterhouses, received from **Mr Alex Greenwich**.

#### **Public Housing Rents**

Petition calling on the Government not to raise public housing rents when Centrelink benefits are increased, received from **Mr Richard Amery**.

#### **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**.

**COURTS AND OTHER MISCELLANEOUS LEGISLATION 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) [3.15 p.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Government is pleased to introduce the Courts and Other Miscellaneous Legislation Amendment Bill 2013, which will make miscellaneous amendments to legislation affecting the operation of the courts of New South Wales and other legislation administered by the Attorney General and Minister for Justice. Schedule 1.1 to the bill amends various provisions in the Anti-Discrimination Act 1977. The amendments clarify that, for a complaint of indirect discrimination, there is no need to prove that a protected ground of discrimination under the Act is a reason for the discriminatory treatment, requirement or condition. These amendments reflect the New South Wales Court of Appeal decision in *Amery and Ors v. State of New South Wales (Director General New South Wales Department of Education and Training)*. The Court of Appeal considered the concept of indirect discrimination and its treatment in earlier cases.

Indirect discrimination includes acts, decisions or requirements, made by reference to criteria that are apparently non-discriminatory but that have a disparate impact on men and women. The Court of Appeal concluded that a requirement under subsection 24 (1) (b) that the discrimination be "on the ground of the aggrieved person's sex" is not consistent with the concept of indirect discrimination. The Court of Appeal concluded that the inclusion of these words in relation to sub-section 24 (1) (b) was a drafting error and should be ignored. The amendments in this bill reflect the decision in *Amery* regarding the correct interpretation of section 24 (1) of the Anti-Discrimination Act. Schedule 1.2 to the bill amends section 122 of the Civil Procedure Act 2005 to clarify how the maximum total payment under a wage or salary garnishee order is calculated. Section 122 of the Civil Procedure Act 2005 still refers to repealed section 37 (1) (a) (i) of the Workers Compensation Act 1987.

This was an oversight in the 2012 amendments to the Workers Compensation Act 1987. The amendment resolves this anomaly. Schedule 1.3 to the bill amends section 13 of the Dust Diseases Tribunal Act 1989 to enable the Chief Judge and President of the tribunal to delegate to another member of the tribunal functions relating to managing the proceedings list; namely, fixing the time, place and before whom proceedings are to be held. Schedule 1.4 to the bill will amend section 5BA of the Evidence (Audio and Audio Visual Links) Act 1998 to allow accused detainees to appear in first appearance bail proceedings via an audiovisual link during the Local Court annual conference and the Christmas-New Year period each year. The proposed amendment will facilitate greater efficiencies, particularly at times of the year when availability of staff is low and resources are limited.

Schedule 1.5 to the bill inserts section 11 (8) into the Fines Act 1996 to allow specified registrars of the district, local and children's courts to authorise employees of the Department of Attorney General and Justice to consider applications for further time to pay a court-imposed fine. Schedule 1.6 to the bill amends schedule 2 of the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 to exclude information relating to the functions of the DNA Review Panel, other than its functions relating to reporting and making recommendations to the Minister, from being accessed under that Act. This amendment will make it clear to potential applicants which information held by the panel cannot be the subject of an access application.

Schedule 1.7 to the bill amends section 25 of the Local Court Act 2007 and provides for the appointment of a legally qualified and admitted police prosecutor as a member of the Local Court Rule Committee when the committee is exercising its functions in respect of matters relating to the court's criminal jurisdiction. It is in the public interest to include a police representative on the committee when it considers criminal procedure rules. Schedule 1.8 to the bill amends section 66 of the Young Offenders Act 1997 to authorise the information exchanges necessary to commence the new Youth on Track scheme. In February 2013 I announced the innovative new Youth on Track scheme, which follows an early intervention model designed to prevent young people at risk of committing crimes from becoming entrenched in criminal behaviour.

Specifically, the bill authorises New South Wales police to provide information to officers of the Department of Attorney General and Justice about warnings, cautions and conferences given to young people under the Young Offenders Act. This information includes criminal history, current offence details and the nature of previous contact with New South Wales police. The bill also authorises officers in the Department of

Attorney General and Justice to enter into arrangements permitting the provision of information about young people to non-government organisations engaged to provide services as part of Youth on Track. 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.**

### **WORK HEALTH AND SAFETY (MINES) BILL 2013**

**Bill introduced on motion by Mr Chris Hartcher, read a first time and printed.**

#### **Second Reading**

**Mr CHRIS HARTCHER** (Terrigal—Minister for Resources and Energy, Special Minister of State, and Minister for the Central Coast) [3.23 p.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Work Health and Safety (Mines) Bill 2013 will continue to ensure the ongoing regulation of health and safety in the New South Wales mining industry. This bill finalises implementation of the national harmonisation of work health and safety laws in New South Wales. This bill allows New South Wales to adopt the provisions of the national model Work Health and Safety (Mines) Regulation and additional provisions developed cooperatively by the New South Wales, Queensland and Western Australia regulators, unions and employer groups. In 2008 the Council of Australian Governments agreed to implement a coordinated national approach to uniform work health and safety laws and consistent mine safety regulation.

In recognition of the significant risks involved with mining undertaken in the three major mining States, particularly in relation to coalmining, it was also agreed that a tri-state process involving New South Wales, Queensland and Western Australia would develop additional mining-specific provisions. The passing of the proposed legislation by 1 July 2013 will help ensure that New South Wales secures reward funding of \$79 million under the Council of Australian Governments National Partnership Agreement to deliver a seamless national economy. The bill establishes the mechanism for the inclusion of additional and appropriate mining-specific regulatory provisions for mining workplaces within the Work Health and Safety Act framework. The bill will replace the Coal Mine Health and Safety Act and the Mine Health Safety Act with one mine-specific legislative scheme.

The objects of the bill include protecting the health and safety of people at mines, providing effective provisions for emergencies, ensuring competency standards for people performing certain functions at mines, providing coal-specific worker representatives and providing additional enforcement powers. The bill enables the establishment of the Mine Safety Advisory Council, boards of inquiry and interstate regulatory cooperation. The bill applies to all workplaces that are mines. It adopts the model mines regulation provisions that define a mine as a place where mining operations are carried out. The bill maintains a consistent approach to the current jurisdiction and current application of the existing mine safety regulatory scheme in New South Wales.

I will now go through the detailed provisions in the bill. The notification of serious workplace incidents is a key element of the work health and safety framework. Under the bill, the appointed mine operator has overall responsibility for work health and safety at a mining workplace. The bill requires a mine operator to ensure the notification to the regulator of notifiable incidents, that is, the death of a person, serious injury or illness, or a dangerous incident. The bill also requires a mine operator to notify other high potential incidents, which will be specified in the regulation. The bill ensures there is appropriate regulatory oversight of mining operations. The regulator will be the Director General of the Department of Trade and Investment, Regional Infrastructure and Services.

The bill provides for the powers and functions of the regulator that are consistent with the Work Health and Safety Act. These regulator functions include monitoring and enforcing compliance, and providing advice and information on work health and safety to the Minister, duty holders and the community. In the bill government officials include inspectors, mine safety officers and investigators who will require specific skills, knowledge, experience and qualifications related to mining operations. The bill provides for circumstances additional to those in the Work Health and Safety Act where an improvement notice or prohibition notice may be in respect of a mining workplace.



These provisions maintain the effect of existing enforcement measures under the existing Coal Mine Health and Safety Act and the Mine Health and Safety Act. There is no reduction in enforcement powers for mines inspectors and investigators. These powers reflect the need for early intervention to prevent the effects of catastrophic risk associated with mining. The bill streamlines an inspector's enforcement powers to enable proactive intervention to address mining risks. The bill also provides for the regulator to make a stop work order if it is necessary to prevent a serious risk to the health or safety of any person at a mine. Mining incidents have the potential to seriously injure or kill large numbers of mineworkers.

An underground coalmine explosion at New Zealand's Pike River coalmine in 2010 killed 29 mine workers. The Pike River royal commission made a number of recommendations about how to prevent mine tragedies after considering the fatal explosion at Pike River. The royal commission's final report was reviewed by the Mine Safety Advisory Council and the tri-state legislation working group. The review of the Pike River report confirmed that the proposed New South Wales legislative scheme applying to coalmines met the appropriate standards. The Mine Safety Advisory Council is a body established under the Mining Act 1992. The bill provides for the continuation of the council with the provisions being transferred from the Mining Act 1992 into the bill. The council is a tripartite group comprising representatives from the regulator, employers and employees, as well as independent health and safety experts.

I now turn my attention to the competence of people with safety-critical roles in mining. Many inquiries and commissions into major mining hazards have identified the need for people with specific skills and expertise to manage mining operations. The Mining Competence Board will determine competence standards for safety-critical roles and undertake the assessment of people to perform those roles, which will be identified in the regulation. The bill also provides for the Minister to have the power to establish boards of inquiry. A board of inquiry may be set up to inquire into an event or dangerous occurrence that has caused death or serious injury at a mine, and into its causes and circumstances.

The high-risk nature of coalmining has warranted special attention by governments and mining operators. Underground coalmines are inherently hazardous workplaces because of the potential explosive atmospheres associated with methane. The bill ensures that the existing coalmine-specific worker representative arrangements are maintained. These arrangements are consistent with Queensland—the other key coal jurisdiction—and the recommendations from the Pike River royal commission report. Industry safety and health representatives, and site-specific safety and health representatives will supplement existing work health and safety worker representatives. The key coalmining stakeholders, the NSW Minerals Council and the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union [CFMEU], Mining and Energy Division, are in agreement on the coal-specific worker representatives.

This scheme is a re-alignment of the "check inspector" scheme under the Coal Mine Health and Safety Act. It enables a practical framework for the concurrent operation of worker representation, consultation and participation schemes under both the bill and the Work Health and Safety Act. The coalmine specific safety and health representatives have all the powers and functions of health and safety representatives under the Work Health and Safety Act. The bill provides for the Minister to appoint industry safety and health representatives. The industry safety and health representatives will be able to enter and inspect a workplace at a coalmine. Additionally, they will be able to review the content and implementation of a coalmine safety management system, participate in an investigation of an event, occurrence or notifiable incident, and assist in the training of other representatives.

The bill will require industry safety and health representatives to take reasonable steps to notify a government official of their intent to issue a notice to suspend operations prior to issuing the notice. The bill sets out provisions for the election, disqualification and rights of site-specific safety and health representatives, including electrical representatives. They may only exercise powers or perform functions in respect of the coalmine for which they are elected. Provisional improvement notices at a coalmine will be limited to site-specific safety and health representatives only. However, before a site safety and health representative exercises this power the representative must consult with any relevant health and safety representative under the Work Health and Safety Act for a work group that comprises workers at the mine who will be affected by the provisional improvement notice.

Electrical safety and health representatives' powers and functions will apply to the whole of the coalmine, but only with respect to electrical equipment and installations, and issues and risks arising from their use. Under the bill the Mine Safety Advisory Council and the Mining Competence Board will continue and the Minister will be able to constitute a board of inquiry. To enable effective regulation of a nationally harmonised

model, the bill makes provision for the sharing of information with regulators of corresponding mining-specific work health and safety laws. These regulators may retain separate, stand-alone mine safety legislation from the corresponding Work Health and Safety Act in their jurisdiction. The Work Health and Safety Act recognises the important role of codes of practice.

The bill ensures that the agreed mining codes of practice can be approved by the Minister. Codes of practice have evidentiary status and are an agreed way that a duty holder can reasonably and practicably comply with his or her legislative obligations. The bill makes it clear that the process for developing mining codes of practice requires consultation only with stakeholders in the relevant jurisdictions—that is, those jurisdictions that intend to adopt the codes. The Government has consulted with the major mining stakeholder groups on the bill. The stakeholder groups, the NSW Minerals Council, Cement Concrete and Aggregates Australia, Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union and Australian Workers Union, represent the bulk of mine operators and mine workers. These stakeholders have been involved all the way through the process of developing the model Work Health and Safety Mines Regulation. Importantly, the bill does not reduce the legislated safety standards for mine workers. 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.**

## **NSW SELF INSURANCE CORPORATION AMENDMENT BILL 2013**

### **Second Reading**

**Debate resumed from 9 May 2013.**

**Mr MICHAEL DALEY** (Maroubra) [3.33 p.m.]: I lead for the Opposition in debate on the NSW Self Insurance Corporation Amendment Bill 2013 and state at the outset that the Opposition supports the bill. The NSW Self Insurance Corporation [SICorp] is a not-for-profit statutory corporation constituted by the NSW Self Insurance Corporation Act 2004 and is a part of NSW Treasury. The NSW Self Insurance Corporation's function is to administer the New South Wales Government's managed funds schemes. The main managed funds scheme known as the Treasury Managed Fund [TMF] is the New South Wales's Government self-insurance scheme. The Treasury Managed Fund protects the insurable assets and liability exposures of all general government sector agencies and a number of State-owned corporations that have joined the scheme such as Sydney Water, Barangaroo Delivery Authority and Forests NSW, amongst others. In addition to the Treasury Managed Fund, the NSW Self Insurance Corporation also administers the Home Warranty Insurance Fund and a number of other government insurance schemes that have now closed.

On 1 July 2010 the NSW Self Insurance Corporation became the sole home warranty insurer of New South Wales following a veritable collapse in the home warranty market amongst private insurers in New South Wales. The Home Warranty Insurance Scheme is a comprehensive consumer protection regime for home owners undertaking residential building projects in New South Wales where the contract price exceeds \$20,000. When builders are unable to honour their commitments under a contract due to insolvency, death or disappearance, home warranty insurance provides a safety net for home owners. In the same way as the NSW Self Insurance Corporation provides protection as a part of the Home Warranty Insurance Scheme, the Government now wishes to extend the activities of the NSW Self Insurance Corporation to provide construction insurance for certain major capital works projects undertaken by or on behalf of the State or an authority of the State.

Clause 8C of the bill provides that the NSW Self Insurance Corporation will provide principal arranged construction insurance with respect to major capital works in New South Wales. Major capital works are the construction of a building, road, tramway, railway, bridge, tunnel or other capital works where one or more of the principals—that is, a party to the contract or a member of a partnership, joint venture or other arrangement—is the State or an authority of the State. The bill provides for the establishment of a Construction Risk Insurance Fund in the Special Deposits account of the Treasury and the investment of money in the funds. Premiums paid by principals will be paid into the fund and payment of the claims on insurance will be paid out of the fund. The fund will be administered by the NSW Self Insurance Corporation. In his second reading speech the Treasurer said:

... the NSW Self Insurance Corporation will be able to provide the same level of cover at a significantly lower cost compared with individual private contractors insuring themselves directly in the market.

It would appear that the driving principal behind this aspect of the bill is simply to save the Government money when securing insurance contracts for its major capital works. The Opposition takes no exception to that, but notes with a touch of irony that in the Motor Accidents Injuries Amendment Bill, which was debated yesterday, the Government provided for the settlement of all funds from damages for people with mental illnesses, children and the like to be settled into the NSW Trustee and Guardian, excluding private trust organisations in this State. But here we have the Government getting back into the insurance game for construction works. It is not without a touch of irony that the Liberal Party—that great bastion of free enterprise—is nationalising on a State basis this aspect of its own insurance for certain capital works. The Opposition takes no exception to that.

**Mr Gareth Ward:** A bill that you are supporting.

**Mr MICHAEL DALEY:** From time to time it is our job to point out certain ironies—as rare as they may be. The bill also provides that the NSW Self Insurance Corporation may also now provide protection on an individual basis to certain eligible State officials for claims made against them in connection with the exercise of their function. In the same way as directors of corporations are insured from liability by means of directors and officers insurance, certain State officials, whether employees, officers, members, directors or other officers of State authorities such as State-owned corporations are covered by an indemnity provided by the State Government. In his second reading speech the Treasurer said:

... more adequate arrangements are needed to enable the NSW Self Insurance Corporation to confirm the protection that is available to these individuals".

