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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Thursday 30 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.

VICTIMS RIGHTS AND SUPPORT BILL 2013

Message received from the Legislative Council returning the bill with an amendment.

Consideration of Legislative Council's amendment set down as an order of the day for a later hour.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Notices of Motions

General Business Notices of Motions (General Notices) given.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Withdrawal of Business

Notice of Motion (for Bills) No. 1 withdrawn by Mr John Robertson.

STUDENT PUBLIC TRANSPORT CONCESSION

Debate resumed from 23 May 2013.

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) [10.09 a.m.]: Last Thursday I moved:

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 on extending concessions to people with disabilities who are studying part time.

Under longstanding rules, to be eligible for transport concessions full-time tertiary students had to be attending day classes and could not be in employment. The Minister has said that the groups that are now eligible include full-time university students, TAFE and private college students, those studying full time but who had been working previously and therefore were not eligible, those who are employed or otherwise receiving an income, those who are enrolled in evening classes and those undertaking postgraduate research at universities. The eligibility criteria for travel concessions had been around for many years and simply did not reflect how people live and study today. We need a common sense approach, which previously was not occurring.

Most people need to work casually or part time while they study to support themselves. Under the old eligibility criteria those who worked were not eligible for a transport concession. These days tertiary institutions are offering classes at night so that students can balance their study commitments with a casual or part-time job. It is ridiculous that in 2013 we would not provide incentives for those who wish to study and are able to work. The requirement for students to be attending day classes meant that those doing higher degrees by research at universities were 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 of this State.

These changes will also make it easier for institutions to understand and administer concessions, cutting unnecessary administrative red tape. There is too much confusion about the rules, and enforcement has been very difficult. Students will still need to meet other criteria to be eligible for a concession, such as being internally enrolled at university full time or taking part in 20 hours or more of face-to-face classes per week at a TAFE or private college. However, students with a disability who because of their disability have to study part time or on an external basis will be eligible for a transport concession.

Transport for NSW estimates the impact on revenue of the changes announced by the min will be minimal and can be absorbed within existing budget allocations. Registered institutions will be contacted to ensure they are aware of these changes, which apply immediately. This makes good sound sense. It makes public transport travel concessions much more equitable. I am delighted that this announcement has received the bipartisan support of members: I think every member of this House wants to ensure that people who study and can work will be able to use our public transport system equitably to do so.

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

Motion agreed to.

DISABILITY SECTOR NURSE SALARIES

Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend) [10.13 a.m.]: I move:

That this House notes:

- (1) people with disabilities are among the most vulnerable in the community and deserve the same high-quality care that everyone else in the community receives;
- (2) there is a 40 per cent vacancy rate for disability sector nurses at Newcastle's Stockton Centre, compromising safety and residents' quality of care and putting increased pressure on overworked nursing staff; and
- (3) calls on the Minister for Disability and Ageing to commit to providing pay parity for disability sector nurses with nurses in the public sector to alleviate these vacancy rates for nurses at the centre and around New South Wales.

I pay tribute to disability nurses everywhere, particularly in my electorate of Wallsend and the Hunter generally. I am speaking on behalf of our nurses because, despite group action including temporary work stoppages and strong representation by organisations such as the Nurses and Midwives Association, these vital workers, who play an integral part in serving the needs of some of the most vulnerable people in our community, are not getting the support they need from this Government. The crux of the problem is this: nurses caring for people with disabilities are paid much less than their counterparts working in public hospitals. Disability nurses are being paid on average 8 to 12 per cent less than nurses in other sectors.

There is a critical shortage of nurses in ageing, disability and home care of up to 21 per cent of the required workforce. It follows then, because of the significant pay difference for nurses working in the disability sector, that the recruitment needed to fill these vacancies is extremely difficult. A clear example of this can be seen locally at the Stockton Centre. The centre is the largest residential disability facility in the State. Worryingly, currently it has around 50 staff vacancies. I am sure members would agree that those 50 vacancies would be readily filled if staff were offered pay parity.

On top of the dire need for local disability nurses to fill vacancies is the absolutely imperative need for a strong workforce to create the backbone of the National Disability Insurance Scheme. The Hunter launch site requires a large number of disability nurses, but at present it is facing a critical shortage because of pay inequity. According to the Community Services and Health Industry Skills Council, the National Disability Insurance Scheme, or DisabilityCare Australia, is at risk of "grinding to a halt" unless enough workers can be trained to provide care by the time the program is running. The national disability sector workforce will need to increase from about 110,000 now to about 220,000 over the next five to six years. In other words, we need to double the disability sector workforce. And who makes up the bulk of this workforce? Our nurses. We will not be able to recruit more nurses to the sector given the current substandard and unfair pay conditions. As the Minister for Disability and Ageing, the Hon. Andrew Constance, said earlier this year:

The biggest challenge of NDIS is getting the workforce in place.

There is one sure-fire way of not getting a disability work force in place, and that is refusing to pay fairly. Disability sector nurses have not had a pay rise since July 2011. Now they have no prospect of receiving any

back pay due to their decision to take a stand against this Government and its pitiful non-offer of a 2.5 per cent pay rise. Ageing, disability and home care nurses perform an incredibly important job in our community. They fulfil a vital role in caring for some of the most vulnerable members of our society. More than 9,000 people with disabilities in New South Wales need supported accommodation. Many are living in residential care. The complex health care needs of those suffering from profound or severe disabilities mean they require a high level of professional care.

I spoke earlier about the plight of the Stockton Centre and the struggle of staff working there caused by a serious lack of manpower. If the vacancies at Stockton Centre were filled residents' safety would be improved, the quality of their care would be improved and the quality of the lives of the nurses looking after them also would be improved. As it stands, the nurses working at Stockton Centre are running themselves ragged trying to make sure every resident is looked after as well as they can be. The Stockton Centre had the same 50 vacancies when the Minister visited the centre last January. The member for Bega was greatly impressed by the work done by the disability nurses, saying,

At Stockton they do an almighty job ... the care and support they are providing is absolutely world class.

He went on to say:

Any claims that [staff] make will be treated very seriously by me as Minister.

My esteemed colleague told the staff that if the figures were correct he would personally "chase it up in order to find a solution". Where is that solution, Minister? There are still 50 vacancies at the Stockton Centre. The challenge of living with a disability is a challenge that faces many, many Australians. It is a challenge facing family members and friends of members in the House today. It is a challenge that takes a mountain of courage; and I believe as representatives of people who live with disabilities—and representatives of their partners, their family, their friends, their communities—it is incumbent upon us to support the professionals who dedicate their careers to providing vital support to these brave and vulnerable members of our community. How can we do this? It is simple: we give them a fair go and we pay them what they are worth. At the very, very least we pay them equally with their counterparts in other sectors.

People with disabilities deserve the same care as the rest of the community. They deserve the same number of qualified nurses caring for them as the rest of the community. This can only happen if ageing, disability and home care nurses are given pay parity with nurses in the public sector. The advice I have been given is that Ageing, Disability and Home Care management must make a formal offer on the matter of a wages increase by the next Industrial Relations Commission hearing on Friday 7 June. It is crucial that the Government makes the right decision. I urge the Minister for Disability Services, on behalf of residents and staff at Stockton Centre, all those living with a disability and those working in the disability sector in New South Wales to please do everything they can to make pay parity for disability nurses a reality.

Mr TIM OWEN (Newcastle) [10.19 a.m.]: I thank the member for Wallsend for moving this important motion. It gives me great pleasure to note that the New South Wales Government values and respects the professionalism and commitment of our dedicated public sector worker employees, including nurses working for Ageing, Disability and Home Care, and acknowledges the difference they make to older people, people with disability, their families and carers. All members would support them. For more than 10 years Labor did nothing to address the issue of pay parity for disability nurses—not one thing. Nurses who are employed in Ageing, Disability and Home Care have had their own award for their employment conditions since Bob Carr was the Premier.

This remained the case through the Iemma, Rees and Keneally governments but it is suddenly an issue for Labor in opposition. Labor expects the Coalition Government to fix it, as we always have to do: we are the Mr Fix Its of this organisation. After 16 years of a do-nothing Government Labor now calls for action on behalf of a union. Give me a break. The Industrial Relations Commission recommended that the New South Wales Nurses and Midwives Association and Ageing, Disability and Home Care continue negotiations. That is continuing at this very time. In fact, Minister Constance is in Newcastle today attending a conference for disability support workers. So the Government takes the matter seriously and is following the advice of the Industrial Relations Commission. I find the motion ludicrous. Paragraph (2) of the motion states:

- (2) There is a 40 per cent vacancy rate for disability sector nurses at Newcastle's Stockton Centre compromising safety and residents' quality of care ...

I state for the benefit of the House and members in the gallery that as at 9 May 2013 the vacancy rate at the large residential care centre at Stockton across all nursing classifications was approximately 7.4 per cent, not 40 per cent. So the member for Wallsend has got her facts wrong yet again. She also fails to note what is about to happen in the Hunter in a month's time, something that will directly benefit the people of Newcastle, including the Stockton Centre, and that is the National Disability Insurance Scheme [NDIS]. I encourage the member to reflect on the bipartisanship between the New South Wales and Commonwealth governments in supporting people with disability and to stop moving motions written effectively by union hacks. The National Disability Insurance Scheme was only possible because of the commitment of the O'Farrell Government.