We think that is a prudent measure. The bill provides that in exercising its functions to arrange insurance for eligible officers, the NSW Self Insurance Corporation may not insure them directly but may only enter into contracts of insurance to arrange this coverage. The Opposition finds the bill uncontroversial and supports its provisions.

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN** (Cronulla) [3.38 p.m.]: I support the NSW Self Insurance Corporation Amendment Bill 2013. The bill amends the NSW Self Insurance Corporation Act 2004 to achieve two main objectives: to confirm that the NSW Insurance Corporation [SICorp] may provide protection to state officials on an individual basis for claims made against them in relation to their functions; and to facilitate the provision of principal arranged construction insurance that extends to non-government contractors for major capital works undertaken on behalf of the State. At the moment the NSW Treasury Managed Fund, operated by the NSW Self Insurance Corporation, provides protection for the State in relation to liabilities incurred by State officials. Concern has been expressed by officers and directors of State authorities about the enforceability of the cover provided to them as the Treasury Managed Fund is not insurance. Therefore, the bill proposes that an indemnity will be provided by Self Insurance Corporation that protects the individual in the exercise of his or her functions. These changes do not alter the cover that directors and officers of Treasury Managed Fund agencies currently receive.

Item [6] in schedule 1 will amend the principal Act by stipulating that the Self Insurance Corporation can enter into contracts of insurance to cover liabilities to which a government-managed fund scheme applies but only in the capacity of the insured and not as the insurer. Turning to the component of the bill that deals with principal arranged construction insurance, I note that cost savings will be achieved in making principal arranged construction insurance available, that is, construction insurance arranged by the customer—public sector agencies—and not the contractor, which is the private sector. The bill will also deliver other benefits to the Government over insurances arranged by the contractor by ensuring that, first, insurance arrangements are in place with a reputable insurer; secondly, administrative red tape is minimised, in particular by removing the burden of ensuring contractor policies remain current; and, thirdly, risk management is improved through better assessment of aggregated risk profiles for major capital works.

Importantly, the bill will ensure that contractors will not be loading the contract price with an inflated insurance premium. Aon Benfield estimates that this could deliver savings to government of 30 per cent to 40 per cent of the insurance premium. Principal arranged construction insurance will be provided through a newly established Construction Risks Insurance Fund, to be administered by the Self Insurance Corporation. The Self Insurance Corporation will reinsure aspects of the risks in the international reinsurance market, as is presently the case. The bill provides certainty and efficiency in the delivery of insurance for major capital works undertaken on behalf of the State and for eligible State officials. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr NICK LALICH** (Cabramatta) [3.41 p.m.]: I make a brief contribution to debate on the NSW Self Insurance Corporation Amendment Bill 2013. The object of the bill is to amend the NSW Self Insurance

Corporation Act 2004 to enable the NSW Self Insurance Corporation to provide protection to individuals who are eligible State officials to cover authorities to which they belong for claims made against them in connection with the exercise of their functions; and to enable the NSW Self Insurance Corporation to provide principal-arranged construction insurance that extends to non-government contractors for certain major capital works projects undertaken by or on behalf of the State or an authority of the State.

The NSW Self Insurance Corporation is a not-for-profit statutory corporation constituted by the NSW Self Insurance Corporation Act 2004. The role of the NSW Self Insurance Corporation is to administer the New South Wales Government's managed fund schemes; the main fund it manages is the Treasury Managed Fund, which is the New South Wales Government self-insurance scheme. The Treasury Managed Fund is there to protect the insurable assets and liability exposures of all general government sector agencies and a number of State-owned corporations. Additionally, the NSW Self Insurance Corporation administers the home warranty insurance fund and a number of other government-based insurance schemes which are now closed. Amendments made within this bill will empower the NSW Self Insurance Corporation to provide construction insurance for particular major capital works projects throughout New South Wales.

Major capital works include the construction of roads, railways, bridges, tunnels, buildings, tramways or any other major capital works, and this insurance will provide protection to the State's interests and liabilities when undertaking any such major capital works projects. This bill will also enable the NSW Self Insurance Corporation to provide protection on an individual basis to any eligible State official for claims made against them in connection with the exercise of their functions. This may be likened to the way directors of corporations are protected from liability by means of directors and officers insurance. Certain State officials, whether they are employees, officers, members, directors or officers of other State authorities, will be covered by an indemnity provided by the State Government.

*[Business interrupted.]*

## LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL VACANCY

### Joint Sitting

At 3.45 p.m. the House proceeded to the Legislative Council Chamber to attend a joint sitting for the purpose of electing a person to hold the place in the Legislative Council vacated by Mr Eric Michael Roozendaal.

At 3.57 p.m. the House reassembled.

**The SPEAKER:** I report that the House has met with the Legislative Council in the Legislative Council Chamber this day for the purpose of electing a person to hold the place in the Legislative Council vacated by the Honourable Eric Michael Roozendaal and that Ernest Kwok Chung Wong was duly elected. I table the Minutes of the Proceedings of the Joint Sitting of the Houses of Parliament of the State of New South Wales held today to choose a person to fill the vacancy in the Legislative Council caused by the resignation of the Honourable Eric Michael Roozendaal.

**Ordered to be printed.**

## NSW SELF INSURANCE CORPORATION AMENDMENT BILL 2013

### Second Reading

*[Business resumed.]*

**Mr NICK LALICH** (Cabramatta) [3.58 p.m.]: This bill will provide that in exercising its functions to arrange insurance for eligible officers, the NSW Self Insurance Corporation may not insure the individuals directly but may only enter into contracts of insurance to arrange this coverage. The NSW Self Insurance Corporation Amendment Bill 2013 in essence provides for and empowers the NSW Self Insurance Corporation to protect our major capital works throughout the State through the establishment of a construction risk insurance fund and also offers protection on an individual basis to particular eligible State officials. The Opposition does not oppose this bill.

**Mr JOHN FLOWERS** (Rockdale) [3.59 p.m.]: I make a contribution to the NSW Self Insurance Corporation Amendment Bill 2013. The NSW Self Insurance Corporation [SICorp] oversees a number of

government self-insurance schemes, provides principal arranged insurance and provides home warranty insurance. The object of the bill is to amend the NSW Self Insurance Corporation Act 2004 to confirm that the NSW Self Insurance Corporation may provide protection on an individual basis to eligible State officials—in addition, or as an alternative, to cover for authorities to which they belong—for claims made against them in connection with the exercise of their functions. The bill also enables the NSW Self Insurance Corporation to provide principal arranged construction insurance that extends to non-government contractors for certain major capital works projects undertaken by or on behalf of the State or an authority of the State.

The NSW Treasury managed fund provides protection for the State and State authorities in relation to liabilities incurred by State officials. The fund is not insurance and individuals, typically directors and officers of State authorities, have expressed concerns about the enforceability of the cover provided to them. It is proposed that an indemnity will be provided by the NSW Self Insurance Corporation that is enforceable by the official against the NSW Self Insurance Corporation. The NSW Self Insurance Corporation's obligation under the indemnity will be managed through the self-insurance fund. It is further envisaged that that bill will provide an important clarification and a level of certainty to eligible State and non-government officials. Adopting a whole of government policy mandating principal-arranged insurance provides substantial benefits to the Government over insurances arranged by contractors. I commend the bill to the House.

**Debate adjourned on motion by Ms Noreen Hay and set down as an order of the day for a later hour.**

### **SUCCESSION TO THE CROWN (REQUEST) BILL 2013**

**Bill introduced on motion by Mr Barry O'Farrell, read a first time and printed.**

#### **Second Reading**

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL** (Ku-ring-gai—Premier, and Minister for Western Sydney) [4.02 p.m.]:  
I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Succession to the Crown (Request) Bill 2013 is an important step towards reforming the rules of succession for Australia's sovereign. The bill joins New South Wales to a national scheme. In turn, the national scheme will fulfil Australia's agreement with the 15 other Commonwealth realms to modernise and align the rules of succession. The bill provides for the New South Wales Parliament to request and consent to the Commonwealth Parliament's enactment of legislation to change succession rules throughout Australia. All other States have agreed to make a similar request to the Commonwealth Parliament.

When the Commonwealth bill is enacted these reforms will end the bias of males over females in the line of succession. A girl born into the line of succession to the throne will no longer be overtaken in the line by a younger brother. As well, the reforms will remove the barrier to the monarch, or people in the line of succession, from being married to a Roman Catholic. Finally, it will repeal the Royal Marriages Act 1772. That Act, as the member for Kiama knows, currently provides that any marriage of a descendant of King George II that was not made with the monarch's permission is void.

Honourable members will be aware that Her Majesty the Queen is not only Queen of Australia; she is also the sovereign of 15 other Commonwealth realms. The leaders of the 16 realms agreed in 2011 to apply uniform changes to rules of succession in each of their jurisdictions. Earlier, Australia's Prime Minister consulted Premiers before committing to the changes, and I signalled in-principle support on behalf of the Government of New South Wales. As this agreement of the realms was reached during the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in Perth, it has become known as the "Perth agreement".

After the Perth agreement was struck at an international level attention has turned to how to implement the rule changes domestically. Informed by advice of the Solicitors-General, the Council of Australian Governments has agreed to implement the reforms by a cooperative request and consent scheme relying on section 51 (38) of the Australian Constitution. Under this scheme each State Parliament is to pass request legislation for the Commonwealth Parliament to enact legislation in the matter. A request and consent bill such as the bill before the House does not give the Commonwealth power to further change the rules of succession

for Australia's sovereign in the future. The Commonwealth is only being authorised to enact a Succession to the Crown Bill that the State Parliaments have agreed to. The form of that Commonwealth bill is appended to the bill before the House.

I now turn to the key provisions of the bill. The request to the Commonwealth Parliament by the New South Wales Parliament is set out in clause 5 of the bill. Clause 4 of the Commonwealth Act will provide that the Act is not intended to affect the relationship between the sovereign and the Commonwealth, the States and the Territories as existing immediately before its enactment. Clause 4 therefore ensures that the current relationship between New South Wales and the monarch is not in any way disturbed by the reforms legislated by the Commonwealth. Clause 6 of the Act will provide that the gender of a person born after the Perth agreement on 28 October 2011 will have no relevance when determining succession to the throne.

Members will know that the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge are expecting a child in just two months. This child will become the third in line to succeed the Queen, after the Prince of Wales and Prince William. An effect of the change supported in this bill is that if the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge were to have a daughter and then a son the older daughter would precede the younger son in the line of succession. Clause 7 of the Act will provide that a person is not disqualified from succeeding to the Crown or from being monarch due to their marriage to a Roman Catholic. The current prohibition dates from the Bill of Rights and the Act of Settlement at the end of the seventeenth and beginning of the eighteenth centuries. The people of New South Wales are from many different backgrounds and religions, and will be more comfortable with these reformed succession arrangements which align with the values of our contemporary society.

A third reform to the Act, at part 2 of schedule 1, makes changes to requirements for certain people to obtain the consent of the sovereign concerning marriage. As the member for Kiama will also know, the Act will require that any of the first six people in the line of succession to the Crown obtain consent of the Queen before their marriage. Failure to obtain consent will remove a person, and their descendants, from the line of succession. Currently, under the Royal Marriages Act 1772, any descendant of King George II must obtain the monarch's consent before marriage, otherwise the marriage is void. The Royal Marriages Act is abolished under the reforms in the Commonwealth Act.

The reforms outlined in this bill are consistent with the values of modern society. The people of New South Wales would expect these values to apply to the rules that govern the succession of Australia's head of State. The approach of enacting a request bill is a constitutionally sound as well as efficient way to achieve these important reforms. We look forward to the Commonwealth enacting legislation in response to this request bill—and the requests from other States. I commend the bill to the House.

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

## **GOVERNMENT SECTOR EMPLOYMENT BILL 2013**

### **MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT STAFF BILL 2013**

**Bills introduced on motion by Mr Barry O'Farrell, read a first time and printed.**

#### **Second Reading**

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL** (Ku-ring-gai—Premier, and Minister for Western Sydney) [4.08 p.m.]:  
I move:

That these bills be now read a second time.

I bring before the House the Government Sector Employment Bill 2013 and the Members of Parliament Staff Bill 2013. As I have said before, we demand extraordinary things from our public service. Whether in executive or non-executive capacity, or on the front line, people in our public service are engaged in protecting lives, educating our children and keeping our communities safe, along with developing the policy solutions to the most complex and challenging problems we face. Yet the legislation that governs the New South Wales public sector workplaces was largely written before we had heard of the internet. Over the last 30 years, in our fast-moving global economy, private and non-government workplaces have adapted to make the most of change. In the public sector, the way we interact with customers, stakeholders and each other is fundamentally different from the way it used to be.

In February this year the New South Wales Government accepted recommendations of the Public Service Commissioner to rewrite the Public Sector Employment and Management Act and to modernise our public service, building on related recommendations made in the New South Wales Commission of Audit released in January 2012. The reforms will create an outward looking, customer-focused organisation with resources shifted to the front line to assist in the delivery of those services that people rely upon each day. We are determined to deliver on our election commitments, a key one of which was to establish a New South Wales Public Service Commissioner to be the independent leader of reform to restore the integrity, performance and accountability of the State's public sector.

The inaugural New South Wales Public Service Commissioner, Graeme Head, is delivering reforms and recommendations to Government which will ensure New South Wales has the best-qualified and most professional public service in the nation; restore the highest levels of impartiality, ability, accountability and leadership in the New South Wales Public Service; ensure public service positions are filled on the basis of merit and qualifications, not patronage or favouritism; promote a public sector culture in which initiative, the achievement of results and individual responsibility are strongly valued; build a new customer service culture; and strengthen the public's confidence and trust in the New South Wales Public Service. The proposals set out in the bill here today will provide for a government sector that is responsive and adaptive, and I thank the Public Service Commissioner for his work across the public service in developing this long overdue overhaul and modernisation of the framework for public sector employment.

In January 2012 the Commission of Audit issued wide-ranging recommendations on reforming the public sector's workforce. It found that the structure of government employment required fundamental overhaul, with many recommendations specifically going to improving its executive's performance. The commission's report identifies areas for reform in just about all parts of government employment, including lack of transparent leadership responsibility; too many employment divisions and controlled entities; need for greater flexibility in staff deployment; overly layered middle management; insufficient responsibility devolved to the highest levels; managers' spans of control should increase; and the pressing need for a capability framework. Recommendation 45 specifically focused on the need for comprehensive review and reform of executive structures.

Many of the issues identified by the Commission of Audit were also the subject of detailed commentary in the Public Service Commissioner's inaugural State of the Public Sector Report, which I released in November last year. Considering the Commission of Audit Report, his own State of the Public Sector Report and other relevant analysis, the commissioner subsequently found that departments and agencies are hampered by a poorly designed, outdated and rigid set of public sector workforce arrangements. The commissioner agreed to lead the implementation of the workforce recommendations of the Commission of Audit. The primary statutory instrument, the Public Sector Employment and Management Act 2002, has been patched and modified over the years but without the benefit of a comprehensive review. The reforms introduced today reflect a commitment to supporting the critical work of the New South Wales public sector through arrangements that encourage good performance, reward talent, support building of career paths, simplify organisation structures and reduce red tape, and improve service delivery and results to the people who pay for our New South Wales public service—the taxpayers and citizens of our State.

I urge all members to examine the provisions of the bill in detail. These provisions outline the Government's plans and intentions to give effect to the objectives and wishes of the people of New South Wales, who overwhelmingly demanded change to the form and function of the State's public sector service delivery and culture, in the election of March 2011. The provisions in this bill deliver on the content of our policy statements and commitments by the New South Wales Liberals and Nationals in opposition and in government, and are a further step in delivering our commitments as we have promised to do. The Government Sector Employment Bill creates an Act that will simplify decades of accreted complexity and deal only with employment matters; an Act that creates a simple and easily understood structure. The current Act provides for a complex array of employment structures, including the government service, the public sector, the public sector services and the public service. The Government Sector Employment Bill simplifies this complexity by establishing only two employment structures: the government sector and the public service.

New employment structures are created by part 4 of the bill for the public service. The bill creates the new public service by amalgamating the current government service and the current public service. It absorbs the government service divisions within schedule 1 of the Public Sector Employment and Management Act. Contemporary organisational structures call for a mobile workforce that allows employers opportunity to move staff expeditiously to priority areas, open opportunities for employees to move to new roles, and enhance the appeal of the public service to the best and brightest. Under the new framework the public service will consist of

those persons who are employed by the Government in the service of the Crown. All public service employees, including senior executives, will be employed at a classification and assigned to a role within their agencies. Employees can be reassigned to a different role at the same classification to suit the department or agency's present needs.

A second phase of reforms will align the NSW Police Force Senior Executive Service, the Health Executive Service and the Transport Senior Service. The senior executive structure will absorb the current Chief Executive Service, Senior Executive Service and award-based executives with the new public service executive arrangements, and the bill provides for the new senior executives to be employed on continuing contracts with clear termination provisions. We are replacing past executive arrangements by providing for ongoing employment for senior executives. They will work to contractually defined termination provisions, and non-performance will be dealt with fairly and quickly. These reforms will be challenging and will confront some outdated traditions and practices, but we are determined that the new executive will create a modern, professional public service that uses the best management approaches from both the private sector and leading public sectors, here and internationally.

Part 4, division 5 of the bill provides for the employment arrangements for non-executive public service employees. The current Public Sector Employment and Management Act contains detailed provisions in this area. The principle in this part is that these employees should retain statutory certainty around the critical areas of their employment. More procedural and variable aspects are better dealt with by regulation or in the rules. The bill provides clarity about key aspects of employment. Clause 45 ensures that they will be employed in a classification of work. Clause 46 ensures their assignment in roles within their classifications and the basis for reassigning them to a different role; and clause 47 sets out the grounds for termination of employment. A head of power provided at clause 48 allows the Public Service Commissioner to make rules dealing with matters relating to their employment.

Apart from moving award-based executives into the new contract-based senior executive structure, existing public sector industrial instruments are not changed by the bill. Section 21 of the current Public Sector Employment and Management Act, which provides a right of appeal to the Industrial Relations Commission against promotions, will not be brought into the new Act. Agencies will be required instead to have proper review mechanisms to deal with procedural issues, and any appeals before the Industrial Relations Commission at the commencement of the Act will be allowed to pursue their course under existing provisions. Government sector is the other employment structure set out in part 5. The new government sector will embrace virtually all New South Wales Government employees. The sector will comprise: the public service, teaching service, NSW Police Force, NSW Health Service, and any other service of the Crown. The regulations may prescribe others. Government employees that may be outside the government sector will be parliamentary and ministerial staff, State-owned corporations employees and the staff of the Independent Commission Against Corruption, the Judicial Commission and the office of the Auditor-General.

Chapter J, section 63 provides a stronger approach to workforce diversity. Part 9A of the Anti-Discrimination Act 1977 currently sets out the requirements for equal employment opportunity employment in the public sector and focuses on compliance and reporting. The Government wholeheartedly supports the principles of equal employment opportunity, but as a result of successful bipartisan embrace of these principles over recent decades these provisions should now sensibly sit within an Act that describes employment arrangements across the public sector. I thank the chair of the Anti-Discrimination Board and others across the public sector for their support of this provision. Proposals here do not in any way affect a person's capacity to make complaints about discrimination but bring a focus on workforce diversity to the centre of workforce planning.

The new government sector employment rules will deal with the details of workplace diversity and, as a minimum, must make provision for equal employment opportunity target groups as currently defined by the Anti-Discrimination Act 1977. Concurrently, the Public Service Commissioner will be able to identify any sector-wide priorities and mandate their adoption. The Minister for Health, the Minister for Police and the Minister for Transport support aligning the health service, transport service, and the Police Senior Executive Service with the new public service. The years of uncoordinated service delivery structures which act against valuable professional mobility are to end. I have asked the Public Service Commissioner to lead that alignment process with the directors general of Health and Transport and the Commissioner of Police.

Work is already underway with strong cooperation and collaboration to achieve this alignment seamlessly. I will bring a bill to this House in August to provide for the Government's agreed changes. I now



turn to the Members of Parliament Staff Bill 2013. In New South Wales staff engaged to work in Ministers' offices, and the office of the Leader of the Opposition in the Legislative Assembly, are currently employed as special temporary employees by the Director General of the Department of Premier and Cabinet under the Public Sector Employment and Management Act. That Act provides that they are taken to constitute a branch of the department. Different arrangements apply in other jurisdictions.

In the Commonwealth, ministerial staff members are employed directly by the relevant Minister, on behalf of the Commonwealth, subject to such general arrangements, conditions and terms as are set by the Prime Minister. Current arrangements in New South Wales can obviously give rise to difficulties and confusion. Part 2 of the Members of Parliament Staff Bill provides for new and more appropriate arrangements under which staff of political office holders are employed, with those officer holders being Ministers and the Leader of the Opposition in the Legislative Assembly. Part 3 of the bill provides for new arrangements under which staff that assist members of Parliament in their electorate and parliamentary duties are employed.

Part 3 of the bill provides that each member, on behalf of the State, is to be the employer of his or her staff. The Parliamentary Remuneration Tribunal will continue to determine the number of staff that each member is entitled to employ. Members who hold a specified parliamentary office—the Whips, the Speaker and President and their deputies—will be entitled to employ additional staff. The relevant Presiding Officer is otherwise to determine the employment powers of each member and the arrangements for the exercise of those powers. These new arrangements are broadly modelled on the arrangements that have applied in the Commonwealth, which have served members of the Federal Parliament exceedingly well for almost three decades. The reforms in the two bills will create a more professional public service, operating along best practice lines, such as one would find in the most innovative, effective public sector, private sector and non-government organisation anywhere in the world. It also will equip our New South Wales public service to meet the needs and expectations of individuals, businesses, families, customers and taxpayers in an increasingly competitive global economy.

This State is the biggest employer in the country, and taxpayers spend more than \$60 billion a year on New South Wales public services. We owe it to the taxpayers to ensure that the public service is the best that it can be. As the service needs of our civic domain change, what will matter is the shape, not the size, of the government and the outcomes it delivers for citizens and customers. We want an innovative, professional and accountable public sector that encourages and rewards performance, delivers the best possible front-line services for local communities across the State and creates the most competitive landscape for investors, economic growth and job creation in New South Wales. I am proud of the achievements of our New South Wales public service, and the New South Wales Government is determined to give our public service executive the tools it needs to continue to develop its strengths and capabilities to serve our community. I commend the bills to the House.

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

## **NSW SELF INSURANCE CORPORATION AMENDMENT BILL 2013**

### **Second Reading**

**Debate resumed from an earlier hour.**

**Mr BRAD HAZZARD** (Wakehurst—Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Infrastructure NSW) [4.21 p.m.], on behalf of Mr Mike Baird, in reply: I speak in reply to the NSW Self Insurance Corporation Amendment Bill 2013. I thank all members who contributed to the second reading debate. The bill enables the NSW Self Insurance Corporation to provide principal arranged construction insurance that extends to non-government contractors for major capital works projects undertaken by or on behalf of the State or an authority of the State. Adopting a whole-of-government policy mandating principal arranged insurance provides substantial benefits to the Government over insurances arranged by the contractor. First, it provides comfort that adequate insurance arrangements are in place with a reputable insurer; secondly, it removes the administrative burden of ensuring that contractor policies remain current as well as complex issues surrounding who may be responsible for a loss or liability that occurs at various stages of the project; and, thirdly, and most importantly, it removes the opportunity for the contractor to lower the contract price with an inflated insurance premium.

A contribution will be payable by the agency to cover the risk, which is similar to how contributions are calculated for the New South Wales agency Treasury Managed Fund. The bill also provides cover for eligible State officials. Increasingly, some directors and officers are not satisfied with being offered directors' and officers' indemnity through the Treasury Managed Fund. They require cover and conditions equivalent to what is being offered by the insurance market, including a policy document noting them as a party to the insurance contract. These changes do not in any way alter the cover that directors and officers of the New South Wales Treasury Managed Fund agencies have received since the inception of the New South Wales Treasury Managed Fund in 1989. On behalf of the Treasurer, I commend the bill to the House.

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

**Motion agreed to.**

**Bill read a second time.**

### **Third Reading**

**Motion by Mr Brad Hazzard, on behalf of Mr Mike Baird, agreed to:**

That this bill be now read a third time.

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

## **COMMUNITY RECOGNITION STATEMENTS**

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### **WALLSEND HERITAGE POSTBOX**

**Ms SONIA HORNER** (Wallsend) [4.25 p.m.]: I recognise the perseverance of Wallsend residents, the Wallsend Heritage Group and the Town Business Association, which paid off last week when their long-term campaign to retrieve an historic postbox culminated successfully in the reinstallation of the much-loved red heritage postbox in Thomas Street, Wallsend. The return of the postbox by Australia Post came with the added bonus of an additional heritage piece that has been added to the town's collection—a second refurbished New South Wales postal service cast iron postbox. I applaud all who were involved in campaigning for the return of this important piece of our local heritage.

### **RETIREMENT OF JOHN BULMER**

**Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD** (Myall Lakes) [4.25 p.m.]: I inform the House that Fairfax group manager and *Manning River Times* general manager John Bulmer left the company last Friday after his position was made redundant. John Bulmer has been a journalist all his working life. He started in 1972 as a cadet journalist with the *Manning River Times* and later moved to the *Great Lakes Advocate* as managing editor before switching to the *Port Express* as manager. John Bulmer has been general manager of the *Manning River Times* since 1994 and for more than four decades he served Fairfax Media and its predecessor companies very well. He worked in many roles covering editorial, sales, production and management. During this time John Bulmer saw large changes in the media industry, including the move to online publishing.

### **SALVATION ARMY RED SHIELD APPEAL**

**Mr RICHARD AMERY** (Mount Druitt) [4.26 p.m.]: This weekend the Salvation Army will conduct its Red Shield Appeal doorknock. Major Bruce Harmer has written in the local newspaper that some 2.2 million people in Australia live in poverty, including 12 per cent of children. It is a challenging statistic to backdrop the good work of the Salvos in the Mount Druitt electorate who, through its counselling services, op shop and numerous volunteers, help so many people in need. This week's *Standard* newspaper also recognises Denis Bedwell, a Salvation Army volunteer from Mount Druitt, for his volunteer work with the Salvos for more than 20 years. Congratulations to Denis Bedwell and a big thank you to the Salvos for their great effort to look after the needy in all our electorates.

### **ALBURY ELECTORATE COMMUNITY ACHIEVEMENTS**

**Mr GREG APLIN** (Albury) [4.27 p.m.]: I congratulate Elissa Thiele of Henty on being selected to represent Australia in Tenpin Bowling at the Special Olympics Asia Pacific Regional Games to be held in Newcastle

in December. This is the largest Special Olympics event held in Australia and Elissa is part of a team of more than 400 Australian competitors. Good luck, Elissa. The 131st Tumbarumba Show saw the awarding of life membership to the show treasurer, Mellie Bell, for her sustained committee work, show preparation and sponsorship generation. Congratulations, Mellie. This great community event also saw the sixty-sixth year of participation by Tumbarumba show stalwart Herb Wolter, who has been involved with exhibits of livestock and farm produce since the age of 13. Herb has grown some of the biggest pumpkins and melons ever produced in the area, with one pumpkin weighing in at 120 kilograms. Country shows need people like Herb. I congratulate him on his long involvement.

### **KHMER AND CAMBODIAN NEW YEAR CELEBRATIONS**

**Mr PAUL LYNCH** (Liverpool) [4.28 p.m.]: I draw to the attention of the House the celebration of the Khmer and Cambodian New Year on Saturday 13 April. This celebration occurred at Watt Khemarangsaram at Bonnyrigg. The function was organised by the Khmer Community of New South Wales Inc. and the Cambodian Buddhist Society of New South Wales Inc. The official celebration featured the Khemara Angkor Dancing Group accompanied by the Khemara Angkor Traditional Band. The event was also graced by the presence of Cambodian Ambassador, His Excellency Mr Chum Sounry, who travelled from Canberra for the event. Speeches were made by Lina Tjoeng, President of the Khmer Community of New South Wales Inc., and Kin Houll, President of the Cambodian Buddhist Society of New South Wales Inc. Individuals and organisations such as these perform invaluable roles within their communities. I have known Lina Tjoeng and her husband, Eric, for some time. Both are tireless workers for and contributors to their community. Events such as this allow the celebration of the diversity of multicultural Sydney, especially in western Sydney.

### **HORNSBY STATE EMERGENCY SERVICE**

**Mr MATT KEAN** (Hornsby) [4.29 p.m.]: The seven-member Hornsby State Emergency Service team has had outstanding success at the Sydney Northern Regional Rescue Competition held on 11 May at Gosford TAFE. The team—comprising Mike Smith, Tony Hine, Phoebe Kiel, Murray Oakley, Reinoud Beijerinck, Owen Dunkerley and Kris Eriksen—demonstrated outstanding skills in simulated scenarios, securing their win 62 points ahead of the nearest competitor. The rescue teams were presented with scenarios that tested a wide range of skills, including rescuing an injured person from a rooftop, swift water emergency and freeing trapped persons in a car. The team will now represent the Sydney Northern Region at the State rescue competition at Penrith in August. I wish them every success in the competition and thank them for the remarkable service they provide to our community.

### **AUSTRALIAN FEDERATION OF ISLAMIC COUNCILS**

**Mr GUY ZANGARI** (Fairfield) [4.29 p.m.]: The Australian Federation of Islamic Councils Incorporated hosted its forty-ninth annual congress dinner and peace ceremony at Malek Fahd Islamic School, Greenacre, on Saturday 27 April 2013. The theme of the event was love and peace. Community leaders and local, State and Federal representatives united to light 2,000 candles in the shape of a dove at dusk on the school oval. I congratulate Mr Hafez Kassem, President of the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils Incorporation, for organising the interfaith ceremony. The ongoing work done to spread the message of peace and love to all is to be commended.

### **ABORIGINAL DISABILITY WORK COURSE**

**Mr ANDREW ROHAN** (Smithfield) [4.30 p.m.]: On Monday 28 May 2013 I attended the graduation ceremony of the first-ever group of students from the Aboriginal pre-vocational program Disability Work Course, which is designed to deliver services to disabled people in the Aboriginal community. The program is managed by National Disability Services and the Cerebral Palsy Alliance. We saw 18 students graduate at the Cerebral Palsy Alliance Centre at Prairiewood in my electorate of Smithfield. The New South Wales Government has signed the National Disability Insurance Scheme agreement with the Commonwealth Government. Programs such as this will ensure that specialised expertise in the field of disability within the Aboriginal community will be available when the scheme is implemented in 2018. I congratulate all graduates and wish them well in their new career. I also thank the sponsors and supporters of this program.

### **CABRAMATTA HIGH SCHOOL**

**Mr NICK LALICH** (Cabramatta) [4.31 p.m.]: I congratulate Cabramatta High School and its principal, Beth Godwin, on the opening of its new performance studio. The new state-of-the-art facility contains a sound and lighting system with supporting facilities. It provides the outstanding performance space the students of Cabramatta High School need and deserve to develop and perfect their performances. I also acknowledge the ongoing hard work of the students and staff at the school.