It was because of the commitment the O'Farrell Government made to improve the lives of people with disability, their family and carers that \$585 million has been allocated for the National Disability Insurance Scheme launch, which starts on 1 July 2013. This is good news for the electorate of Wallsend, as it is for the rest of the Hunter and the areas surrounding the trial site: the local government areas of Newcastle, Lake Macquarie and Maitland. It means jobs growth for the region and huge support benefits for the most vulnerable in our society. Most importantly, it means increased funding and improved services and outcomes for people with a disability. The Stockton Centre employs approximately 430 nursing staff—comprising registered nurses, enrolled nurses, endorsed enrolled nurses and assistants in nursing.

The current vacancy rate across these classifications is not 40 per cent, as indicated in the motion. The Stockton large residential centre has convened a reasonable workload committee involving representatives from staff, management and the New South Wales Nurses and Midwives Association. I have spoken to the nurses there and I understand their plight but the Government is following the advice of the Industrial Relations Commission. Ageing, Disability and Home Care is talking to the association and, as I stated, Minister Constance is talking to workers in the area today: as we speak he is on the ground up there. Therefore, I move that the motion be amended as follows:

By leaving out paragraphs (2) and (3) with a view to inserting instead:

- (2) congratulates the Government on committing \$585 million for the New South Wales NDIS Hunter launch site and being the first State to sign up to the full rollout of the NDIS, which will see funding for disability services increase from \$2.5 billion to \$6.4 billion for New South Wales by 2018;
- (3) notes that it was under the former Government that disability nurses were put on a separate award from hospital nurses; and
- (4) notes that pay negotiations between the ADHC and the New South Wales Nurses and Midwives Association are currently underway.

Mrs BARBARA PERRY (Auburn) [10.26 a.m.]: I commend the member for Wallsend for bringing this important issue to the notice of the House. This motion focuses on pay parity for disability nurses, which really is simply an issue of fairness. The need for disability nurses has been well established. It is not a stable need, it is an increasing need. We have an even bigger problem when we recognise that the National Disability Insurance Scheme [NDIS] is in its infancy and we clearly are going to have to increase our workforce to meet the demand that the National Disability Insurance Scheme will make.

There is a critical shortage of workers entering the disability sector. For the National Disability Insurance Scheme to achieve its aims the national disability sector workforce will need to increase from its present numbers of between 110,000 and 120,000 to double those figures, between 220,000 and 250,000 over the next five years to keep up with the demand. However, the number of disability nurses in New South Wales decreased from 3,005 in 1996, to 2,510 in 2001 and to just 1,811 in 2012. So I do not understand how members opposite cannot accept that we have a problem; we clearly do. Disability nurses get, on average, about 7 per cent less than public health system nurses and midwives and some categories of Ageing, Disability and Home Care nurses, such as clinical nurse educators, are paid 15 per cent less than their counterparts in the public health system.

Mr Tim Owen: Why didn't you do anything about it?

Mrs BARBARA PERRY: Well, what you are doing about it is making sure that nurses still leave the sector; that's what you're doing.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! The member for Auburn will direct her comments through the Chair.

Mrs BARBARA PERRY: Achieving wage parity with general nurses is essential to halt the exodus of staff from disability services. Not recognising the important role that disability nurses play will cause a huge and continuing loss to people with enormous healthcare needs. Barbara McCormack, who has a son with a severe disability, wrote me wonderful letter. She stated:

These nurses play a vital role in carrying out their duties, working with the most disadvantaged and needy in our society. Those I have seen and met go far beyond their duty of care to their clients ... they are passionate in a way that can't be measured in their pay packets. Do you realise what is involved in carrying out the highly specialised care ADHC nurses are required to give to their clients?

They are extremely powerful words from Barbara McCormack, who should know because her son has a severe disability. Today I call on Minister Constance to look very carefully at the implications of his negotiations on this issue. I know that he understands the issue and I ask him to recognise the implications of the lack of wage parity at present and the implications of trying to squeeze more out of a profession which is already struggling under enormous weight. The Government must recognise that by not doing this it is undermining a lot of work that has gone towards upholding nursing, particularly disability nursing, as a valuable contribution to our society.

The specialised roles are increasingly being recognised as vital to many people with disabilities who have complex health needs. They play various roles in multi-professional and multi-agency teams in a range of settings. For example, they are experts in understanding the issues of pain for people with severe disabilities, many of whom have to use non-verbal communication. This expertise is in short supply but high demand. The cuts to TAFE are pertinent as well. We need to ensure that we are doing better and one way to achieve that is to ensure that wage parity occurs.

Mr ANDREW CORNWELL (Charlestown) [10.30 a.m.]: I support the amendment moved by my colleague the member for Newcastle. The New South Wales Government values and respects the professionalism and commitment of our dedicated public sector workforce employees, including nurses working for Ageing, Disability and Home Care, and that they make a difference to the lives of older people, people with disability, their families and their carers in New South Wales. The New South Wales Government strongly supports the provisions of high quality care to people with disabilities and is making a significant investment in the delivery of services to the disability services sector. Programs such as the National Disability Insurance Scheme and Stronger Together 2 highlight our commitment to the sector.

The Stockton Large Residential Centre is located in the Hunter, which is the New South Wales launch site for the National Disability Insurance Scheme. The centre provides service to approximately 360 clients. I have first-hand experience of this service, because when I was at school I volunteered as a scout for several weeks. I understand the issues that the residents and the staff face. The centre employs approximately 430 nursing staff, comprising registered nurses, enrolled nurses, endorsed enrolled nurses, and assistants in nursing. The current vacancy rate across these classifications within the Stockton Large Residential Centre is not at 40 per cent, as the member for Wallsend stated in her notice of motion. As of 9 May, as my colleague the member for Newcastle said, the vacancy rate at the Stockton Large Residential Centre across all nursing classifications was approximately 8 per cent.

The Stockton Large Residential Centre also has a significant contingent labour force consisting of casual nursing staff that can be leveraged to guarantee there is no compromise to quality of care and services provided. Further, the Stockton Large Residential Centre has convened a reasonable workload committee, involving representatives from staff, management and the NSW Nurses and Midwives Association. The committee will make recommendations to management in relation to current staffing establishment. The committee will consider the skill mix of staff, and training and planning, to make a positive contribution to the workload of nurses. The nurses working for Ageing, Disability and Home Care are skilled trained professionals working with people with disabilities to build on a person's strengths that will enable them to participate in and contribute to their communities.

Industrial matters such as working conditions are matters appropriate for award negotiations between the agency and the appropriate union. Under the provisions of the New South Wales Government's public sector wages policy, nurses employed in Ageing, Disability and Home Care were offered a 2.5 per cent wage increase from July 2012. The NSW Nurses and Midwives Association rejected this offer. Nurses who are employed in Ageing, Disability and Home Care have their own award that provides for specific employment conditions and salary rates. There is no nexus between this award and the Public Hospital Nurses (State) Award and that has been the case since 1989, when the former Government separated the two awards.

In July 2012 the NSW Nurses and Midwives Association lodged an application for a new award in the NSW Industrial Relations Commission. The NSW Industrial Relations Commission has recommended the NSW Nurses and Midwives Association and the Department of Family and Community Services, Ageing, Disability and Home Care, continue discussions in accordance with the New South Wales Government wages policy. Ageing, Disability and Home Care is committed to continuing to work with representatives of the NSW Nurses and Midwives Association to negotiate an outcome and develop a new award within the parameters of the New South Wales Government's public sector wages policy.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD (Macquarie Fields) [10.34 a.m.]: It is great to see some of the disability nurses in the gallery. They have enormous expertise. The Minister for Ageing, and Minister for Disability Services is well aware of their expertise because he appeared on the *7.30 Report* and was shown to be helping a family with the care that was needed. He is not blind to the needs of the workforce and the work they do. This is simply a matter of equity. As a society, we are judged by how we look after those with the greatest needs and an inequitable distribution of salaries between nurses and the disability sector and the health workforce is unfair.

Under the Labor Government wage parity was achieved at the end of 2008, and a final pay rise was delivered in July 2010, at which time pay rates were comparable. However, the public health system had achieved pay rises to take them ahead of Ageing, Disability and Home Care nurses and when their award expired on 30 June 2011 the wages policy of this Government had already come into effect. That puts the lie to what has been said about this being ignored. Under the former Labor Government nurses in disability services had wage parity. This is all on the shift of the O'Farrell Government.

Mr Tim Owen: That is not true.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD: I note the interjection of the member for Newcastle. I suggest that he look at the record. If he says it is not true then he should put it on the front page of the *Newcastle Herald* tomorrow. Overseas research is increasingly recognising the critical need for specialised disability nurses, not just in the acute health sector but also for those with disabilities to allow them to take their rightful place in our society. The cuts to TAFE are a further reduction of our ability to care for those with disabilities. As those in the gallery will know, people with disabilities are living longer than ever before and their care has never been more complex. People with severe cerebral palsy, for example, often use many medical devices to assist them and the expertise that is required to look after these people safely and with compassion is extraordinary. It takes a long time to acquire the expertise, which is not common in the community, and these skills need to be supported. In a recent report the Ombudsman published sobering figures on deaths of people with disabilities in care. He noted that people with disabilities die 30 years younger than the general population. The Ombudsman said:

Our reviews point to the need for strong, continuing commitment to improve the health outcomes of people with disabilities in care, and to reduce preventable deaths.

People with disabilities need adequate and effective medical support. As the former Government did, this Government needs to grant wage parity to nurses who work in disability care. If it does not, it will fail in the provision of appropriate health care to people with disabilities and their families. The number of disability nurses is shrinking. If the Government does not grant wage parity to disability nurses they will not be able to properly staff their units. This will mean an increased cost. The Treasurer, who is in the House, will be well aware of this fact. If there are no permanent staff, agency staff or locums need to be employed. Therefore, the cost is higher for less care. The State is lacking 21 per cent of the required workforce. We have only 80 per cent of the number of disability nurses that are required in our society, and that is before the introduction of the National Disability Insurance Scheme. Demand will increase. This Government has the power to grant wage parity to disability nurses. If it does, it will save money. I commend the motion to the House.

Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie) [10.38 a.m.]: I speak on the motion for the member for Wallsend in support of disability public sector nurses. Having trained at Morisset Hospital as a psychiatric nurse, I worked in the disability sector for many years and have an interest in this issue. I have spent the last 10 years working at Kanangra, which is a part of the Stockton Large Residential Centre. I pay respect to the nurses who have come to listen to debate on the motion of the member for Wallsend in support of their colleagues in the disability sector.

This is a simple proposition. I am concerned about the amendment moved by the member for Newcastle. The basis of the motion for the member for Wallsend can be inherently supported because it is talking about parity of pay, it is talking about equity, and it is talking about fairness. They are the same sorts of issue that I imagine would be addressed if there were a substantial demonstrable difference in pay rates between

members of Parliament—although I note that there is one between the class of 2007 and today, and the Treasurer supports me in that statement. We want parity, we want fairness and we want equity. There is no argument that members of Parliament are quite well remunerated, but I have concerns about the remuneration of those who are looking after the most vulnerable people in the public sector hospital environment, including in the disability sector in our large residential centres.

The clients who are looked after in those centres have complex needs; they rarely just suffer from one condition or developmental disability. Many of them have a dual diagnosis, which includes elements of mental health issues; they are also more vulnerable to other illnesses and injuries. Therefore, the skill set that the nursing staff bring to the care of these people is very wide and specialised. Nursing staff within the disability sector are not being paid at the same level as generalist nurses, yet they are delivering very similar services and they certainly have the same skill set and qualification. I do not agree with the member for Macquarie Fields that this has all happened on the O'Farrell Government's watch; the rot started under the former Government. But this is not about playing the blame game and this is not about attacking the Minister for Disability Services. The Minister is doing an excellent job, and I note that he is in the Hunter today, although he is not there to talk to the nurses about pay parity and equity issues.

This issue has to be addressed, not just because it is about fairness but for the very obvious reason that we need to attract people to the sector. We have an ageing population generally and many of these sectors are being impacted by that, but in the disability sector some 50 per cent of the nursing staff are over 50 years of age and 15 per cent are over 60 years of age. This is a looming crisis. When we have registered nurses earning something like \$5,000 less per annum than their equivalent with the same qualifications in other sectors—for example, Assistants in Nursing earn \$2,500 less—then I think we have a problem that needs to be addressed.

Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend) [10.42 a.m.], in reply: I thank the member for Newcastle, the member for Auburn, the member for Charlestown, the member for Macquarie Fields and the member for Lake Macquarie for their contributions to debate on this motion. The member for Newcastle has disappointed, and in fact insulted, many of the nurses in New South Wales by disputing the facts that have been given to me on good account that there are 50 vacancies at Stockton.

Mr Tim Owen: I said 40 per cent.

Ms SONIA HORNER: I do not think so. The member for Newcastle is insulting the staff at Stockton Centre with his dodgy figures. He has insulted every nurse in the disability sector today by suggesting that this motion, which I wrote, was written by a union hack. For a start, the union has been very supportive of pay parity. But I was a schoolteacher and that sort of comment detracts from the member's intelligence and integrity and it insults every nurse in New South Wales.

The member for Auburn, thank heavens, talked about the importance of fairness and the fact that cuts to TAFE are also pertinent to this issue. The member for Charlestown supports the self-congratulatory Liberal amendment that was moved by the member for Newcastle. That amendment in no way addresses the genuine need for nurses for people with a disability. I know that every nurse at Stockton Centre will be insulted by the lousy amendment the member for Newcastle has put forward, which will be successful because he has the numbers. The member for Charlestown purported that I fudged the figures. He is trying to pull the wool over our community's eyes and he is trying to pull the wool over nurses' eyes, because our facts were correct.

Thank heavens for the member for Macquarie Fields, who talked about the global need for disability nurses and how their special qualifications are recognised in many countries and should be recognised in Australia. I also thank the member for Lake Macquarie who has experience in the disability sector having worked in it for a very long time. He talked about the specialised skill set that the nurses bring. I conclude by urging the House to support my motion because it is about addressing the large vacancy rate at Stockton Centre and the fact that the lack of pay parity for nurses in the disability sector with their counterparts in the public sector will cause this vacancy rate to continue.

The member for Newcastle can groan all he wants, but the reality is that this is a genuine concern. I am sorry that he keeps pooh-poohing it and fudging the figures; it is really disappointing. People with disabilities are amongst the most vulnerable in the community and I do not see that the amendment of the member for Newcastle will in any way address the needs of those people or address the fact that we have such large vacancy rates for nurses in the disability sector in New South Wales. The amendment moved by the member for Newcastle does not take seriously the genuine needs of the staff and the community in his electorate, in my

electorate or in the electorate of the member for Charlestown. This is not about me; this is not about union hacks. This is about the community the member for Newcastle serves, and I believe he has insulted that community today.

Question—That the amendment be agreed to—put.

The House divided.

Ayes, 50

Mr Anderson	Mr Elliott	Mr Perrottet
Mr Aplin	Mr Flowers	Mr Roberts
Mr Ayres	Mr Fraser	Mr Rohan
Mr Baird	Mr Gee	Mr Rowell
Mr Barilaro	Mr George	Mrs Sage
Mr Bassett	Ms Goward	Mr Smith
Mr Baumann	Mr Grant	Mr Souris
Ms Berejikian	Mr Gulaptis	Mr Speakman
Mr Bromhead	Ms Hodgkinson	Mr Spence
Mr Casuscelli	Mr Holstein	Mr Toole
Mr Conolly	Mr Issa	Ms Upton
Mr Cornwell	Dr Lee	Mr Ward
Mr Coure	Mr Marshall	Mr Webber
Mrs Davies	Mr Notley-Smith	Mr R. C. Williams
Mr Dominello	Mr Owen	<i>Tellers,</i>
Mr Doyle	Mr Page	Mr Maguire
Mr Edwards	Mr Patterson	Mr J. D. Williams

Noes, 21

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

Question 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.

HIV-AIDS PREVENTION

Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) [10.56 a.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) commends the Government for initiatives on prevention, awareness, and education of HIV and AIDS;
- (2) acknowledges the long-term commitment of the Minister for Health towards prevention, awareness, and education of HIV and AIDS; and
- (3) acknowledges the great work of ACON in delivering support and services for people with HIV and AIDS, and prevention and education programs particularly within the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex (LGBTI) communities.

People once thought that ending the spread of HIV would be impossible, but that is no longer true. I commend the Minister for Health on her long-term commitment to, and comprehensive understanding of, HIV-AIDS and the Government for implementing the Ending HIV campaign, which encourages regular testing, early treatment and safe-sex practices, to end this epidemic. I also acknowledge the commitment of the shadow Minister for Health and the Opposition to that campaign. Contracting HIV is no longer a death sentence, and the rate of infection in New South Wales has been stable for the past decade. However, according to ACON, about 250 gay men a year still contract HIV in this State. That is why we must continue our efforts.

For the benefit of the House, I will provide an historical context for the HIV epidemic that hit us more than 30 years ago. I get a great deal of inspiration from the way in which the gay community came together and showed such strength in the face of devastation. Indeed, many people of a certain age in Sydney would know of someone who contracted HIV-AIDS or who cared for a family member or close friend who contracted the disease in the 1980s. At that time Australia developed a compassionate, evidence-based response with responsible leadership and strong partnerships between governments, the scientific community, health professionals and, importantly, affected communities. Fortunately, Australia was not overwhelmed by fear and panic; instead, we enjoyed multi-partisan political support.