### **WOMEN IN LEAGUE**

**Mr STUART AYRES** (Penrith) [4.31 p.m.]: I draw the attention of the House to the recent Women in League competition organised by the National Rugby League. Although we saw the Panthers put 62 points on the board, the most important feature of the event was the fact that players wore pink jerseys to raise the profile of women involved in the sport of rugby league. Thousands of dollars were raised to support the Ronald McDonald Family Room and the neonatal intensive care unit at Nepean Hospital. The annual Women in League lunch was held prior to the competition. It would be remiss of me not to mention the important work done by Di Langmack. The Women in League competition is about focusing on the importance of women's positive involvement in rugby league.

### **HUNTER UNITED DIVING CLUB**

**Ms SONIA HORNER** (Wallsend) [4.32 p.m.]: I offer my congratulations to the Hunter United Diving Club members who returned home in early April from the Australian age championships in Perth with 10 medals, five of which were gold. Liam Connelly, Liam Wood, Monique Collin, Charlotte Moore and sisters Olivia and Amelia Dillon from the Hunter United Diving Club represented the State and helped New South Wales to emerge as the overall champion State, despite being outnumbered almost two to one by Victoria. I offer special congratulations to Liam Wood from Fletcher, who won gold in the 13-to-14 years synchronised diving competition and collected individual bronze medals in the three-metre and one-metre springboard events. I am sure they are Olympians in the making.

### **LEN AND MARIE JEFFERY SIXTIETH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY**

**Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD** (Myall Lakes) [4.33 p.m.]: Len and Marie Jeffery from Tuncurry celebrated their sixtieth wedding anniversary on 21 March 2013. Marie and Len met by chance at a tram stop while they were both on their way to a dance in East Kew in Melbourne. Although Len was taking another girl to the dance, that relationship ended there, and Marie recognised Len later and asked him for a dance. As Marie puts it, "That was that" and they married four years later. The couple moved with Len's job as a State manager to the Sydney suburb of Carlingford. They raised three boys—Peter, Brian and Greg—and moved to Tuncurry when Len retired in 1988. They enjoy sport, particularly golf and tennis, and are one of the few couples who can boast of hitting three holes in one between them.

### **LAO NEW YEAR CELEBRATIONS**

**Mr PAUL LYNCH** (Liverpool) [4.34 p.m.]: I draw the attention of the House to the Lao New Year celebrations held at the Wetherill Park Community Centre on Sunday 7 April. This celebration of the Year of the Snake was organised by the board of directors of the Lao Community Advancement (NSW) Cooperative Limited and the management committee of the Lao Buddhist Society of NSW Limited. Speakers at the event included Phosy Sengthong, President of the Lao Buddhist Society, and Deth Sysengrath, President of the Lao Community Advancement Cooperative. Other organisers included Pierre Vanthavong and Mrs Pinhkham Simmalavong, OAM. I have regularly attended this event and it is always a pleasure to do so. The Laotian community adds to the multicultural diversity of south-west Sydney and it is one of the reasons that our area is such a great place in which to live. This diversity is always on display during the spring and New Year festivals. I was delighted to share the event with the Laotian community and I thank the organisers for the invitation.

### **ROSE BAY RELAY FOR LIFE**

**Ms GABRIELLE UPTON** (Vaucluse—Parliamentary Secretary) [4.35 p.m.]: On Saturday 18 May 2013 I joined my local Rose Bay Police Local Area Command to walk in Cancer Council NSW's Relay for Life. Relay for Life is a community event in which teams participate in a relay-style walk or run to raise funds for the Cancer Council NSW. Cancer Council NSW commits itself to supporting the development of prevention strategies, research into new treatments and cures and the clinical and emotional needs of those affected by cancer. I congratulate the Rose Bay Police Local Area Command, under the leadership of Superintendent Commander Mike Fitzgerald, on its substantial fundraising efforts in support of Cancer Council NSW's important work.

### **MARIA SS DELLE GRAZIE FAMILY FESTIVAL**

**Mr GUY ZANGARI** (Fairfield) [4.36 p.m.]: The tenth annual family festival of Maria SS Delle Grazie was held on 28 April 2013 at Club Marconi. The festival is a celebration of Italian culture and heritage in

Australia. The celebrations included a commemorative mass, live entertainment from Italian and Australian artists, traditional Italian food stalls and a classic car show. The finale was a fireworks display. I congratulate Mr Vince Colagiuri and the committee on organising the successful festival. I congratulate Mr Colagiuri on his outstanding service as a committee member over the past 10 years, especially the past five years as the association's president. Mr Colagiuri will step down as president at the end of his current term and his passion and enthusiasm will be missed by all. I wish him well in his future endeavours.

#### **TRIBUTE TO MERV COLLINS**

**Mr MATT KEAN** (Hornsby) [4.37 p.m.]: I congratulate Merv Collins on receiving an award for 20 years of service with Marine Rescue NSW. Mr Collins, the unit commander at Hawkesbury Marine Rescue, started with the Royal Volunteer Coastal Patrol in the Sydney division, where he assisted with the Olympics in 2000. After the Olympics he transferred to Hawkesbury, where his skill and dedication were recognised and he was appointed a watch officer and took on the additional role of operations officer. Mr Collins's dedication to helping the boating public over the past 20 years should be an inspiration to all volunteers. I also thank Jan Collins, Merv's wife, for her ongoing support and for putting up with Merv while he worked to serve the community.

#### **HUNTER PRIMARY SCHOOL TOUCH FOOTBALL TEAM SELECTIONS**

**Ms SONIA HORNER** (Wallsend) [4.38 p.m.]: The Hunter's young people continue to achieve great things in sport. I acknowledge our talented students who have won places at the diocesan primary school touch selections. The girls' team included Emma Yarnold, Thalia Simon, Isabella Balcomb, Madison Poole, Holly Dragonic, Erin Mulhearn, Georgia Watts, Ashley Allen, Bella Warry, Georgia Stewart, Bree O'Neill and Kiara Dixon. The boys' team included Tyran Duffield, Tyler Moodie, Drew Sellars, Steven Dengate, Bayley Caruso, Lawson Rankin, Daniel Shipman, Reece Jeffries, Patrick Andrews, Jacob Cross, Levi Barclay and Joshua Wheatley. I am sure members will join me in wishing them all the best in the competition and congratulating them on their achievement.

#### **BUDDHIST VESAK DAY CEREMONY**

**Mr ANDREW ROHAN** (Smithfield) [4.39 p.m.]: It gives me great joy to inform the House that I attended the celebration of Vesak Day on Sunday 19 May 2013 at the Phuoc Hue Temple in Wetherill Park. Vesak Day is the most significant day on the world Buddhist calendar. It represents the birth and the death of Gautama Buddha. The day encourages Buddhists to show compassion, to be generous and to reach out to help unfortunate members of the community. A large gathering, mainly members of the Buddhist Vietnamese community, filled the temple. Religious clergy conducted Buddhist ceremonies to commemorate the occasion. I find that extremely admirable, to say the least, and it is why I felt incredibly blessed to be part of such a spiritually enlightening event.

#### **BUDDHIST VESAK DAY CEREMONY**

**Mr PAUL LYNCH** (Liverpool) [4.40 p.m.]: I draw to the attention of members an event last Sunday at the Buddhist Phuoc Hue Temple at Wetherill Park: Vesak Day, the celebration of Buddha's birthday. The event was attended by a number of parliamentarians and a number of other distinguished guests, including Paul Mannix, the State President of the Justices Association, together with many most venerable and venerable monks. The temple is largely based, but not exclusively based, in the Vietnamese community. They have developed an extraordinary structure and community over quite a number of years. I have had the pleasure of attending events for the past 20 or so years. The event consisted of both a secular services of parliamentarians and representatives speaking and of a religious service, which includes chanting in Vietnamese and Pali in traditional Buddhist chants. It is an extraordinary display of multiculturalism in Sydney and New South Wales. It is an event that is a delight to attend.

#### **RETIREMENT OF GRAEME MINETT**

**Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD** (Myall Lakes) [4.41 p.m.]: I inform the House that Graham Minett, Assistant Principal of Tinonee Public School is retiring after a teaching career spanning 39 years. Graeme trained as a teacher at Lismore Teachers College and graduated in 1973. His first appointment was at a one-teacher school in Maude in the Riverina, where he spent four years. He then moved to Parkes for two years before travelling overseas and returning in 1982 to teach at Cobar Primary School, where he received his first

promotion to executive teacher. Graeme's next appointment was in Nambucca Heads where he became Secretary of the Primary Schools Sports Association and hockey convenor for the Nambucca zone. From 1993 to 1998 Graeme was the Assistant Principal at Taree Public School. During that time his wife and four children settled in the Manning Valley. Since 1999 Graeme has been at Tinonee Public School where he has taught primary schoolchildren of all ages. Graeme is passionate about sport, especially hockey. He has been New South Wales Boys Hockey coach since 2007 and Manning Zone Primary Schools Sports Association Treasurer for three years. In retirement Graeme and his wife, Narelle, intend to travel around Australia and overseas.

**Community recognition statements concluded.**

## **PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS**

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### **SHELLHARBOUR CITY COUNCILLORS KELLIE MARSH AND PAUL RANKIN**

#### **SHELLHARBOUR ELECTORATE COMMUNITY BUILDING PARTNERSHIP GRANTS**

**Ms ANNA WATSON** (Shellharbour) [4.42 p.m.]: I draw two matters to the attention of members. The first relates to the disgraceful opposition last Tuesday night at Shellharbour City Council displayed by two Liberal councillors, Kellie Marsh and Paul Rankin, in voting against a mayoral minute proposed by Mayor Mariane Saliba indicating support for an extension of mandated nurse-to-patient ratios across all hospitals in New South Wales. The mayor was delivering on a promise after attending a public rally of Shellharbour Hospital nurses last month, which was also attended by the member for Kiama. The mayoral minute is inoffensive and simply asks council to support a letter being sent to the Minister for Health and the Premier calling on the Government to extend the mandated nursing hours ratios across all hospitals in New South Wales. That one simple gesture by the mayor was opposed by former Liberal Mayor Kellie Marsh and her Liberal colleague, which is typical of those two councillors.

An article in today's *Illawarra Mercury* cites Councillor Marsh as saying, "I certainly can't recall a time council was pushing or promoting union business in the chamber". It seems that Councillor Marsh has forgotten when she was photographed with a Transport Workers Union official and striking workers at the Tip Top Bakery at Oak Flats on 28 August 2012, which appeared on the front page of the *Illawarra Mercury*. I recall that Councillor Marsh participated in that rally as the Mayor of Shellharbour City Council. As a former union official I thought at the time that it was interesting to see a Liberal standing with workers and a union at a picket line. Now we can see that it was simply a publicity stunt in front of the camera for a run in the newspaper.

The true colours of Councillor Marsh have been exposed as nothing short of political hypocrisy. When a media camera is around she is suddenly the friend of the worker and the union, but when the camera is turned off she reverts to being a typical Liberal: against workers and their representatives. But I am not too surprised because a few days before the council meeting the member for Kiama—the Illawarra's free-range chicken, as I refer to him now—issued a media release that bears a remarkable resemblance to the words spoken by Councillor Marsh last Tuesday night. The member for Kiama said that negotiations were premature. Councillor Marsh then parroted the same line, which was quoted in today's *Illawarra Mercury*—

**Mr Gareth Ward:** Point of order: Private member's statements have to be relevant to electorates. The member for Shellharbour is making a political attack on Kellie Marsh because she is worried she will roll her in her electorate at the next election.

**Ms ANNA WATSON:** That is not a point of order.

**Mr Gareth Ward:** I know that.

**Ms ANNA WATSON:** The member for Kiama says that the mayor should do the job that she was elected to do and focus on the needs of Shellharbour ratepayers. Councillor Marsh said precisely the same words in the council chambers—

**Mr Gareth Ward:** Point of order: Attacks on members should be done by way of substantive motion. The member for Shellharbour has been in this Chamber long enough to know that. Tell her to move a motion or sit her down.

**Ms ANNA WATSON:** This is relevant to my electorate. This is about nurses in my electorate. Councillor March said precisely the same words in the council chamber during the debate last night.

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans):** Order! I remind the member for Shellharbour that any attacks on member should be done by way of a substantive motion.

**Ms ANNA WATSON:** Two things are clear from this episode: first the Liberals have always paid lip-service to protests and rallies by nurses—they say one thing at a rally and then move away from it. On Tuesday night Councillor Marsh had the opportunity to stand with the nurses to ask for a fair go at Shellharbour Hospital, but she decided to stand against them.

**Mr Gareth Ward:** Point of order: Private members' statements should not be used to attack people in the manner in which the member for Shellharbour is attacking them. You should sit her down unless she has something of substance to say.

**Ms ANNA WATSON:** Sit down. Councillor Marsh decided instead to stand against them. Secondly, she is clearly the puppet of the member for Kiama who lays down the law and she obeys it right down to using the same form of words in debates.

**Mr Gareth Ward:** Point of order: This is another substantial attack. Tell her to move a motion or finish her statement.

**Ms ANNA WATSON:** Are you the Speaker or is the member for Kiama?

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans):** Order! The member for Shellharbour will finish her statement.

**Ms ANNA WATSON:** I am also very pleased to record in *Hansard* that 10 local projects from the Community Building Partnerships Program will share in \$300,000 worth of funding. It is a shame that the truth hurts the member for Kiama in relation to his friend Councillor Marsh. Under the Community Building Partnership Program I received many applications for many worthwhile projects worth up to \$1 million. Obviously when there is only \$300,000 in total funding some projects will miss out.

**Mr Gareth Ward:** Is that all?

**Ms ANNA WATSON:** Do not forget that it was a Labor initiative. I always try to recommend funding for as many projects as possible spread across local communities in my electorate, and those opposite wanted to stop it. I have so many examples of funding that has already been provided, but the best part of being a local member of Parliament is obviously working closely with local community groups and dedicated volunteers who give up their time and energy to help build our local communities. I am sure all members in this House would agree with that.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE** (Bathurst—Parliamentary Secretary) [4.46 p.m.]: I acknowledge the hard work of our nurses across the State in each of our hospitals. I know that Government members have made a very strong commitment to ensure that more front-line services are delivered across this State, which includes more nurses. Government members will not be dictated to by unions; we work on behalf of our communities. I remind Opposition members that private members' statements are not an opportunity to attack the Government and say they are standing up for the unions. Private members' statements should relate to matters in their electorates. The Government commends the hard work of our nurses across this State. I congratulate the Minister for Health on her work in upgrading so many hospitals that were neglected for so long and could not deliver the required patient care.

### CAMDEN ELECTORATE SCHOOLS

**Mr CHRIS PATTERSON** (Camden) [4.47 p.m.]: I refer to a recent visit to this House by students from primary schools in my electorate. On their visit the students saw how the Parliament works. My electorate of Camden had one of the first members of the New South Wales Legislative Council, John Macarthur. John and Elizabeth Macarthur were true leaders of our local community after they were granted 5,000 acres of land in the cow pastures. To this day the Macarthurs are still ranked among the great agricultural families in Australia

and the reason that Camden is known as the birth place of our nation's wealth. They established wool production, wheat growing, dairying and grape growing. The students were able to see the bust of John Macarthur when they visited the Legislative Council.

The students who visited Parliament House have been given a leadership role in their schools. They have been elected to a position that has a particular distinction among the student body as well as among the staff: they have a high degree of commitment and dedication to their school and fellow pupils. The experience they gain in their positions will help them with their future endeavours. Initially the students were in awe of the grandeur of Parliament House, but then they settled in to take in the history of this grand building and how it works. The hands-on experience showed them the process of legislation and how it impacts on their lives. I found all the students very responsive and appreciative of the experience. I have received many messages from the young leaders indicating the visit has shown them so much more to the workings of Parliament.

In some small way I am sure they will be able to put some of the knowledge into their roles as leaders. Being a leader in a school is not that different to what we do. It is all about democracy—giving everyone a say in how they would like to have things done. I thank my parliamentary colleagues the Minister for Transport and the member for Vacluse for giving up their time to visit and speak with the students. They shared their experiences as leaders within their own electorates and within the Government, which was much appreciated and invaluable. I thank the highly professional and helpful parliamentary and Chamber staff—Ian, Chris, Steve, Lynn and Mark from the upper House—for all their help in organising and running the day. My favourite part of my role as a member of Parliament is meeting students from my local schools.

I was highly impressed by the calibre of the students, who not only did themselves proud in the way that they conducted themselves on the day but also proved to be a great example of the students and staff at the schools they represented. The teachers and staff who attended with the students are to be commended for their commitment and dedication to the education of our children. I thank them for bringing the students into Parliament House for the experience—Nancy Noble from the St Paul's Catholic Primary School, Principal Don Spencer from the Mary Immaculate Parish Primary School, Brian Hodge from the Narellan Vale Public School, Tania Cannings from the Elderslie Public School, Neil Davies from the Macarthur Anglican School, Principal Su Newbery from the Mount Annan Public School, Colin Mountford and Sue Davies from the Camden Public School, Jason Geer from the Leppington Public School and one of our newest schools in my electorate that was opened only this year, and Cathy Grant from the Oran Park Anglican College.

The day would never have been a success without the contribution made by the students. I thank each and every one of them for their contribution to the day—my wonderful niece Olivia Dooner, Peter Cornett, Daniel Brennan, Jessica Arentz, Jayden Douangdara, Shermie Santiago, Olivia Bradwell, Mariah Gonzalez, Katelyn O'Neill, Katie Thorn, Giordan di Mauro, Luke Drayton, Ben Matthews, Zarko Zoric, Serena Chowna, Amelia Dimarco, Joshua Green, Brooke Green, Aaliyah Mascarenas, Jack Burns, Kyah Fuller, Joshua Hand, Alexandra Hennings, Charles Ingram, Alana Kolanovic, Jessica McLean, Caitlin Sendt, Harry Stretton, Liam Wright, Emily Saysanavongpheth, Nathan Truong, Luke Halls, Adam Tidyman, Peter Davies, Chloe Waine, Isabelle Pirovic, James Oxborough, Liam Mangan, Chloe White, Piper Sullivan, Lara Sultani, Scott Lalor, Oliver Boone, Stephanie Press, Clarissa Simione, Christian Uelesen, Emily Cai, Sam Leotta, Emily Dawson, Luke Barlow, Jordan Fleming, Claudia Howard, April Huisman, Jackson Langston, Jackson McCabe, Alex Pace, Georgia McCarthy and Matthew Squire.

All the students I have mentioned have shown that they are true leaders. I wish them all the best for the future. It was a privilege to host students from the wonderful schools in my electorate. They did themselves proud and are fantastic ambassadors for not only their schools but also their communities and their families. I commend them all.

#### **GUNNEDAH PAEDIATRIC AND MATERNITY SUPPORT GROUP**

**Mr KEVIN ANDERSON** (Tamworth) [4.52 p.m.]: It is with pleasure that I draw to the attention of members a fantastic community organisation in Gunnedah—the PaediatRic and Maternity Support group, or PRAMS—which was launched by some local mums in 2008. Each founding member of the group, who has had firsthand experience with Gunnedah's maternity and/or paediatric facilities, witnessed a fundamentally good service that was largely due to committed staff. The group felt that improvements to the hospital environment would complement the outstanding level of care. PaediatRic and Maternity Support group members continue to work towards achieving the group's objectives by purchasing new medical equipment and by providing cosmetic enhancements to the rooms and spaces that are utilised by patients and their families.



With the support of the wider community, the PaediatRic and Maternity Support group has completed several major projects, but more remains to be done. The group is determined to improve the services that currently are available in Gunnedah and ensures that those services, which are vital to every member of the community, are retained locally. Mothers and children of Gunnedah deserve to have access to the very best in health care equipment and facilities, and the PaediatRic and Maternity Support group is doing a great job in assisting with provision of facilities. The committee is led by Amber Donoghue. The group's commitment is expanding to introduce a fantastic program to Gunnedah, Paint the Town REaD. As the group comprises mothers, aunts and grandmothers, the importance of reading to children is common ground among its members. Sadly, that is not the case with every household.

The PaediatRic and Maternity Support group believes that with the Paint the Town REaD program and community support, they can get books into every home and create vast improvements in the early literacy skills of children in the north-west region of the State. Paint the Town REaD is an early literacy scheme that encourages the whole community to read, talk, sing and rhyme with children from birth. Research shows that early literacy skills that are developed before a child commences school become the child's literacy foundation, which is vital for attaining competency in reading and writing at school. Future successes and opportunities in life depend on those literacy skills. Paint the Town REaD was first developed in Parkes in the 1990s but now takes its message of "Read, talk, sing and rhyme with your child from birth" across New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland and now in Gunnedah. The PaediatRic and Maternity Support group has commenced giving books to every newborn who is delivered or transferred back to the Gunnedah District Hospital through the home visits of our amazing Royal Far West child and family health nurses.

We all know that Gunnedah is a town that can do more to help our children not only by hosting local events and programs but also by ensuring that all the local children from the age of zero to five receive at least three books as well as working out ways in which to engage parents and carers in providing the most literacy-rich environments they know. I congratulate the PaediatRic and Maternity Support group on its excellent work. I encourage the group's committee to continue to work hard. The group has my full support. I encourage everyone in the Gunnedah community to strongly support the PaediatRic and Maternity Support group and to get behind the Paint the Town REaD program to put a book in every child's hand. If there is nothing else that parents can do for their child, they should at least read to them and sing to them.

**Mr Paul Toole:** Or play the guitar to them.

**Mr KEVIN ANDERSON:** Or play the guitar or some other musical instrument to them, as my good friend the member for Bathurst so rightly says. I congratulate the PaediatRic and Maternity Support group, PRAMS, and its committee on doing a fantastic job in the great town of Gunnedah.

#### **MENAI ELECTORATE COMMUNITY BUILDING PARTNERSHIP GRANTS**

**Ms MELANIE GIBBONS** (Menai) [4.56 p.m.]: Today I will speak about two of the well-deserving recipients of the latest round of Community Building Partnership grants. Members of the Holsworthy Girl Guides and the Anzac Village Pre-School were both overjoyed to learn that their applications for capital works funding had been successful. What I like about the Community Building Partnership Program is that it provides the opportunity for smaller groups—and in many cases groups with limited capacity to raise necessary funds for works—to receive a significant sized grant. Many of the projects put forward are for simple renovations, such as roof repairs or a bathroom upgrade, but they involve expense and otherwise would be impossible without funding from the program. I was pleased to be able to support those community organisations in getting the projects completed, which has enabled them to get on with the real work they have set out to do.

Once again, the Menai electorate received requests in excess of the money available, but I am sure that the successful recipients will put the \$200,000 allocated for the electorate to good use. The Holsworthy Girl Guides received \$20,000 to repair the guides hall on the grounds of the Holsworthy Public School. It is intended that the money will be used to assist with construction of a covered walkway between two buildings, which will give the girl guides a useable all-weather area. I was delighted to have the opportunity to see the girl guides in action last week for a night-time cookout. As a former brownie, it was good for me to see what the girl guides are doing today.

I was warmly welcomed by a girl guides leader, Erica Maso, who was busy helping the girl guides get fires going for three-course meal. Despite the chilly evening, I enjoyed standing around the fire with the girl guides, getting to know them, and having a look at their facilities. Similar to the boy scouts, the girl guides

program provides girls and young women with a sense of purpose, belonging and achievement. In a non-formal setting, they are taught leadership and personal development. The programs are delivered by trained volunteer leaders. As a female representative in this House, I am always supportive of any programs that encourage young girls to take on leadership roles. Hopefully one day we may see some of the girls in roles similar to mine.

Not too far away from the girl guides, the Anzac Village Pre-School has been operating for more than 40 years in the leafy surrounds of Wattle Grove. Despite its residential location, it is an incredibly tranquil setting for a preschool. The preschool originally served many defence families in the area, but today defence families represent approximately 50 per cent of the kids at the Anzac Village Pre-School. It is one of the unique features of the area. The preschool affects the girl guides too: While defence families provide an influx of new community members, they also are prone to leaving suddenly after short periods. These services have come to expect this but it can still create some gaps. For example, when parent helpers are posted elsewhere and are unable to continue their roles. This poses a few challenges for the various community groups and schools that have to manage the introduction of new faces and the sudden departure of old ones.

Currently the Anzac Village centre runs two classes at a time: one for three days a week and one for two days a week. I was surprised to learn that its current director is only the fourth director at the centre since it was opened—obviously it is not a bad place to work. Centre Director Catherine Manley showed me the two children's bathrooms the centre plans to upgrade with the \$19,219 funding from the Community Building Partnerships Program. Both bathrooms, while still functional, have the original fittings and plumbing from the original building and are definitely in need of an update. Some more shelves and cupboards for better storage will also be installed.

During my visit I took some time out to play with the kids. I joined the "Anna belles"—two girls named Annabelle—in the quiet corner while they made beautiful beaded necklaces. I went to the "hair salon" and watched the girls take turns in hair styling using plastic fruit—apparently plastic bananas make good hair straighteners. I also watched the boys busily build things with blocks and paint pictures. It was story time not long before I left but everything had to be packed away before it could begin. I was told to wait and see what happens when the "clean-up" song is played.

At the push of a button the song started and the kids started rushing around putting things away. Once the song had finished the room was cleared and they were ready to begin story time—no doubt a good "clean-up" song would come in handy in quite a few homes. I understand why this centre has been operating for so long—it has a wonderful atmosphere and a friendly staff. I was glad to visit these two groups and to inspect the projects they had successfully applied for. They are both well-deserving recipients. I congratulate the Holsworthy Girls Guides and the Anzac Village Preschool on their successful funding applications and I look forward to seeing both projects completed in the near future.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE** (Bathurst—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.01 p.m.]: I congratulate the member for Menai on bringing these two valuable projects that she has supported through the Community Building Partnership Program to the attention of the House. In the lead up to the election the Coalition gave a commitment that if elected it would continue the Community Building Partnership Program for another year. That commitment was honoured. The Treasurer then ensured that funding was found to keep this very valuable program running for another three years. It was wonderful to hear the member for Menai talking about these sorts of organisations and groups that will benefit from this funding. They are made up of a lot of volunteers who give of their time and energy and it would take years to match funding of even a few thousand dollars. This program builds on infrastructure and provides local jobs and its continuation is proof of the Government's recognition of that.

### LIVERPOOL COURTHOUSE

**Mr PAUL LYNCH** (Liverpool) [5.02 p.m.]: Tonight I draw the attention of the House to the quite bizarre story of the Liverpool Courthouse. A courthouse is a significant building for any town or city. I have particular memories of Liverpool Courthouse because I commenced my career as a legal practitioner there in the early 1980s, working as I did then in my first job as a solicitor with a firm based at Liverpool. The courthouse opened in 1972, replacing the much older and quite historic courthouse. In 2010 the then Attorney General announced that the Liverpool Courthouse would be refurbished—the new government continued with this commitment. Indeed, the local profession argued that there should be an extra courtroom. This was not necessarily the view of the previous Government but it was supported by the new Government, as was gleefully pointed out by the Attorney General when he officially opened the newly refurbished building in April this year.

This meant that the courthouse not only was refurbished but went from having four magistrates' courts and one call-over court to having five magistrates' courts and a call-over court at a total cost of \$7.5 million. The profession and the community were looking forward to the courts sitting again at Liverpool after a 14-month closure. During the refurbishment the courts did not operate at Liverpool—cases were directed to the Bankstown and Campbelltown local courts. Resuming sittings at Liverpool Courthouse would be more convenient for the residents of Liverpool and for local practitioners, many of whom I know and many of whom suffered a comparative downturn in business because the Liverpool Courthouse was not operating. Indeed, everyone in Liverpool was looking forward to getting back to work at Liverpool Courthouse, except there was a bit of a problem.

Despite the newly refurbished courthouse and at least one brand-new courtroom they are not being properly utilised. Only three magistrates are sitting there despite the fact that there are five magistrate courts. One has to wonder why so much money was spent on a courthouse that is being so under-utilised—40 per cent underused. It reminds me of the *Yes Minister* episode where they had a hospital without patients. A courthouse without judges and magistrates seems exactly on par with *Yes Minister*. What is particularly irritating is that it is not as if there is not work that could be done there. In fact, there is an even more absurd aspect to this. At Campbelltown Courthouse there are hearings of cases in what is called the "Liverpool DPP" list. These are more serious cases where the prosecution is handled by the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions rather than police prosecutors.

These cases can commence at Liverpool Courthouse for the first appearance but are then transferred to the Liverpool DPP list at Campbelltown Courthouse—these are Liverpool cases being heard at Campbelltown. This is the sort of thing that happened while the Liverpool Courthouse was being refurbished but in this case the work has not returned to Liverpool. The work has remained at Campbelltown even though the courthouse, including a new extra courtroom, has re-opened at Liverpool. Before the renovation there were four magistrates at Liverpool; there are now only three—one would have expected five magistrates granted the construction of an extra courtroom. So it is not only that the Government has not provided an extra magistrate; it has reduced the number of magistrates from four to three. Cutting justice services at Liverpool is wrong, and to do so in a newly refurbished courthouse is pretty bizarre. Ugo Parente from the Liverpool-Fairfield District Law Society was involved in consultation over the refurbishments and was one of the main proponents for including an extra courtroom. He said the Government has failed the people of Liverpool—he is correct. He also said:

The new courthouse was meant to benefit the people of Liverpool by having increased services, instead Liverpool is worse off with the new courthouse which has two empty courtrooms.

Liverpool is a growing city that needs increased resources. I don't understand the logic behind building an extra courtroom to cope with demand, then making people travel elsewhere to have their case heard. Liverpool deserves better.

Mr Parente is completely correct.

## TWIN TOWNS MEALS ON WHEELS FORTIETH ANNIVERSARY

**Mr GEOFF PROVEST** (Tweed—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.05 p.m.]: Tonight I inform the House of an important event in my electorate. Twin Towns Meals on Wheels celebrated a momentous 40 years of service to the community in April this year. Meals on Wheels perform a very important role in every electorate in this State. In addition to providing meals to elderly people, Meals on Wheels volunteers are possibly the only human contact those elderly people enjoy throughout the week. I was lucky enough to be invited to speak at the morning tea in celebration of 40 years of community volunteerism and compassionate neighbourhood support. The morning tea was held at the Florence Street Presbyterian Hall and past and present volunteers were there.

I am led to believe that the member for Drummoyne is actively involved in Meals on Wheels. I am assured that he occasionally dons an apron and cooks a mean lasagne at his local Meals on Wheels. I applaud him for his community spirit. The commitment and compassion of these volunteers is truly amazing. They are the crux of the organisation—this was very evident at the morning tea. Some of the remarkable volunteers and committee members present that morning included President Neville Lesina, who has been a Meals on Wheels volunteer for 26 years; Vice President Norman Hood; Judy Gittoes, who has worked with Meals on Wheels for 39 years—Judy's husband, Shorty Gittoes, is a very well-known local businessperson, was very active on the Tweed Shire Council and continues to contribute to the great area of the Tweed; Lucy Turner and Gloria Newton, who were two of the original committee members; Kay Steele; Betty Barnes; and Pam Wray.

Most Australians recognise the dedication of the Meals on Wheels organisation in supporting the more vulnerable members of society over the past 60 years, and it is an integral part of many communities across this

State. I also complement local government for its support of Meals on Wheels because without local government support this organisation would not be able to operate. The service provided by this organisation reaches out to those limited in capacity, by disability or age, by providing nutritious meals to the elderly and the disabled. However, this is only one facet of the organisation's service. The volunteers provide a level of social interaction and friendly checking of individual wellbeing throughout their work. This simple but essential service means thousands of people who otherwise may be forced to leave their homes, and be cared for full time, are able to enjoy their independence while maintaining healthy and happy lives. Overall, the values of the Meals on Wheels organisation—compassion, care, respect, teamwork and integrity—were well on display to those in attendance on that day.