In New South Wales, the gay community established the AIDS Action Committee, which became the AIDS Council of New South Wales and which is now known as ACON, and the Bobby Goldsmith Foundation to provide care and support. Sex worker and injecting drug use communities set up similar organisations, including the Sex Worker Outreach Project and the NSW Users and AIDS Association. Consumer bodies such as People Living with HIV/AIDS NSW, Positive Living NSW and other community groups followed, representing those affected in policymaking and service planning. There are now fundraising bodies such as the AIDS Trust of Australia, support services such as Ankali, remembrance projects such as the Sydney Park AIDS, or SPAIDS, memorial groves and the annual candlelight memorial honouring those who have died.

The largest of these bodies is ACON and it is Australia's largest community-based gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender health and HIV-AIDS organisation. With a large volunteer and staff base, ACON provides services dealing with sexual health, mental health, alcohol and other drugs, ageing, homophobic violence, domestic violence, housing and workplace equality. In 2010, ACON celebrated 25 years of work to improve gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender health and wellbeing, provide support for people living with HIV and take action to reduce HIV transmission. The ACON organisation has an holistic understanding of health that recognises the negative impact of social factors including exclusion and discrimination, such as our exclusive and discriminatory marriage laws. Indeed, removing all discrimination from our laws would reduce the negative health impacts caused by stigma and make ACON's job easier.

With support and funding from this Government and previous governments and from community, arts, business and other organisations, we have prevented the wider spread of HIV and other bloodborne viruses. We should be proud of what we have achieved. I acknowledge all those who have worked together to save lives and prevent illness throughout the history of HIV-AIDS. The advent of combination drug therapies about 20 years ago changed HIV from a killer disease to one that could be managed. Thankfully, we have witnessed significant drops in the number of people dying or having serious health crises. Health services no longer need to provide dedicated wards for people with HIV-defined illnesses, and most have integrated their responses to HIV into all health services.

Massive advances in treatment and understanding of how to prevent transmission of the HIV virus have been made. These advances mean that the lives of people with HIV are almost the same as others' lives. Early treatment can reduce the presence of the HIV virus in the body and help prevent HIV-related illnesses, as well as transmission to others. I encourage all sexually active gay men to get tested regularly throughout the year. If HIV is diagnosed early men can be offered early treatment to drastically reduce further risks. It is essential that we remember that people in poorer countries and places where homophobia is rife do not have the same support. The cost to them, their families and communities is far greater. It is incumbent on us to share our knowledge and expertise. Australians overseas are doing important work, particularly in our neighbouring countries such as Papua New Guinea and Timor.

I acknowledge the important work of the Pacific Friends of the Global Fund to increase education and awareness to fight HIV and AIDS, as well as tuberculosis and malaria, in the Pacific region. They are supported by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and are headed up in Australia by Executive Director Bill Bowtell. Last year Bill, who is a friend of mine, was made an Officer of the Order of Australia for his distinguished service to public health, particularly for his leading role in HIV-AIDS awareness and prevention. In the 1980s he played a large part in Australia's well-regarded response to the first wave of HIV-AIDS cases.

For the first time there is a real chance to eradicate this illness and effectively stop HIV by 2020. This is a bold yet achievable target. The Ending HIV campaign aims to encourage regular testing and early treatment, and to renew efforts to educate and encourage safe behaviours. This progress is a credit to successive Ministers, especially the current New South Wales Minister for Health, Federal and State government bodies and research and health professionals. Most importantly, it is a credit to organisations such as ACON and the wider lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex community, especially those most affected by HIV-AIDS.

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla) [11.03 a.m.]: I thank the member for Sydney for his gracious remarks about government initiatives and for bringing this fundamental public health matter to the attention of the House. HIV-AIDS first appeared in New South Wales in 1983 and Sydney became the epicentre of HIV-AIDS in Australia. New South Wales quickly became a world leader in responding to HIV-AIDS. The early New South Wales response to the challenge of HIV included the introduction of needle and syringe programs and education programs aimed at those communities most at risk. Thanks to a practical, evidenced-based and bipartisan approach, effective programs have been developed and implemented over time to address the epidemic.

According to NSW Health, rates of HIV have remained relatively stable in this State, with 330 new diagnoses notified in 2011, compared with 307 in 2010 and 329 in 2009. In 2011 the New South Wales health system provided health and support services to more than 10,000 HIV-positive people. Most new HIV notifications in New South Wales continue to occur among gay men. Rates of HIV infection in other populations, including injecting drug users, sex workers, Aboriginal people and heterosexuals, remain low. The advent of effective HIV treatments has allowed people to live longer with HIV, with less morbidity and a better quality of life. New research shows that effective treatment for people with HIV can reduce onward sexual transmission by 96 per cent. That demonstrates why it is important that people know their HIV status and that there is ready access to HIV testing and treatment.

Last year on World AIDS Day the Minister for Health launched the "NSW HIV Strategy 2012-2015, A New Era" campaign. The Minister stated that it is possible to dramatically reduce new HIV infections in New South Wales by increasing testing, improving access to treatment and reinforcing proven methods such as condom use and harm reduction. The strategy adopts challenging targets that are based on the targets in the 2011 United Nations political declaration on HIV-AIDS. Key targets of the strategy include: reducing sexual transmission of HIV among homosexual men by 60 per cent by 2015 and 80 per cent by 2020; decreasing rates of HIV infection in other populations such as Aboriginal people and heterosexuals by 50 per cent; reducing the average time between infection and diagnosis from 4.5 years to 1.5 years; and increasing to 90 per cent the number of people with HIV on antiretroviral treatment.

These targets are to be reached by six broad methods. The first is to maintain high levels of safe behaviour. The strategy builds on HIV prevention efforts in New South Wales. Protective behaviours by people at risk of HIV have resulted in stable rates of transmission in gay and other homosexually active men, injecting drug users and sex workers. The first method will include continuing to promote condom use, a focus on harm reduction, promotion of targeted education campaigns and creating an enabling legal environment. NSW Health, ACON, Positive Life NSW, the New South Wales Sexually Transmissible Infections Programs Unit and HIV and related programs in local health districts, with the support of the Australasian Society of HIV Medicine, are some of the organisations that will carry out the promotion of those campaigns.

The second broad method to achieve the strategic targets is to intensify HIV prevention in priority populations—namely, gay and other homosexually active men, people who inject drugs, Aboriginals and sex workers, as well as those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. The third method will be to improve access to the needle and syringe program, which is a proven and cost-effective public health intervention of considerable success and has the potential to further reduce the number of HIV infections attributable to injecting drug use.

In 1988 New South Wales became the first jurisdiction to pass legislation to enable the needle syringe program. It has been estimated that \$27 has been returned for every dollar invested in needle syringe programs by Australian governments in the past decade. That makes it one of the most cost-effective public health measures of all time. Whatever our abhorrence of injecting drug use, it is clear that the needle syringe program has been a roaring success and an appropriate public health measure to combat the spread of HIV-AIDS. The program has saved countless lives. The fourth method will be to promote HIV testing, making it easier to have an HIV test, and faster testing. The fifth method will be to promote treatment uptake, make access to treatment easier and support treatment adherence.

The sixth method will be to provide treatment, care and support services in the community. Paragraph (3) of the motion relates to ACON. The successful response to HIV in New South Wales started and continues as a partnership between the government, clinicians, researchers, health services and affected communities. In 1983 the gay community in Sydney established ACON in response to the emerging threat of HIV. The ACON organisation has taken a leading role in HIV prevention and care as well as in the health of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people. A key action of the New South Wales HIV strategy is that ACON leads community mobilisation efforts for gay and other homosexually active men, including the delivery of HIV awareness testing campaigns.

In response to the strategy, ACON launched a major new health promotion initiative, Ending HIV, which aims to end the transmission of HIV among gay men in New South Wales within the decade. It is a ground-breaking, interactive social marketing and education engagement platform incorporating communication, campaign and community mobilisation initiatives. In conclusion, I point out that here in New South Wales we have the evidence and the tools with which to end the epidemic. Now it is time to put them to use through our partnerships and collective action. I commend the motion to the House.

Ms LINDA BURNEY (Canterbury) [11.10 a.m.]: I support the motion moved by the member for Sydney. It goes to the heart of a very important issue that concerns all of us. Most members in this House are of a vintage that would remember the Grim Reaper advertisement in the late 1980s. It is one of the most effective education campaigns that I can remember. It brought to the fore a new issue for many Australians—that is, the HIV-AIDS illness, which had become a reality in Australia. Prior to that, most of us did not know very much about it. I understand that Bill Bowtell, who was working at the time for the Federal Labor Government, was one of the key people in that highly effective education campaign.

The motion refers to one of the most important organisations in this space, ACON. As the motion indicates, ACON delivers support and services for people with HIV-AIDS and prevention and education campaigns, particularly with the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex communities. The ACON organisation has such a high reputation and respect within the community that it needs no explanation. Obviously, the main work of ACON is around HIV and it carries out a number of services in the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex community, some of which concern mental health.