This organisation has an extraordinarily valuable role within our local community. The electorate of Tweed has more people over the age of 65 years than any other electorate in New South Wales. Therefore the need is great, and continuous. It was refreshing to see that Meals on Wheels has new volunteers joining the organisation. As with many volunteer organisations, there has been a decline in the number of active volunteers within Meals on Wheels, so it is pleasing to see this new blood. However, I must add that many of the Meals on Wheels volunteers are on the hospital auxiliary, the local branch of Red Cross and the local section of the Salvation Army. There were a number of multiple-service volunteers at the function. I do not think the great State of New South Wales could function without those volunteers. I am pleased to be the chairman of the Emergency Volunteers Association of New South Wales, an effort of the O'Farrell-Stoner Government to increase the number of volunteers and recognition of them. I commend them to the House.

**Mr RAY WILLIAMS** (Hawkesbury—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.10 p.m.]: I will take but a moment to commend my good friend and colleague the member for Tweed for raising the important institution of Meals on Wheels. Meals on Wheels is one of those great community support groups that have been helping the most vulnerable in communities right across New South Wales. The member mentioned the various people who work for Meals on Wheels in his area. Can I, on behalf of the New South Wales Parliament, extend our appreciation to not only the various people and the many, many volunteers who support Meals on Wheels and make up Meals on Wheels, but indeed the volunteers right across New South Wales who are a fundamental aspect of our communities and support the most vulnerable in our society, the aged and the frail, and do a wonderful job. We extend to them our great appreciation.

### **SMITHFIELD BRING IT ON! FESTIVAL**

**Mr ANDREW ROHAN** (Smithfield) [5.11 p.m.]: I speak on the recent Bring It On! Festival, one of the biggest youth festivals in New South Wales held in my electorate of Smithfield. The event was held last month to mark the end of National Youth Week, a week that celebrates the contributions and achievements of youth around Australia. This year's theme was, "Be Happy, Be Active, Be You". I am proud to say that about 6,000 people gathered at Fairfield Showground, Prairiewood for this great festival. The free-of-charge festival ran from 11.00 a.m. to 8.00 p.m. and there were countless activities to cater for everyone, with stalls, amusement rides, sport activities and four performance stages. Of the 17 performances, most were local talent; however there were a few celebrity guests to join in the festivities. While the performances were impressive, the highlights of the festival were the battles. Dance battles and hip-hop battles were held between groups, allowing talented teams and schools to showcase their talent. Fairfield High School won the competition for schools and was awarded equipment for its music department. I applaud it for its win.

It is truly wonderful to see young people become so involved in community activities. The Bring It On! Festival has been an annual event for 11 years, and it has showcased some of our most talented youths in the area. It encourages young people to participate in fun activities as well as get in touch with the multiculturalism of our area. This event would not have taken off without the volunteers. Their hard work and commitment to this festival is evident through their accomplishments. I congratulate them for another successful year. I would like to specifically mention Clare and Amy Melville, former students of Prairiewood High School, and the involvement of the Youth Advisory Council from Fairfield Council, who helped make the event possible.

Fairfield city prides itself on its extremely diverse community. Recent statistics show that 19.3 per cent of the Fairfield community are young people aged 12 to 24 years. This is a rather large percentage of youth, the second-largest youth population of all local government areas in western Sydney. Hence it is important to identify their growing importance in our society. However, it pains me to say that there are several issues that affect the youth of Fairfield city. According to Fairfield City Council's "Strategy for Young People in Fairfield City 2013-2017", the youth lack proper policies that can help them. Many young people are becoming

disengaged with school, and youth unemployment rates are rising. One in six youths live below the poverty line. Also, because of increasing ethnic diversity, the proficiency levels of English are slightly lower compared to the rest of Sydney's young people.

I am overwhelmed with sadness knowing that, while we try to combat issues such as this, lack of funding has made some of our services obsolete or has forced them to shut down. Nevertheless, we are still persevering to create more available facilities for our youth. Places such as PCYC and Mission Australia are just a few of the programs we offer to young people and their families. These services provide support and counselling and foster a sense of community, with weekly activities for young people and mature aged people. Also, after the New South Wales Government's changes to the leaving school age, the number of young people attending university rose from 2.8 per cent in 2006 to 4.0 per cent in 2011, a massive spike in tertiary education numbers. I am incredibly proud of my electorate and the young people in it. While we still have many issues, I will strive to combat them and I stand in support of any services which may benefit the youth of my electorate.

### **DRUMMOYNE ELECTORATE FERRY SERVICES**

**Mr JOHN SIDOTI** (Drummoyne) [5.16 p.m.]: It gives me great pleasure to make this private member's statement. It is a good news story. Members will know that I have said in this House many times that the bloodline of my electorate is public transport. This time I have more good news. The hardworking Minister for Transport, the Hon. Gladys Berejiklian, has delivered once again for the good people of Drummoyne. It is very important that the State keeps investing in and upgrading its public transport. So it is with great pleasure that I have been getting out to many constituents in the Drummoyne electorate the message about the restoration of the 140 weekly ferry services that were scrapped by the previous Government. This Government reinstated those services. In fact, it went a step further; not only has it reinstated the original services that were scrapped, but it has introduced an extra 25 ferry services per week, or an extra five new services per day, west of the Harbour Bridge.

Since then we have also put in place a new ferry operator—more fantastic news. This operator is delivering better customer service and has committed to upgrading a number of wharves. Watch this space: I have been lobbying the Minister for the past six months because a number of Drummoyne electorate residents have been complaining about the state of the Drummoyne ferry wharf. Though I am not complaining—we have a number of very good, state-of-the-art wharves in Cabarita, Chiswick and Abbotsford—I know the Minister for Transport will keep Drummoyne in mind as this is a pivotal area; if we can improve the wharf, that general equates to better travel times up and down the Parramatta River.

Might I also say that this hardworking Minister recently announced that there will be a new timetable in October. The change to the timetable for this system will involve express services from Abbotsford and Cabarita during commuter peak times. This is fantastic news for the people of Abbotsford and Cabarita. This service will be up to 10 minutes faster than current travel times. Imagine not sitting in traffic for those 10 minutes, and having more time for your family and better productivity. There will be new dedicated services from Cabarita, Abbotsford, Chiswick and Drummoyne to Darling Harbour in peak times—more fantastic news. The new timetable will include consistent 30-minute services between Cabarita, Abbotsford, Chiswick and Drummoyne wharves to Circular Quay via Darling Harbour. The news just keeps getting better.

My constituents have been screaming out for better late-night services to Cabarita, Abbotsford, Chiswick and Drummoyne. And, guess what? The Minister for Transport has delivered again—again and again. The good news keeps coming. I was hesitant to ask about weekend services, because I love watching those packed ferries of a Saturday and Sunday travelling down the Parramatta River. I only had to mention this once. And you guessed it again: that hardworking member of Willoughby and Minister for Transport is at it again, with more weekday off-peaks, more weekend services. This is absolutely fantastic. There are four extra trips on Sundays in the morning from Cabarita, Abbotsford and Chiswick and more late night services. Drummoyne is the envy of every other electorate. Not only will the residents of Sydney benefit from increased services up and down the Parramatta River; so, too, will the tourist sector and people visiting the city.

**Dr Geoff Lee:** And Parramatta.

**Mr JOHN SIDOTI:** And even Parramatta. The member for Parramatta is another hardworking member: he is on the same footing as me—doing his best and delivering for his electorate. The Minister has taken this approach not only for the short and medium term; she is also looking at a long-term plan. That is what responsible governments do. They do not think about only today and yesterday; they also think about tomorrow

and next year. That is exactly what this Government has done. When I was doorknocking the hardworking residents of Rhodes the message coming back was that, with all the development approved under the previous Government, Rhodes needed better ferry services. What has the Minister for Transport done? She said that she is looking for opportunities to expand services, provide new wharves and grow the ferry network to cater for growth. The possibility of a potential new wharf at Rhodes will be investigated, and Drummoyne wharf will be upgraded under the plan. I thank the Minister for Transport. The Drummoyne community is grateful for these extra services.

**Mr RAY WILLIAMS** (Hawkesbury—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.21 p.m.]: It would be remiss of me not to commend the member for Drummoyne on behalf of the Minister for Transport for his comments. My colleagues the member for Riverstone, the member for Londonderry, the member for Parramatta and I represent electorates that are sometimes referred to as the transport-starved areas of the north-west. The Minister has played an important role for the people of north-western Sydney, whether it be the commencement of the North West Rail Link, increased bus services to our area, and Rouse Hill in my electorate in particular, the addition of air-conditioned trains on the Richmond line—in the past commuters suffered freezing cold trains in winter and hot trains in summer—or increased night ride services. The list is endless. I take the opportunity to thank the Minister for Transport for the role she has played on behalf of our commuters.

### **OUR LADY OF LEBANON COLLEGE RUBY JUBILEE**

**Dr GEOFF LEE** (Parramatta) [5.22 p.m.]: I congratulate Our Lady of Lebanon College on 40 years of inspiring service and contribution to the community. Today I reflect on the wise words of Principal Sister Marlene Chedid's address to celebrate the college's ruby jubilee. Principal Juliette Ghorayeb and Sister Constance Bacha of the Maronite Sisters of the Holy Family laid the foundations for Our Lady of Lebanon School, aided by Monsignor Peter Ziade. The school opened its doors with an enrolment of 115 students under Our Lady of Lebanon Church in Harris Park on 31 January 1973. The following year Sister Madeleine de la Croix was appointed with Sister Constance, and they were the pioneering sisters over the next 20 years, with other sisters appointed to minister throughout this time. The principals that have followed are Sister Constance Bacha from 1974 to 1995, Sister Irene Boughosn from 1996 to 2004 and Sister Marlene Chedid from 2005 to 2013.

In 1978 the sisters acquired two adjoining house blocks to accommodate the primary school and convent, with the generous assistance of the Federal and State governments and many parents and friends. Construction was completed in 1982 and the official opening was performed by then Senator Peter Baume, Minister for Education, on 26 June 1982. In the 1980s an application was lodged to establish a secondary department and the official opening was performed in 1992 by then Prime Minister Paul Keating. A second primary building was opened in 1995. In 2000 then Prime Minister John Howard visited the school and the then New South Wales Premier Bob Carr was a guest in 2001. Further additions to the secondary building were officially opened in 2004 by the Governor, Professor Marie Bashir. More recently, in 2012, the Building the Education Revolution grant allowed the extension of the primary premises, resulting in the building of another primary block.

Our Lady of Lebanon School, which has become known as Our Lady of Lebanon College, is unique for a number of reasons. Along with its sister school, St Maroun's College, they were the first Maronite schools in Australia. They offered compulsory Arabic, the majority of enrolled students were of Lebanese ancestry and these Maronite schools regularly celebrated the Maronite Catholic liturgy. The college census of 2013 lists the enrolments for primary at 687 and secondary at 490. In 40 years the school has progressed from a 115 primary student enrolment with classes held under the church to a college with about 1,200 enrolments from K-12 with six building blocks. Carrying on the motto "To know, love and serve", Our Lady of Lebanon College has lived out these principles through the tireless work, commitment and support of the Maronite community.

In fact, if early migrants back in the 1960s had not requested Maronite schools the sisters would never have landed on Australian shores. From the beginning Our Lady of Lebanon College has been the realisation of the hope of Maronite families to offer a Maronite education to their children. Today the college is more than an educational institution; it is also a cultural way of life, a spiritual well spring, a tight-knit community and a loving family. I thank the many people who have been part of the life of Our Lady of Lebanon College: the bishops—I mention specifically His Lordship Ad Abikaram, who has constantly supported the college with his enthusiasm and knowledge that stems from an educational background—and our new Bishop-elect, Antoine Tarabay, with years of experience within the educational institution, will continue the focus on education.

I thank the reverend clergy, the staff and students, the parents and friends, and the many benefactors. We especially acknowledge the many Maronite Sisters of the Holy Family who have ministered tirelessly over 40 years at Our Lady of Lebanon College. Together we acknowledge what has been achieved. We look forward to bigger and better things and we give thanks to our God and our dear Mother Mary, who have loved this college into being and have journeyed with us, blessing, gracing and nurturing our college family. On behalf of the House I express our best wishes for another 40 years of tireless community service and wish Our Lady of Lebanon College another 40 years of success.

### COAL INDUSTRY

**Mr CLAYTON BARR** (Cessnock) [5.27 p.m.]: Today I offer my complete and unabated support for the coalmining industry in New South Wales. I was raised in Cessnock on a bed of coal from the coalfields of the Hunter. Interestingly, coalmining in Newcastle first started in the 1790s and quickly spread west. Certainly during the twentieth century there was coalmining in Cessnock, Kurri Kurri and Maitland; it has since moved a little further west and north west. Today in Parliament the Minister said that 9,600 people are directly employed by the coalmining industry in my electorate. One would think that would be reason enough for me to support the coalmining industry. That is an important reason, but I will give more reasons. The coalmining industry in the Cessnock electorate built pools, hospitals, police boys clubs and more. That is what the coalmining industry has done in my community. It has made people wealthy enough that they can buy their own house and land. It has made it possible for families to become asset rich, to travel and to educate their children.

One of the proudest things that the coalmining people of my community do is send their next generation to university, whether it be to study a degree that might land them back in the coalmining industry, to study a degree that takes them somewhere else on planet earth or to study a degree that brings them back into community services to be school teachers, nurses or whatever. That is what the coalmining industry has done in my community. But that is still not the reason I support the industry. When I got home I switch on the lights, turn on the television and open the fridge or turn on the kettle. That is another reason to support the coal industry in New South Wales. Greens members who sit in this Chamber and in the other place say no to coal. The irony is that they also go home and switch on lights. Yet they say no to coal.

On the weekend the Leader of the Opposition was invited to attend a seminar called "Our Land, Our Water, Our Future". The seminar's name identifies for me the deceit of The Greens, because it should have been called, "No more coal. Shut down the State." In good faith the Leader of the Opposition attempted to try to engage in conversation with them, but they are deliberately trying to be deceptive and tricky to get people tied up in knots to achieve their own end. This all comes from Jonathan Moylan, the same person who issued the fake ANZ release that cost shareholders millions of dollars. These people who say they are holier than thou, who preach from the high moral ground, say, "You've got to follow the rules. You've got to be transparent and do things the right way, but we don't because we are holier than thou."

The New South Wales coal industry provides \$1.7 billion to this State's economy. That makes it possible for us to have schools. I would love to hear The Greens policy when they shut down coal. How will they pay for schools and roads? How will they pay for public transport that they want to be free, not just cheap? How will we pay for those things if we do not receive these royalties? Every weekend the jobs listed in the local newspaper are in the coal industry, not in wind farms, solar or any other renewable energy sources. I am a massive fan of renewable energy: I want us to embrace renewable energy. Members opposite want to prosper and develop renewables. We all see that as the future, but in my lifetime we will not be switching on the lights in our homes or running our fridges on 100 per cent, or even 50 per cent, of renewable energy sources.

We will be running those appliances on coal, in the same that people have relied on coal for the past 200 years, and probably will do so for the next 100 years at least. We will always work towards using more renewable energy. Today, tomorrow and in my lifetime energy will be provided by coal, coal and coal. I say to The Greens that if they have some other plan, solution or other way to have energy without coal, bring it on. All The Greens do is deceive, scaremonger and seek to trip up people. The Greens are anything but clear, transparent or open with the community. The Greens should get down off the high moral ground and tell everyone what they are all about. Do not deceive us.

**Mr RAY WILLIAMS** (Hawkesbury—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.32 p.m.]: It is not often that I support Opposition members, but today I support our colleague the member for Cessnock in his support for the hard-working coalmining workers and the industry within his electorate. Every member of the O'Farrell Government stands firm in their commitment and support for the hard-working coalmine workers in the coal

industry across this great State. We have heard of the billions of dollars returned to Treasury each year from the coal industry. The fact is that that industry underlines the wealth and prosperity of this country. Whilst we have a Federal Government that squanders that wealth and prosperity, it certainly will not be squandered under a future Tony Abbott government. I encourage the member for Cessnock to encourage his Leader of the Opposition to turn around and stop his opposition to the coalmining industry.

### **NEWCASTLE JUNIOR CAVALIERS CRICKET CLUB UNITED KINGDOM TOUR**

**Mr ANDREW CORNWELL** (Charlestown) [5.33 p.m.]: On Saturday 11 May I had the privilege of attending the Newcastle Junior Cavaliers Cricket Club 2013 United Kingdom tour dinner and watched the excited young players being presented with their baggy greens. This team of 14 young men, all aged from 16 to 18 years, come from the Charlestown club in my electorate. This trip to England will be the first for all of them. The team leaves Australia on 20 June and returns on 23 July. They will be in England for 28 days and will play 19 games of cricket on some of the world's most iconic fields. Some brilliant fixtures have been arranged at grounds such as the elite Ealing Cricket Club in London, Stratford-upon-Avon, North Devon Sidmouth and the magnificent Bath Cricket Club ground located in the middle of the picturesque town of Bath.

As a cricket player I know just how much it means as a young cricketer to play the game in England for the first time. Unfortunately, I went to England to play cricket in the twilight of my career; nonetheless, it was a fantastic experience. For these young players whose careers are on the rise it is a magnificent opportunity. This is a trip of a lifetime for these 14 young players: Daniel Arms, Tom Dwyer, Ben Evans, Jonathon Sharpe, Joshua Edwards, Jackson Mace, Aiden Moore, Aaron Summers, Jordan Bradley, Riley Coulson, Duncan Brown, Joshua Sutton, Matthew Bench and Isaac Wallace. I know they will bring home memories, on and off the field, they will hold forever. Not only will this trip give the boys the opportunity to play the game they love in England; it also will instil in them the honour of representing their home town as well as their State, country and the wider Australian cricket community.

While on tour the boys will take turns captaining the team each day, another invaluable experience for them as cricketers, as young men and this country's future leaders. The team carries on a long tradition of touring England. Organisers have told me that every English club contacted remembered the Cavaliers from previous tours and they were extremely keen to extend the 2013 team some good English hospitality. Indeed, coach Rodney Mace was himself Cavalier and toured with the team more than 20 years ago. As someone who spent a bit of time playing against Rodney Mace I know that he will instil in those young players his front foot hook shot, which he should have had a trademark on. Rodney has coached this year's Cavaliers for the past five years and is well versed in the rigours of mentoring and managing 14 young men. His dedication and commitment, along with that of the six managers who will accompany the tour in taking such an energetic bunch on their first international trip, is certainly to be admired.

Not only will these young men play some great cricket; they will experience the thrill of seeing some of the best as Rod has arranged for the boys to watch Australia in the Ashes on the opening day of the Lords test match—an incredible experience for any young Australian. Rod has done all he can to ensure the boys have a memorable experience and has prepared personalised kit bags and play and dress uniforms, as well as training gear for all the players. Experiences such as these shape our young sportsmen. I acknowledge the work that has been put into this incredible tour by the stalwarts of the Newcastle Junior Cavaliers Cricket Club. Local sporting organisations and programs form a vital part of our community. Without them our young people would never be as engaged in sport as they are. I take this opportunity to wish the whole team, their coach and managers, and the entire touring party of 43, the very best for what should be an incredible experience.

The gala dinner held as a send-off was attended by many former Newcastle Cavalier cricketers, who toured and mentored players and shared their experiences. I note the particular contribution of John Ragg, who travelled via the United States on a previous cricket tour to the United Kingdom. He was so engrossed in recounting his story that after 40 minutes of speaking he had not yet reached the point when he arrived in England and was still talking about his experiences in the United States. This gives the House some idea of the fantastic time these young men will have. I wish them all the best. They will have a fantastic time, make a mountain of fantastic new friends and bring back many great memories. I thank the House for its indulgence.

### **TRIBUTE TO PAMELA GRIFFITH**

**Mr JOHN FLOWERS** (Rockdale) [5.37 p.m.]: Tonight I acknowledge a resident in my electorate of Rockdale and an exceptionally talented individual. Pamela Griffith is an artist, a teacher and an inspiration to the



art community and to the people of Rockdale. Born into an artistic family, Pamela's grandmother was the only person to have painted the main street of Wollongong in the nineteenth century, and this painting survives to the present day. Pamela trained as an art teacher at Sydney Teachers College and East Sydney Technical College. She furthered her education by completing a Bachelor of Arts degree at Alexander Mackie Art School and began teaching at a number of institutions. Since then she has had an enviable career presenting her works in over 150 exhibitions commencing in 1978. Over this period she travelled the globe studying and exhibiting in places including but not limited to England, Israel, the United States of America, France, Hong Kong and the Galapagos Islands. Her works are displayed in a variety of public, corporate and private collections, including the National Gallery of Australia, Canberra; the Federal and New South Wales Parliament Houses; New South Wales State Library; St Ignatius and St Joseph's colleges; the Vatican; and Sydney, New South Wales and Charles Sturt universities.

Pamela's paintings and drawings capture the essence of nation building and through her work she has become part of that nation-building process. Barry Stern, a well-known identity in the art world, made the comment that Pamela is an artist who is "strong on determination. She is professional, sure of herself, but she also has the humility that reveals her quest for truth both as an artist and as a human being." According to Professor Joanna Mendelssohn from the College of Fine Arts at the University of New South Wales, Pamela Griffith is an artist whose work follows a great tradition—the tradition of craftsmanship and technical excellence which she applies to her decidedly contemporary work. In painting, drawing, printmaking and design she strives for work which is both artistically satisfying and technically masterful.

Pamela's achievements are many. She was commissioned by the Catholic Church in 1994 to create a toile of the now Saint Mary McKillop's life. Pope John Paul II made particular reference to this piece when he visited the Powerhouse Museum during World Youth Day festivities in 1994. For the bicentenary in 1988, Pamela was commissioned to design a toile to mark the occasion, and in 2007 she was commissioned by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet to design etchings for the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation [APEC] conference. There were 21 prints presented to the visiting heads of state of 21 nations. The current licences from the now Roads and Maritime Services of New South Wales have watercolour waratahs on them designed by Pamela, who worked with the team who created this high-technology card.

Over the weekend of 13 and 14 April, Pamela held an exhibition at Tempe House and St Magdalenes Chapel. Tempe House was built in 1836 by Alexander Brodie Spark on the southern banks of the Cooks River and designed by architect John Verge. Tempe House is of exceptional historical significance as a remarkably intact 1830s villa still able to be appreciated in its largely unaltered landscape setting. The exhibition was opened by Robert Brodie Spark, the great-great-grandson of Alexander Brodie Spark. Pamela Griffith said that the object of the exhibition was to make people aware that this outstanding colonial building was made to display art long before Sydney had an art gallery, and once again Tempe House could become a cultural centre for the arts in Rockdale. The exhibition was a resounding success.

We are privileged to have people of the calibre of Pamela Griffith in our community. People such as Pamela enrich our cultural environment. Their efforts enable us to have pride in our local area and as Australians. We should all be very proud of these gifted people. Art is an important part of any civilised culture, which can sometimes be overlooked or not fully appreciated. It enables many people to tell their story and gives a voice to those who may express themselves differently. It tells their story. Pamela Griffith's pictures and paintings give us a sense of what Australia was, is and will be. Pamela Griffith is an acknowledged teacher much in demand. Her disciplines cover oil and acrylic painting, watercolour, portraiture and printmaking. We eagerly await Pamela's next collection and/or exhibition and wish her all the very best for the future.

#### **ALISON HOMESTEAD MEN'S SHED**

**Mr DARREN WEBBER** (Wyang) [5.42 p.m.]: Today I highlight the important role of the Men's Shed network in my electorate of Wyong and throughout the Central Coast region—which at the moment is copping an absolute bucketing, and I wish everyone well and a safe trip home. On Monday 13 May I was pleased to be able to officially open the new Alison Homestead Men's Shed, located on the grounds of the historical Alison Homestead in my electorate of Wyong. This newest addition to the Central Coast Men's Shed network will allow greater access to the fantastic support provided by the Men's Shed organisation and its fantastic volunteers.

The Alison Homestead Men's Shed was fully funded by a State Government Community Building Partnership grant of \$10,975. Sadly, the new building was opened under the dark shadow of a senseless act of

vandalism. In the early morning hours of Saturday 3 December 2011, the beautiful heritage building known as the Alison Homestead, which housed the men's shed prior to this one and a museum, was burned to the ground. The community was devastated, sad and angry at losing the wonderful pieces of history given to us by descendants of the pioneering families of our area.

The opening of the Alison Homestead Men's Shed is the first step in rebuilding what was lost and, importantly, shows the community that the Alison Homestead has a bright future, rising from the ashes with support from the State Government and Wyong Shire Council. The new men's shed is yet another wonderful example of how the O'Farrell Government's Community Building Partnership grants program is assisting our community. Only under this Government is the Community Building Partnership program guaranteed to continue in the long term. In the latest round of announcements, another \$300,000 has been allocated to many worthwhile projects in my electorate of Wyong.

This particular grant enabled the construction of the new shed, including the laying of the concrete slab. The shed is now a valuable addition to the many established men's sheds on the Central Coast—they are popping up like mushrooms. There are four in the Wyong shire and another two under construction. As a patron of this association, I welcome their continued expansion across the Wyong shire. With an ever-increasing population on the Central Coast, the men's shed network continues to play a vital role in promoting and supporting men's health activities by the provision of a safe environment that encourages the social inclusion of men and facilitates meaningful discussion within our community. This will benefit men of all ages, particularly younger men who no longer have contact with their fathers or grandfathers.

The official opening ceremony was well attended by more than 80 members and supporters of the Alison Homestead Men's Shed and the Wyong District Museum and Historical Society, and also joined by members of men's sheds from all over the Central Coast. A sausage sizzle barbecue was provided for all who attended, including me. I take this opportunity to particularly thank Mr Greg Denning, the President of the Wyong District Museum and Historical Society, and all the hardworking members of his committee for their involvement in the establishment and construction of this latest men's shed. The first thought that came to mind when I saw the shed in all its glory was, "I want one of them in my backyard."

Most importantly, this event was the first time I had the opportunity, honour and privilege to unveil a plaque with my name on it. Despite lots of infrastructure being provided to the Wyong electorate in two years of good responsible governance under the first Liberal member, I am yet to have had a plaque with my name on it—it has usually been a Minister. This plaque, like a first kiss or intimate moment, will be a fond memory for me and will always hold a special place in my heart. With planning currently underway, I know there are many plaques to come in the Central Coast and Wyong electorates. I also thank Wyong Shire Council for its assistance and support in ensuring that this latest project was up and running as quickly as possible. I look forward to continuing to work closely with the local Central Coast Men's Shed organisation and with Wyong Shire Council to ensure that the Alison Homestead is restored to its former glory.

### **HAWKESBURY ELECTORATE SCHOOL EVENTS**

**Mr RAY WILLIAMS** (Hawkesbury—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.47 p.m.]: Tonight I share with the House new programs and initiatives which have been developed at some of my schools in the Hawkesbury. Each year all Australians come together on 25 April to commemorate Anzac Day. This year I was humbled to stand alongside the community at several Anzac Day services to honour the men and women who have served and continue to serve our country for the freedom we now enjoy. One of the services I attended was held at Dural Public School prior to Anzac Day. Corporal Jonathon Perrottet, from the Royal Australian Air Force at Richmond, was present at the service and he spoke with students about his involvement in the air force. I thank principal Milly Stone, assistant principal Sabina Heinrichson, and teacher Angie Onay, who organised this ceremony. Events such as these held in our schools ensure that the legacy of our fellow Australians who made great sacrifices on our behalf are not forgotten, and Dural Public School is leading the way in this regard.

Schools in the rural areas of the Hawkesbury have recently embraced the healthy outdoor benefits of BMX bike riding. Colo Heights Public School started the trend late last year and Cattai Public School has now constructed its very own BMX tracks within the school grounds. These initiatives were started with the support of Rebecca Webb, who is the Hawkesbury regional coordinator for the Active After-school Communities Program. She works with regional schools to encourage children to participate in local sports clubs in their areas to help improve fitness levels for children. The Active After-school Communities Program is a national initiative providing primary school children with access to free sport and other structured physical activity to

encourage a love of sport that inspires them to join a local sporting club. This is a wonderful program which will improve the fitness of school children and boost access to local sporting clubs, and I encourage other schools to get involved.

Recently, Rebecca also established a partnership with the Western Sydney Cycling Network for a bicycle recycling program, which consists of three main themes: donation of bikes, repair of bikes and reintroduction of old bikes into the community. Western Sydney Cycling Network agreed to assist Cattai Public School acquire 25 bikes and helmets as part of the special initiative funding arrangement; however, Western Sydney Cycling Network was in need of stock. I was therefore very proud to donate two of my own family's BMX bikes towards the project. This is a great initiative. It has brought the community together through a working day to construct the BMX track at Cattai Public School, and now those local kids are getting the benefit of this wonderful, healthy, outdoor activity.

Construction of the Cattai Public School BMX track took place with 15 local parents who volunteered their time working on bobcats, excavators, tippers, cameras and shovels. Assistance was also provided by Hawkesbury Hornets BMX club member and track builder aficionado Brett Barnes. The kids have been learning all about BMX through the Active After-school Communities Program from Olympian Luke Madill. I was also happy to support this initiative with support through the Community Building Partnership funding for the construction of a new bike storage shed. Cattai Public School now has a new BMX track, bike shed and all the BMX bikes it needs. I encourage anyone who has an old BMX bike lying around in their garage to donate it towards this program.

Another aspect of the Active After-school Communities Program is an Australian Football League initiative which Rebecca introduced to Maraylya Public School. Greater Western Sydney Giants Australian Football League players Sam Reid and Tim Mohr recently visited Maraylya Public School as part of this program where the Giants players conducted a coaching clinic at the school. This initiative was originally in response to a letter sent by two Maraylya Public School students Lucas Rando and Jayden Colgan. My old public school of Rouse Hill recently held a "Principal for the Day" competition as part of a new leadership program in the school. Students were asked to write down in fifty words or less why they would like to be principal for the day. The winning entry was from Madeleine Burnett, a year six student who wrote a poem. It reads:

I'd love to be principal for the day  
so much to do and so much to say  
you would get to meet, greet  
and sit in the principal's seat  
I'd have a smile on my face as big as the sun  
working with staff to get things done  
meetings to go to and letters to write  
discussions with students and teachers alike  
my enthusiasm is high and I learn really quick  
this opportunity would be great and I would love to be picked

Congratulations to Madeleine. I also take the opportunity to thank the principal of Rouse Hill Public School, Peter Thompson, who I have only just been advised will be retiring at the end of the current term. Mr Thompson is a gentleman and his experience has been greatly appreciated at the school. Mr Johnson stepped into the role of principal a few years ago following the departure of former principal Jason Miezes, who now holds a regional position within the education department. Mr Miezes was much loved by the entire community and his tenure included leading the children down from my old heritage school on top of the hill on Windsor Rd to the current school site.

Rouse Hill Public School is one of the largest primary schools in New South Wales with just over 850 students. It has grown significantly since I was a student in 1971 when it had a student body of just under 100 students. I take the opportunity once again to thank all the principals of the many schools across the Hawkesbury electorate and also the teachers and the community members on the various parents and citizens committees. You all do a wonderful job assisting in the high quality of education provided on behalf of the students in the area of the Hawkesbury and it is greatly appreciated by me and the broader community. Well done.