When Carmel Tebbutt was the Minister for Health, the former Labor Government made a \$450,000 commitment to ACON for the provision of mental health services. The motion also commends the current Government on its continued commitment to this issue and to ACON. ACON is a large non-government organisation with approximately 120 staff. One of its strengths is that it is not just Sydney based but extends to Lismore, Port Macquarie and the Illawarra. The organisation plays an important role in collecting data. While HIV has been part of our lives for a long time, issues around transmission rates continue to be a concern. This motion brings home to all of us the need for constant vigilance in relation to the HIV-AIDS illness and that there is constant work as well as changes taking place in terms of treatment of the illness.

The member for Sydney also highlighted that in some parts of the world the issue of HIV-AIDS is the major cause of death. In many countries in Africa, the death rates of HIV-AIDS are beyond belief. One of the big issues is the availability of medication such as antiretroviral drugs to treat the illness and prevention of the illness being transmitted between mother and child. Those countries do not have the same level of education and tolerance that exists in Australia. That is part of the major issues confronting some of the developing nations in Africa. As the member for Sydney indicated, some of those nations are very close to Australia. I commend the member for Sydney for moving the motion, for reminding us of the need to be constantly vigilant about HIV-AIDS and for recognising the role of ACON in the treatment of the illness.

Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) [11.13 a.m.], in reply: Our State can be very proud of the Ending HIV campaign conducted by ACON and the coordinated response to the treatment of HIV-AIDS from health professionals, government and the community. New South Wales is leading the nation in this response. I thank the member for Cronulla and the member for Canterbury for their contributions to the debate. The member for Canterbury reminded us of the power of the Grim Reaper television commercials in the 1980s. I know that this motion has the strong support of the member for Coogee and the member for Balmain. I thank the Minister for Health and the shadow Minister for Health for their support for ACON and for Ending HIV.

I thank and acknowledge the staff and volunteers of ACON and particularly highlight the work of Nick Parkhill and Mark Orr. I also thank ACON for its great advocacy on issues such as the medical use of cannabis, the rights of the terminally ill and marriage equality, which are strongly supported in my electorate of Sydney.

The Ending HIV program also shows the importance of funding and supporting early intervention strategies. Its success will be testament to how this State could, and indeed should, do more in this and many other mental health areas in terms of early intervention work. This motion is a tribute and a thank you to ACON. Indeed, it is a tribute to the work that has been done by those who have lost loved ones through HIV-AIDS and who are motivated by that loss to make the world a better place for people who suffer from that condition and, moreover, to end HIV. I commend the motion to the House.

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

Motion agreed to.

UNANDERRA RAILWAY STATION EASY ACCESS UPGRADE

Ms NOREEN HAY (Wollongong) [11.16 a.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) calls on the Minister for Transport to stop politicking and commit to the installation of the much-needed Easy Access Upgrade lifts at Unanderra Railway Station;
- (2) notes the Minister has announced upgrades to a number of other stations along the Illawarra railway line yet ignores the needs of the community in Unanderra and its surrounds;
- (3) demands the Government make good on its pre-election commitment to install lifts at Unanderra Railway Station as a matter of urgency; and
- (4) recognises that the 10,000 signature petition tabled and debated in the Parliament clearly demonstrates community unity in its demand for the installation of the lifts at Unanderra.

Mr John Williams: Smoker's cough.

Ms NOREEN HAY: Stay out of this, Murray-Darling.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! The member for Wollongong will direct her comments through the Chair.

Ms NOREEN HAY: I often have spoken in this place about the Government's failure to honour its commitment to install an easy access lift at Unanderra railway station. Here I am again speaking in this place on the issue, and there are still no lifts. The Minister for Transport continually denies that she had ever pledged to give the communities of Unanderra, Farmborough Heights, Cordeaux Heights and Mount Kembla an easy access lift at the Unanderra railway station, yet I have responses that were sent to my constituents stating the opposite. Prior to the election the local Liberal candidate and various shadow Ministers came in droves to the Illawarra and promised that if they were elected those lifts would be installed. There are still no lifts.

I have lodged petitions, one with 10,000 signatures and the other 500 signatures, and I have debated the issue in this House time and time again. Government members have had the audacity to look directly into the eyes of my constituents, who plead for easy access lifts at Unanderra rail station, and simply ignore their pleas. I note that the electorate of the member for Kiama has a brand new railway station. His biggest problem is what to name the station. I will continue to fight for the disadvantaged people of Unanderra. The member for Kiama should consider that people are being denied access to public transport as a result of decisions made by his Government and which he supports.

I have stated on the record many times and reiterate today that this not about me as the local member of Parliament. It is about people with disabilities, people with prams and elderly people who cannot access a train. I am almost sick of hearing myself say time and again in this place that prior to the election the Coalition promised that easy access lifts would be installed. As we know, it has backflipped, reneged if you will. Mothers with prams, disabled people and the frail and elderly have been campaigning for 20 years for better and safer access to the station. Here is another oldie but a goodie: The people of the Illawarra have nothing to fear from the election of a Coalition government. That is what they were told. I would not be surprised to find that the member for Murray-Darling, who has never been to Unanderra in his life—

Mr John Williams: I have, plenty of times.

Ms NOREEN HAY:—will speak on this motion. Really, Murray-Darling, you lot should get real. Let us take a quick look at what the Government has done: public servants gone; Port Kembla port privatised; and lifts not installed at Unanderra railway station; not to mention some of the disgraceful legislation it put up this week. I simply do not have all day to list them all. Again, I remind the Government of its pre-election commitment that the community had nothing to fear from the election of a Liberal-Nationals government. That statement has been proven to be false. The former Labor Government allocated \$11.4 million for an easy access upgrade at Unanderra railway station; it is true that the people of Unanderra had been waiting too long. Now the Government continues to rub salt into their wounds by ignoring their needs.

Mr John Williams: It allocated a lot of money for transport—it never happened.

Ms NOREEN HAY: How would you know, Murray-Darling? You are a new boy in here. Just behave yourself.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! The member for Wollongong will direct her comments through the Chair.

Ms NOREEN HAY: I suggest you ask the member for Kiama and the member for Murray-Darling to stop interrupting.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! Government members will be silent while the member for Wollongong makes her contribution.

Ms NOREEN HAY: I also put on record that the installation of easy access lifts at Unanderra is beyond politics. It is doing what is right for a community that is struggling to access public transport. Government members talk about the number of people using trains, and they use that number to determine priority. If obstacles prevent people from getting on the trains, Government members use the fact that they are not using the trains as a defence for not providing the lifts. How is that for a bite of all sides of the cherry? Government members misled people during the election campaign, letting them believe that the Government was going ahead with this upgrade. A Gladys Berejiklian press release dated Tuesday 14 December 2010 states:

NSW LIBERALS & NATIONALS COMMIT TO THE GONG SHUTTLE

The Minister—then a member of the Opposition who would say anything to get into government—said in the press release:

Commuters have had enough of being taken for granted by Labor's neglect over the past 15 years.

Whether it is the time it takes to catch the train to Sydney, the safety and cleanliness around trains and stations or the need for an easy access upgrade at the Unanderra station, commuters deserve better ...

Mr Richard Amery: Who said that?

Ms NOREEN HAY: Gladys Berejiklian, who is now the Minister for Transport. She was making a promise, along with what the candidate was saying at the time, that those lifts would be installed if the Coalition formed government. Then I received a letter from the Minister stating:

... work on the accessibility upgrade of Unanderra Station was delayed ... because of issues associated with the location of underground services.

After a review of the project, a requirement for additional design work was identified. Once the revised design has been completed and evaluated, the project team will be able to provide an update on the timing of the project.

After the Minister had been in office a little while she sent me another letter basically saying the project had gone back down the list. Coalition members were forever saying they would go ahead once they fixed the problem underground, and RailCorp had put up signs to say they were going ahead with the project. It is true that I have a letter from the Minister saying that the project would go ahead once that was sorted out. It is true that press releases and statements during the election gave a commitment to install those lifts. It is true that since the Coalition has been in government it has installed lifts everywhere, including in Gareth Ward's electorate, and denied the people of Unanderra—

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! The member for Wollongong will resume her seat. When addressing members of the Chamber, the member for Wollongong should refer to them by their electorate and not by name.

Ms NOREEN HAY: I apologise.

Mr Gareth Ward: Can Hansard note that she apologised? There is a first time for everything.

Ms NOREEN HAY: For calling him Gareth. I should have called him better than that.

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) [11.23 a.m.]: I wish to move an amendment to the motion. I move:

That the motion be amended by leaving out all words after "That" with a view to inserting instead:

This House:

- (1) notes the commitment of this Government to improving transport access in the Illawarra;
- (2) notes the Government has committed to upgrades or commuter car parks at Dapto, Albion Park, Kiama and Gerringong, as well as a brand new station at Shell Cove;
- (3) notes the previous Government made an unfunded and undelivered commitment to upgrade Unanderra station;
- (4) notes that this Government spent more than \$1 million on repair works and remediation to fix up the mess the previous Government left at Unanderra.

Isn't sunlight the best disinfectant? When the truth comes out you find what the real situation is—more than a million dollars in the mess left at Unanderra station without any plan for real action. I believe it is better to use the words of those opposite to demonstrate their hypocrisy. Let us look at an article by Matthew Jones from the *Illawarra Mercury* in 2009:

Wollongong MP Noreen Hay said funding for accessibility upgrades was "definitely" included in the 2009 budget.

Did we come to office in 2009? Was it 2010? It was March 2011, after 16 years of those opposite in government. They had 16 years to do this.

[*Interruption*]

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! The member for Kiama has the call.

Mr GARETH WARD: The article continued:

"Gareth Ward should be fighting for funding from the Liberal transport minister for our area—not making excuses for why local projects aren't being funded," she said.

She accused the Coalition of "sitting on their hands" when it came to station upgrades.

"We're missing out in the Illawarra because Barry O'Farrell doesn't want to fund projects in our region," Ms Hay said.

Labor had made the allocation. By the member's own admission, the funds were allocated in 2009. Like mining licences to Eddie Obeid, what happened? The money vanished. Off it went into the hands of the member for Wollongong and gone. She should have spent the money when she had it when she was in government. I make absolutely no excuses for the fact that under the Transport Access Program of this Government, a \$770 million program, we are providing new car parking at Kiama station and Gerringong station. We are doing upgrades to Dapto. I acknowledge in the gallery today the Dapto VIEW Club, who are visiting Parliament. I am sure they will appreciate upgrades to their local station. We have a brand new station coming for Shell Cove, which is going to make great improvements for those younger families, pensioners and workers who are going to be looking for transport access. This was the mess that we were left by those opposite. So incompetent were they when they were in government they built a police station at Oak Flats. Did they allocate any car parking spaces?

Mr Bryan Doyle: Surely.

Ms Noreen Hay: Point of order: The point of order is relevance. The member for Kiama is dealing with police and car parks. This motion is specifically about the installation of lifts at Unanderra railway station.

Mr GARETH WARD: Not the amendment, which we are debating at the moment. The amendment mentions Oak Flats.

Ms Noreen Hay: My motion.

Mr GARETH WARD: Read the amendment.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! There is no point of order. I draw the member for Kiama back to the motion.

Mr GARETH WARD: I note that the member for Wollongong does not let the truth get in the way of a good story. Those opposite built a new police station with no car parking and expected them to teleport to work. The police used the commuter car parking which meant there was a demand for commuter car parking at Oak Flats. I am proud that this Minister has reformed public transport in this State. I say to the member for Wollongong that I believe improving access to stations across New South Wales is important. I join with her in supporting upgrades in access. But, like all families and households, if you spend more than you earn you need to make decisions about what has to be prioritised.

The reality is her Government left this Government a \$5.2 billion deficit—\$55 billion in debt—red ink all over the place. They always do the same thing. Like a dog returning to its vomit, Labor always leaves a legacy of debt. We had to make some decisions about what to prioritise. This side of the House is all about doing the greatest good for the greatest number. Do I support an upgrade at Unanderra Railway Station? I am sure that most people in the Illawarra would; in fact, I am sure everybody does. But we are doing the greatest good for the greatest number. For every single year those opposite were in office they did not meet one spending target. We had 16 years of missing every target.

Mr Ryan Park: Triple-A credit rating.

Mr GARETH WARD: I love it when the member for Keira interjects. Our State credit rating was going to be downgraded to "weak" as a result of Labor's disreputable management: \$55 billion in debt with \$30 billion worth of infrastructure backlogged. Do not dare talk to me about financial responsibility. I will not be lectured by those who left this State in a terrible mess. If we had the money, of course I would like to see those upgrades. We have to work together on those things. It is not true for the member for Wollongong to say this Government is not delivering on public transport. We introduced quiet carriages—something the member for Wollongong could not possibly ride in—for people to enjoy a different travelling experience. We have extra police on trains rather than the transit officers who could only make a citizen's arrest; under those opposite transport crime on the South Coast line rose to record highs.

People want quality public transport; we did not receive that under the former Labor Government. That is why we are building new car parks at Kiama, Oak Flats and Moss Vale. That is why we are making improvements at Dapto and Wollongong. That is why we are building a new station at Shell Cove. We are doing our best to service this community. When the Government of which the member for Wollongong was a member allocated the money, what did she do when she had the power? Until the member for Wollongong tells this House what happened to the \$9 million that she talked about in 2009, she stands condemned.

Mr RYAN PARK (Keira) [11.30 a.m.]: I welcome the Dapto View Club. As a Dapto resident for 25 years I can attest to it being a great part of the world.

Mr John Williams: Go the Colts.

Mr RYAN PARK: Thank you for the plug also for Dapto High School. First, I congratulate the member for Wollongong.

Mr John Williams: Why?

Mr RYAN PARK: I will tell you why. She fought for this issue with great strength and determination in government. She fought for this issue and was allocated money in government.

Mr Gareth Ward: What happened to the \$9 million?

Mr RYAN PARK: What then happened, for the information of the member for Kiama, was a small thing called a change of government. A somewhat minor event in the State's political history occurred in March 2011 when the Government changed. That is called democracy and it is what happens every four years in this place when the people of New South Wales decide on their Government. In 2011 the people decided on that lot

opposite. Secondly, I will refer to the very clear commitment the then shadow Minister for Transport, Gladys Berejiklian, provided in a media release—a minor document released by the then Opposition as it headed to the 2011 election. The documents states:

Whether it is time to catch the train to Sydney, the safety and cleanliness around trains and stations or the need for an easy access upgrade at Unanderra station, commuters deserve better services.

What a tragedy. Those opposite made a written commitment that we are happy to table. But two years and three budgets after coming to government we have not seen one cent for that project. Our community understands commitments very clearly. When shadow Ministers make commitments in the lead-up to an election we expect them to be held to account. The elderly and the disabled in Figtree in my electorate have had a gutful of not being able to access Unanderra Railway Station.

The member for Wollongong and her community fought hard to get a commitment. This commitment was backed by the then Opposition, now the Government. We will hold this Government to account. Whilst we have only 20 members on this side of the House, it is our job on behalf of the men and women in the Illawarra community to hold the Government to account for commitments. We will hold the Government to this commitment. On behalf of every resident, whether in Unanderra, Figtree or the surrounding areas, we guarantee that we will continue to raise this issue in this place because it is important that the men and women of the Illawarra have access to important public transport facilities in their region.

Mr Mark Coure: Tick, I've secured them, unlike you guys after 16 years.

Mr RYAN PARK: Sit down.

Mr JOHN WILLIAMS (Murray-Darling) [11.34 a.m.]: Was the comment to sit down directed at me by the ex-deputy director of transport?

Mr Ryan Park: No, never.

Mr JOHN WILLIAMS: It is interesting to debate this motion. The Minister asked me to debate this topic on the last occasion the member for Wollongong raised it. For many years I sat on the Opposition benches as the member for Wollongong spent most of her time congratulating the Labor Government on its great work. Today we hear that the member for Wollongong had an assurance for the allocation of money in the 2009 budget for lifts at Unanderra railway station. What did she do? She made the announcement without any follow-up. During the last debate on this issue, the member for Wollongong, knowing people have no trust in Labor or in their promises, knew that the money would never be made available. The member for Wollongong left her constituents out on a limb with a promise she would never fulfil. Far too many transport promises were made. The former deputy director of transport would know well that the Labor Government never fulfilled its many transport promises. The people of New South Wales were given promises all the time about what the former Labor Government would spend on transport and new railway links. The \$5 billion for the Metro would have quite easily paid for lifts at Unanderra Railway Station.

That money was wasted. The member for Wollongong never should have been trusted. No trust should have been given to Labor's promise. Members opposite knew Labor could not be trusted. Where did the \$9 million go? We want to know where the money is. We want to know the money trail. That money was announced to the people of Wollongong under a promise by the former Labor Government when the Leader of the Opposition was the Minister. The people of Wollongong were promised they would have these lifts installed. Because that did not happen as promised under the former Labor Government, the member for Wollongong comes in here and starts passing the buck to this Government. The member for Wollongong knows that in any election campaign issues are important, as is the ability to address them. However, when coming into government we found the cupboard bare. We are \$5 billion heading in the black. The member for Keira held the position of deputy director of transport. He is a proud man. The member for Keira knew about the Unanderra railway lift.

Mr Ryan Park: We didn't have the money

Mr JOHN WILLIAMS: Labor did not have the money, but it told the people it could deliver and put it in the budget. It put \$9 million in the budget knowing damn well that its promises would never come to fruition. The member for Wollongong should have looked closely at the promises made in her electorate to

ensure that they were fulfilled. There was never a chance to fulfil the promises. The member for Wollongong made promise after promise to the people of Wollongong when Labor was in Government and failed to deliver on every promise. She should not come to the House and criticise this Government.

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) [11.38 a.m.]: I support the motion moved by member for Wollongong, who is a wonderful advocate for the people of Wollongong. I note that this is the second time that this motion has been debated in the House. I note that a 10,000 signature petition as well as a 500 signature petition was presented by the people of Wollongong regarding the Unanderra lifts. I will paint a picture of the O'Farrell-Stoner Government. The first thought is that the Government—

Mr Lee Evans: Trust.