#### **LONDONDERRY ELECTORATE COMMUNITY GROUPS**

**Mr BART BASSETT** (Londonderry) [5.52 p.m.]: One of the great pleasures of being a local member is meeting people in the community who volunteer their time freely to help others and improve the local

community. Recently I visited the 1st Whalan Scout Group with the Minister for Citizenship and Communities, and Minister for Aboriginal Affairs to present a cheque from the State Government's Community Building Partnership program. The 1st Whalan Scout Hall was built over 40 years ago and needs to be refurbished to ensure it complies with modern safety standards. While we were there the Minister and I enjoyed the hospitality provided by the scouts and their leaders with a delicious morning tea.

We spent a lot of time talking with the leaders about the program and activities that Whalan Scouts participate in. We then sat down with the boys and girls and played some of the games that they have been taught at their regular meetings. The Minister was much better at the games than I was but the kids out-did us both. I congratulate the parents who freely give their time to make up the leadership of the 1st Whalan Scouts. I was very impressed by their dedication to the cause and the commitment to their children. The Whalan Scout group is a very pro-active community-minded group that not only provides an avenue for children and young people to make friends and learn practical skills, but also reaches into the wider community.

The \$35,000 funding is a vital boost of assistance to upgrade a hall that requires refurbishing and will be able to cater for a wide range of scouting and community usages. The funding has been provided under the New South Wales Government's Community Building Partnership program with \$300,000 available this financial year for worthy community-based projects in the Londonderry electorate. The Minister and I really enjoyed our time at 1st Whalan Scouts and I thank the scouts including the regional commissioner for Greater Western Sydney, Neville Henderson, the deputy regional commissioner, David Stopps, and local leaders Julie-Ann Brewer, Glenn and Dedre Daines, Lisa Cox, Joshua Fisher and about 20 scouts.

Another community group I recently visited to present a cheque from the Community Building Partnership program was the Yarramundi Rural Fire Service Brigade. I attended the brigade's annual general meeting with the mayor of Hawkesbury City Council, Kim Ford, to present a cheque for \$30,000 so the brigade can purchase a variable message sign. The Yarramundi Rural Fire Service Brigade, like all Rural Fire Service brigades, is made up of volunteers who freely and selflessly give of their time to protect property and lives from the ravages of fire. Like all Rural Fire Service brigades Yarramundi is an integral part of the semi-rural community with members assisting with other emergency situations like storm damage, flooding and car accidents. It is also on hand to help other community groups when they need assistance with fundraising and other ventures like manning barbecues for the school fete and traffic and parking control at big community events like the Hawkesbury show.

The \$30,000 funding is a vital boost of assistance that will be used by the brigade to purchase the variable message sign that can be utilised for both emergencies and general community activities at other times. Variable message signs are vital tools to help alert the public during emergency situations and I commend the Rural Fire Service brigade. The annual general meeting presented an opportunity to catch up with many locals, including Ed Cameron who was re-elected as the brigade's captain and Chris Garlick who was re-elected as the president.

Last Sunday, for the third year in a row, I called in to the annual Werrington community festival at the neighbourhood centre for a few hours to chat with locals and lend my support to a great community gathering. There was live music, dance and cultural performances and the Werrington scouts ran the barbeque with their steak and sausage sandwiches but faced strong but healthy competition from the men's shed who were selling hotdogs. The annual event is a community service provided by the Werrington community project and I congratulate Lauren Harris, the community development worker, and her team of dedicated volunteers on another successful festival.

Following this I went off to the Werrington Little Athletics annual presentation awards held at St Marys Leagues Club, which was well attended and a huge success. I also congratulate the boys and girls who received awards at the Little Athletics presentation day and the older boys and girls who had started in Little Athletics but moved on to other athletic groups. I thank all of the parents and friends of Little Athletics who make up the executive on a yearly basis and those parents who take on board an age group and turn up every weekend during the athletics season to provide a service to parents who are not able to take their children to the events. I also thank the St Marys Leagues Club for its ongoing community support in assisting community events like Little Athletics.

#### **BATTLE OF CRETE SEVENTY-SECOND ANNIVERSARY**

**Mr CHARLES CASUSCELLI** (Strathfield) [5.57 p.m.]: On Saturday 18 May I was honoured and proud to attend the Cretan Association of Sydney and NSW Annual Ball commemorating the seventy-second

anniversary of the battle of Crete and the Greek campaign. The official hosts were Mr Nick Janes, as host and President, Cretan Association of Sydney and NSW, and Mr Andrew Petrakis, president of the Cretan Federation of Australia and New Zealand.

Official guests included Mr James Jordan, president of the joint committee commemorating the battle of Crete and the Greek campaign; Mr Bill Kotsovolos, president Greek RSL sub-branch; Mr Vassilios Tolios, Consul General of Greece in Sydney; the Hon. Matt Thistlethwaite, Parliamentary Secretary for Pacific Island Affairs, Parliamentary Secretary for Multicultural Affairs; Dr Cedric Spencer, Liberal candidate for Grayndler, representing the leader of the Federal Opposition, the Hon. Tony Abbott; Mr John Robertson MP, leader of the State Opposition, shadow Minister for Western Sydney, shadow Minister for the Illawarra and also member for Blacktown; Lieutenant Colonel Eric Modderman, representing Major General Michael Slater of the Australian Defence Force; the Very Reverend Father Angelo Alifierakis, chief executive officer of the Estia Foundation, representing the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia; Vice-Admiral Alexandros Theodosiou, Deputy Chief of the Hellenic National Defence general staff, representing the Hellenic Armed Forces; and Commander Georgios Pelekanos, Director of Executive Office and aide to the Deputy Chief of Defence at Hellenic National Defence general staff.

I was honoured to attend the celebration of the seventy-second anniversary of the battle of Crete, representing the Premier, who earlier in the day laid a wreath with the Cretan community commemorating this solemn event in the history of the island of Crete. I extend my thanks to the organisers of the event, the Cretan Association of Sydney and New South Wales. I congratulate them on an event that provided not only moments of reflection and acknowledgement of sacrifice but also a celebration of Cretan and Greek culture. I am inspired by the legacy of the many veterans of the Battle of Crete. Their valour and sacrifice will never be forgotten. Accounts of the battle tell a story of heroic resistance against a terrifying airborne invasion of a kind that had never been seen before but which would change the face of warfare forever. While I may leave many of the finer points of the Battle of Crete to the historians and the military strategists, I want to point out a few lessons that deserve to be repeated, especially today 72 years on.

The citizens of Crete, the ordinary people of the island, fought back bravely and with extraordinary determination. Anyone who has ever wondered to themselves what they would do if an enemy appeared in the skies above their home and how they would respond should look closely at the bravery shown by the people of Crete. Winston Churchill remarked at the time, "Heroes fight like Greeks." He was not referring to ancient warriors famous in Greek legends or in Greek history; he was referring to the people of Crete. We should reflect on the fact that Cretan casualties—those who were killed during the occupation of the island—were just a little less than the combined numbers of the casualties of the Armed Forces who comprised the combatants of the day, both Allies and Germans. Some 3,500 civilians died during the occupation. It should be remembered that Australians alongside New Zealand and British troops showed grit and determination on a foreign plot of land far from home and that they stood with the people of Crete.

The people of Crete forged a bond with these Aussies, Kiwis and Brits and together they gave the Nazi invaders an almighty surprise, one that taught them a hard lesson that echoed through the future course of the war. I am honoured to celebrate their memory tonight. I join with the representatives of all those who fought together on the shores of Crete to give thanks for their courage and to rejoice in the fellowship that endures between the people of this land and the people of Crete. That fellowship is nowhere more apparent than in the tremendous contribution made by Cretans and Greeks to Australia today. The Cretan Association and the Cretan Federation work proudly today for the benefit of the Cretan community and carry on their community's legacy. The ability of Australians from all backgrounds to celebrate one another's cultures in harmony represents the true fruits of peace and the sacrifice of those, like the Cretans, who put liberty and freedom above all else. Lest we forget

### **SOUTHERN YOUTH AND FAMILY SERVICES**

**Ms NOREEN HAY** (Wollongong) [6.02 p.m.]: I was pleased to see sitting in the public gallery yesterday Ms Narelle Clay, Chief Executive Officer of Southern Youth and Family Services, and a number of her colleagues and clients. Southern Youth and Family Services is an independent, community-based benevolent organisation and a registered charity fundraiser. It delivers services in the southern part of New South Wales, including Wollongong, the broader Illawarra, the Shoalhaven and the southern tablelands, as well as delivering one program nationally.

The main purpose of Southern Youth and Family Services is to support and care for vulnerable, disadvantaged and homeless young people aged 12 to 24 years or those young people at risk of disadvantage

and homelessness. It also helps support the families of these young people, which may include foster parents, grandparents and siblings. The work of Southern Youth and Family Services includes the provision of supported accommodation, community social housing, counselling, mediation, support and the delivery of a range of programs to improve the life situation of young people and their families.

During community recognition statements yesterday the New South Wales Treasurer abused the process by pulling a political stunt and recognising Southern Youth and Family Services from Wollongong, unbeknown to Narelle Clay who innocently sat in the gallery with her colleagues and clients, having been invited to the Parliament by the Treasurer. The Treasurer congratulated some of the youths in attendance on their achievements, such as, undertaking the Higher School Certificate. I too congratulate the staff and clients of Southern Youth and Family Services in my electorate of Wollongong and appreciate the difficult position of those who rely on funding. It is deplorable that the Treasurer would use them in this manner and seek to score political points on the very day that the O'Farrell Government moved to block child sexual abuse victims from accessing compensation if they lodge a claim more than 10 years after the crime.

What is the world, no, New South Wales coming to when we effectively tell survivors of child sexual abuse that if their abuse happened over 10 years ago it does not matter? Too late, too bad, so sad. Yesterday the members of the New South Wales Labor Party, led by John Robertson, stood up one by one and said, "This is unacceptable." But the Government used its numbers and the legislation went through, just like a freight train. Is this really the Government that the people of New South Wales thought they were voting for?

The 10-year guillotine on compensation claims applies to the victims of child sexual abuse and covers the victims of sexual assault and domestic violence. These laws are being passed over the objections of not just the Labor Opposition but Legal Aid NSW and many other victims organisations. When the Prime Minister announced the royal commission last year tears were shed by many across our nation. It was thought that finally the long-suffering victims would feel confident enough to share their ordeal and their equally unimaginable resilience. Finally, our society was ready to delve into the hundreds of complaints that had been made about schools, government, welfare agencies and the church—which had effectively been swept under the carpet—and expose not just the perpetrators of abuse but the enablers who protected them.

The State Government no doubt timed this act of penny-pinching because it knew the royal commission would provide an impetus for more survivors to step forward, thereby opening the door to more claims. It wanted to cut off those costs. Child sexual abuse is the most insidious of crimes. It thrives on a culture of secrecy and silence. So many victims are tormented by nightmares and fail to report out of fear or shame. Many, quite naturally, are too young at the time of the offence. One report has found the average delay in reporting abuse is 23 years. Disclosure is a gut-wrenching event in itself.

We must never forget as well that child sexual abuse victims do not only suffer at the moment of violation. The detrimental impacts usually stretch over decades. Time limits on eligibility cruelly deny compensation to those whose psychological trauma crystallises in later life. I have recently been encouraging victims to come forward but one of the worst things about the legislation that went through the House yesterday was the retrospective nature of the bill. In August 2011, the Government commissioned a report from PricewaterhouseCoopers, which found that the cost of providing compensation to the victims of crime and abuse in New South Wales was currently \$72 million a year—a price that I think is more than reasonable. A 10-year limit on sexual abuse claims is cost cutting to the point of immorality. The Treasurer's behaviour here yesterday was deplorable.

## **MENTAL HEALTH PREVENTION AND EARLY INTERVENTION STRATEGIES**

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH** (Sydney) [6.07 p.m.]: I speak today about the importance of prevention and early intervention strategies in mental health. This is an issue that directly affects many individuals and non-government organisations in my electorate. Mental illness contributes significantly to the national level of disease, with 3.3 million Australians affected and many more family, friends and neighbours also impacted. In the Sydney region there were 11,837 mental health hospital admissions in 2011-12 alone. We have had many inquiries, reports and reviews calling for urgent action in this regard—the latest being the National Mental Health Commission report card, showing that people with a serious mental illness live 25 years less and that 2,000 people with a mental illness take their own lives each year.

I acknowledge the Government's commitments, with a dedicated Minister and a Mental Health Commission, and initiatives such as the 2021 hospital avoidance programs to shift mental health treatment away

from hospital and emergency departments. The shift towards prevention and early intervention has already occurred overseas in the United States of America, the United Kingdom, Norway and Sweden, among others. Prevention and early intervention programs have shown success in other areas. Smoking has declined by half in men and a third in women since 1985 following anti-smoking campaigns. Breast cancer mortality has dropped by 22 per cent since the promotion of regular breast screening.

Although the benefits of early intervention and prevention are well known, little money and few services are orientated towards preventing illness or crisis. In New Zealand about one-third of mental health expenditure has been going to non-government organisations working in this space but in New South Wales it is only 6 per cent. At the same time there has been a one-third increase in acute mental health inpatient care in New South Wales since 2003 and more than 10 per cent of those discharged from a mental health inpatient unit were readmitted within 28 days.

In my electorate, St Vincent's Hospital struggles with the numbers; the pressure is to discharge people as soon as possible because others need help. With an average inpatient day costing \$745, this is not a cheap option either. We should be preventing this crisis and supporting people in their community, but the great majority of our limited mental health effort goes to crisis care. St Vincent's Hospital Mental Health Service has a 90 per cent occupancy rate and very short stays. St Vincent's Hospital provides inpatient mental health care for homeless people with complex needs, residents, visitors, tourists and workers in the inner city, many of them from out of area but unable to get a bed close to home. The hospital has restructured operations to streamline entry through the emergency department and the Psychiatric Emergency Care Centre and has implemented a recovery focus. The service provides outreach clinics to hostels and accommodation facilities.

St Vincent's Mental Health Service has established partnership projects with inner-city homelessness services. I have attended these meetings where people commit to work together for the benefit of common clients. The service is making sure that clients are involved in planning and service development, and its creative and inspiring consumer participation coordinator, Douglas Holmes, has engaged clients in creative and innovative projects and activities that help their recovery. More of these programs are vital.

With funding from Lord Mayor Clover Moore's Salary Trust, local leaders in six locations have been trained and supported to help identify people who may need help and link them up with the right service providers. This program has now started a second stage of creative activities to avoid relapse and promote recovery. I commend these local reforms and the cooperation and diligence to use resources most effectively. I also commend the many inspiring workers in these organisations who are striving to help people in distress. But we must invest more in preventing the need for costly and distressing hospitalisation. People with a mental illness should not have to wait until they reach crisis point, undergo a short intervention, then find themselves back on the street, in a hostel, boarding house or social housing unit, unsupported, and without activities, socialisation or work and with little sense that they will be welcome in their community.

I know that many organisations are champing at the bit to do more early intervention. Large organisations like St Vincent's Hospital, Mission Australia, Matthew Talbot Hostel, Edward Eagar Lodge, Mission Australia, Oasis, Neami National, HopeStreet, Lou's Place, the Wayside Chapel and of course the Benevolent Society are all focusing on early intervention strategies as the hallmark of their 200-year birthday celebrations. They all know that preventing crisis and reducing impacts are worthwhile goals for their clients and for the community. I call on the Government to provide funds specifically to prevent relapse, support recovery and promote inclusion and community support.

**Private members' statements concluded.**

**The House adjourned, pursuant to standing and sessional orders, at 6.12 p.m. until  
Tuesday 28 May 2013 at 12 noon.**

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