Mr GUY ZANGARI: Trust, heaven forbid. The Coalition Government first, sacks the workers; secondly, cuts the service; and, thirdly, sells the assets.

Mr Mark Coure: Point of order: We are talking about transport, not anything else but transport.

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): Order! There is no point of order.

Mr GUY ZANGARI: Let us look at the first part of the motion that states: calls on the Minister for Transport to stop politicking and commit to the installation of the much-needed easy access upgrade lifts to Unanderra Railway Station. The Minister for Transport should get on with the job. The second part of the motion notes the Minister has announced the upgrades to a number of train stations along the Illawarra railway line yet ignores the needs of the Unanderra community. Why have their needs been ignored: because it is in a Labor electorate at the moment.

Mr Mark Coure: At the moment.

Mr GUY ZANGARI: Talk to the hand, the head ain't listening brother. The third point asks the Government to make good on its pre-election commitment. There we go. To date all these communities have asked for railway station upgrades, but nothing has happened. In the Fairfield electorate Villawood, Yennora and Chester Hill residents have asked a question about railway station upgrades and they get the stock standard answer, just as the member for Wollongong did. Let us paint the picture: The elderly cannot get up to or down from the train station, the mums and dads with prams cannot gain access and the disabled cannot get on to the platform. I asked the Minister why Yennora Railway Station had not been upgraded with lifts so that the elderly, the disabled and mums with prams could gain access.

The answer was that the railway station did not have enough patronage. It was a remarkable answer: it does not have enough patronage because they cannot get up to or down from the platform. What sort of answer is that? This revolutionary Government has delivered 2½ years of misery. It is not logical: I cannot get the pram up the stairs but I will look at the train app on my iPhone. The Government promotes quiet carriages but they are of no use if there are no easy access lifts to enable parents to get the pram onto the platform. The new Transport for NSW uniforms look great but they make no difference to the people of Unanderra who cannot access the railway station. The list goes on. During the past 2½ years New South Wales has experienced the biggest mess of transport breakdowns and delays under the Coalition Government.

Mr LEE EVANS (Heathcote) [11.42 a.m.]: I will try to take the heat out of the debate. I commend the member for Wollongong for being a trier. This is the third time she has moved this motion. On each occasion the member reiterates that during the election campaign the person who did not win the electorate of Wollongong promised to upgrade the Unanderra Railway Station. The person who did not win that electorate is not the member for Wollongong. It is the responsibility of the member for Wollongong to achieve an upgrade of a railway station for her constituents.

Mr Mark Coure: The current member for Wollongong.

Mr LEE EVANS: As the member for Oatley said, the current member for Wollongong. I note that in the member for Wollongong's earlier diatribe she stated it has been a 20-year campaign. I agree with her. For 20 years the community has been fighting for an upgrade of the Unanderra Railway Station. It is an absolute disgrace. Labor was in Government for 16 years. In 2009 the former Labor Government had the money for the project and it is now 2013.

Ms Noreen Hay: You promised in 2011.

Mr LEE EVANS: Who promised in 2011?

Ms Noreen Hay: You promised in 2011

Mr LEE EVANS: I did. Did I promise?

Ms Noreen Hay: Yes, you did.

Mr LEE EVANS: Did I produce a glossy brochure or an artist's impression? The *modus operandi* of the Labor Party is to issue an artist's impression. Was there an artist's impression of the Unanderra Railway Station in 2009? No, there was not. Was there an artist's impression of the \$500 million wasted on the Inner West Metro? There were artist's impressions of new trains, new railways and new highways. Were they delivered? No, they were not. In 2011 the people of New South Wales demanded a change. They have had enough of artist's impressions, glossy brochures and empty promises. In 2009 the former Labor Government had the money for the project, but did nothing.

Ms Noreen Hay: You are a dope.

Mr LEE EVANS: I am not the one who moved the motion for the third time to debate the upgrade of Unanderra Railway Station. I have worked hard in my electorate to deliver for the people of Heathcote. In her diatribe the member for Wollongong says there is nothing to fear from the Coalition Government. There has been reference to the Coalition candidate for the electorate of Wollongong. I can only wish that candidate had won the election; if he had the upgrade of Unanderra Railway Station would have been delivered by now.

Mr Guy Zangari: You are admitting the nose in the trough.

Mr LEE EVANS: Is the member for Fairfield accusing the Government of pork-barrelling? In the last year of the former Labor Government \$750,000 was committed to community builders—pork-barrelling money—to be given out.

Ms Noreen Hay: Get another quote; you obviously don't know what you are talking about.

Mr LEE EVANS: I cannot even read it; I have to put my glasses on. It will have to be in font size 18 for me to be able to read it. I have one thing to say to the member for Wollongong: Work harder, achieve outcomes for your electorate and stop moving these motions.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) [11.46 a.m.], by leave: The member for Heathcote just admitted in this House that if Wollongong was a Coalition electorate, the Minister for Transport would have delivered an upgrade to Unanderra Railway Station. The member for Wollongong has brought to the House a petition signed by 10,000 people to upgrade Unanderra Railway Station—one cannot get better than that. I have not seen a petition like that from the member for Heathcote. I will tell members why he does not need to present any petitions, why the member for Kiama does not need any petitions and why he does not need to present any petitions on transport.

Mr John Williams: Point of order: I ask that you direct the member for Bankstown to speak through the Chair. She is making a direct attack on the member for Kiama.

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): Order! I remind the member for Bankstown that she should direct her comments through the Chair. I ask all members to lower their voices. I was always told that those who resort to shouting to win an argument are on the losing side.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK: I have a bundle of questions that I have asked the Minister for Transport and I have received a whole range of answers that end up with the same line that says that they will consider it. One member that does not ask any questions of the Minister for Transport is the member for Kiama. He does not need to ask any questions about any upgrade.

Mr Gareth Ward: Point of order: My point of order relates to attacks on members. They must be by way of substantive motion and not in the manner outlined by the member for Bankstown.

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): Order! I remind the member for Bankstown that if she wishes to make an attack on another member it must be done under the standing orders and not across the table.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK: The reality is that 10,000 people have asked for an upgrade of Unanderra Railway Station, and quite rightly so—70 steps to get down to the platform is a disgrace. No-one disputes that Dapto Railway Station should receive an upgrade, but it is interesting that the member for Kiama and others are able to get upgrades for their train stations. Time and again I have asked about upgrades for Punchbowl, Yagoona and Bankstown train stations, and I have asked on behalf of the member for East Hills about Panania station. That poor guy must not be in the right faction in the Liberal Party.

The member for East Hills had a lovely photo taken with the Minister for Transport at Panania station prior to the election, both of them distressed at the state of the station, yet two years later there has not been a single question from the member for East Hills and no upgrade has been undertaken at Panania station. Perhaps the member for Kiama can tell the member for East Hills what he needs to do to get an upgrade to his station; tell him the secret. The motion should be supported. The member for Wollongong is right to continue to argue that constituents of Unanderra are being deprived of an easy access lift when members like the member for Kiama and the Minister for Transport know it is a necessity. The Government has supposedly allocated \$770 million over four years, so where is the money and where are the upgrades?

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) [11.50 a.m.], by leave: This Government has completed Cardiff station, including two new lifts, ramps, main station building, canopies, wheelchair access, toilets and so on. Other upgrades include ramps, car park works and improved safety at Adamstown, Gosford, Greta, Hamilton, Singleton, and the list goes on. In western Sydney other upgrades include help points, new fencing and improved accessibility to stations like Canterbury in a Labor electorate, Fairfield, Granville, Guildford, Lidcombe, Liverpool, Penrith, Quakers Hill, Schofields, Seven Hills and Strathfield. In western Sydney, Windsor station was completed in October last year with better accessibility and customer facilities. In the Illawarra and southern Sydney, the subject of this motion, Gerringong station upgrade includes a brand new ramp. I thank the member for Kiama for pushing that upgrade in this place. The member for Kiama lobbied the Minister for Transport to achieve the Albion Park transport interchange ramp access upgrade.

I thank also the member for Cronulla for lobbying so that more commuter car spaces at Cronulla Railway Station are available for his local community. Some minor works have been done at Wollongong, but we do not thank the member for Wollongong for that; we thank the member for Kiama, who lobbied for those works. Who can forget that \$1 million was spent fixing up the mess at Unanderra station left behind by the former Minister for Transport. He left half the station inaccessible when works stalled. Where was the member for Keira, who was working for the Department Of Transport at the time? I am sure he was working with the Minister for Transport before that time. Let us look at other stations in Sydney. The Government has installed two new lifts at Martin Place station as part of the upgrade while Town Hall station has new platform canopies, lifts and accessible toilets. A major upgrade has been done at Sydenham station and an upgrade has just been completed to Balmain Wharf, Neutral Bay Wharf, Rose Bay Wharf and Beecroft station. A date I will always remember is 14 September last year, just like 14 September this year: it is my birthday.

[Interruption]

The member for Bankstown repeated kindergarten five times. Tell us the truth. Last year, 14 September was a date that I will always remember because it was the day on which we announced an upgrade to Oatley Railway Station that Labor failed to deliver. Oatley is done and dusted. We will now move on to Narwee station because in 16 years Labor failed to deliver one upgrade to Oatley, Narwee or Unanderra.

Ms NOREEN HAY (Wollongong) [11.54 a.m.], in reply: I acknowledge the contributions from members representing the electorates of Kiama, Keira, Murray-Darling, Fairfield, Bankstown and Oatley, although the contribution from the member for Oatley should be struck out because the member for Kogarah got his lifts so he is in here on false pretences. The member for Kiama did his usual stunts on what the Government has done, what it is going to do, what he is doing to Dapto and Shell Cove. I have lived in Dapto for a long time and I have yet to see a step to get onto the Dapto railway platform. There is no step. I do not begrudge the Dapto community an upgrade because my family and I live there. However, it is not right during an election to promise the good people of Unanderra, Berkley and Figtree that they will get those lifts and then for the member for Kiama and the member for Heathcote to say that if the Coalition candidate had won the electorate the lifts would have been installed at Unanderra. The Government lost \$1 billion after taking office—it went missing—but when the Government found that money it could have installed those lifts at Unanderra.

The member for Murray-Darling is an absolute dope; there is nothing else to be said about him. He said, "We were never going to fulfil the promise to install the lifts at Unanderra. Stage one went in. RailCorp put up a sign saying it found underground problems and so it was delayed." The okay for those lifts to be financed was given in

2009 and by the 2011 election the new toilets and the upgrades to the platform were all done. All they had to do was keep the promises they made. The member for Murray-Darling said that when they got into government the cupboard was bare. But his Treasurer said that when they got into government there was \$1.3 billion in the cupboard.

The member for Murray-Darling should talk to his own Treasurer. He asked what the previous Government did. We took the car imports to Port Kembla, we did not privatise Port Kembla and we were going to install the lifts at Unanderra railway station, but you decided to sidetrack it. Let me tell you about the member for Heathcote. The member for Heathcote talks about how hard he has worked. The member for Heathcote is a new member but that lot opposite have done nothing. They have done a lot of talking and delivered nothing, but they are prepared to come in here and say that it does not matter that the now Minister promised to install those lifts because they did not win that seat. The member for Oatley comes in here and claims he is getting his lifts.

Mr Mark Coure: Point of order: The member for Wollongong is not directing her comments through the chair.

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): Order! I uphold the point of order. I remind the member for Wollongong to direct her comments through the Chair.

Ms NOREEN HAY: The member for Oatley is attempting to use up my time so that I cannot continue to show how misleading and dishonest this Government is. The member for Oatley owes thanks to the member for Kogarah for getting the lifts at Oatley, because he did not get them. To be bragging and saying that in government he worked so hard is rubbish. He is rubbish, it is rubbish, and he knows it.

Mr Mark Coure: Point of order: We are all friends here—

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): Order! What is the member's point of order?

Mr Mark Coure: I would not want the member for Wollongong to mislead the House. The member for Kogarah did not deliver an upgrade.

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): Order! There is no point of order.

[Time for debate expired.]

Question—That the amendment be agreed to—put.

The House divided.

Ayes, 57

Mr Anderson	Mr Gee	Mr Roberts
Mr Aplin	Mr George	Mr Rohan
Mr Ayres	Ms Goward	Mr Rowell
Mr Baird	Mr Grant	Mrs Sage
Mr Barilaro	Mr Greenwich	Mr Sidoti
Mr Bassett	Mr Gulaptis	Mrs Skinner
Mr Baumann	Mr Hazzard	Mr Smith
Ms Berejiklian	Ms Hodgkinson	Mr Souris
Mr Bromhead	Mr Holstein	Mr Speakman
Mr Casuscelli	Mr Humphries	Mr Spence
Mr Conolly	Mr Issa	Mr Stokes
Mr Cornwell	Dr Lee	Mr Toole
Mr Coure	Mr Marshall	Mr Ward
Mrs Davies	Mr O'Dea	Mr Webber
Mr Dominello	Mr Owen	Mr R. C. Williams
Mr Doyle	Mr Page	
Mr Edwards	Mr Patterson	
Mr Elliott	Mr Perrottet	<i>Tellers,</i>
Mr Evans	Mr Piper	Mr Maguire
Mr Flowers	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.

Amendment agreed to.

Question—That the motion as amended be agreed to—put.

Division called for and Standing Order 185 applied.

The House divided.

Ayes, 57

Mr Anderson	Mr Gee	Mr Roberts
Mr Aplin	Mr George	Mr Rohan
Mr Ayres	Ms Goward	Mr Rowell
Mr Baird	Mr Grant	Mrs Sage
Mr Barilaro	Mr Greenwich	Mr Sidoti
Mr Bassett	Mr Gulaptis	Mrs Skinner
Mr Baumann	Mr Hazzard	Mr Smith
Ms Berejiklian	Ms Hodgkinson	Mr Souris
Mr Bromhead	Mr Holstein	Mr Speakman
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Mr Conolly	Mr Issa	Mr Stokes
Mr Cornwell	Dr Lee	Mr Toole
Mr Coure	Mr Marshall	Mr Ward
Mrs Davies	Mr O'Dea	Mr Webber
Mr Dominello	Mr Owen	Mr R. C. Williams
Mr Doyle	Mr Page	
Mr Edwards	Mr Patterson	
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Mr Evans	Mr Piper	Mr Maguire
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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 as amended agreed to.

HEADSPACE WOLLONGONG

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) [12.17 p.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) congratulates Headspace Wollongong on celebrating its fifth birthday;
- (2) acknowledges the hard work and dedication of Dr Andrew Dally, Kelly Marshall, Chris Comber and the Headspace team;
- (3) notes the attendance at the Headspace Wollongong birthday celebrations of Senator Kate Lundy, Sharon Bird, MP, Stephen Jones, MP, Councillor Mark Way and Reg Jago, representing the member for Wollongong, at this important event;
- (4) recognises the wonderful welcome to country conducted by Richard Davies;
- (5) congratulates the Headspace team on assisting more than 3,000 people over the last five years; and
- (6) sincerely thanks the Premier for his contribution of \$1,000 towards Headspace Wollongong.

At some stage most members of this House will have had to confront a friend or family member who was suffering from mental illness. Once upon a time in the workplace a person with an identifiable ailment would take some leave. If that person told their co-workers that they were feeling down or depressed they would not have been greeted with the same warmth and empathy that they would have received had they been suffering from another type of illness. Supporting people with mental illness unites all members in this place. I appreciate the work of both sides of this House, as well as the Federal Parliament, in seeking greater support for people suffering with mental illness.

Headspace Wollongong—and the other Headspace offices around the State—seeks to serve a special cause; that is, young people who are suffering with mental illness. Coming from a regional electorate, as Mr Assistant-Speaker does, I know that many young people in regional areas are often confronted by isolation and lack of opportunity. Pressures such as Higher School Certificate study, work, family or love-life commitments sometimes become all too much and people need the support and assistance that Headspace provides. As the motion states, headspace Wollongong has been operating for five years and it is important for the House to take note of that important milestone as well as the enormous commitment made by a group of people who make that service work. They are not just employees; they are people who have a passion for service to young people and who are committed to the belief that many young lives can be turned around and, in many cases, saved.

I am incredibly impressed with the work of this Government and the support of this House, including the Opposition, for the initiatives being taken in mental health services. The State's first Minister for Mental Health was appointed by this Government. The Minister, Kevin Humphries, is doing a fabulous job. Recently he visited the Illawarra to attend the opening of the new Watershed facilities in Wollongong. The Government maintains its commitment to Lifeline by investing additional funding in the provision of services through volunteers and the provision of additional counselling services between midnight and 6.00 a.m., which is when many people suffer the most, while the rest of us are sleeping soundly in our beds. The provision of those services is supported not only by the Government but also by the Opposition and all sides of politics in this House.

I acknowledge the very hard work and dedication of Dr Andrew Dally, Kelly Marshall and Chris Comber, who made the effort to get headspace Wollongong off the ground, particularly Dr Andrew Dally. Kelly Marshall and Chris Comber do a sensational job of supporting headspace Wollongong and the work that it does. The fifth birthday was celebrated on a parliamentary sitting day. I thank the Government Whip for granting me leave to be able to attend, enjoy and celebrate such an important event along with my Federal parliamentary colleagues and members of the community. The celebrations were quite fascinating and exciting. I was delighted with the wonderful welcome to country, which was conducted by Richard Davis. He is a fixture in the Illawarra landscape and a particularly important part of the Illawarra's Aboriginal community. I am sure that members representing all sides of politics in this House join me in commending the wonderful work he does to demonstrate what is so good about Indigenous Australians, of which all members of this House would be well and truly apprised.

I congratulate the headspace Wollongong team on having the assistance of more than 3,000 people over the past five years. Many of those people would have been at the end of their tether. I have no doubt that this

service has saved lives. The effort and dedication of headspace is clear in the enthusiasm of the staff and the success of the organisation. The motion thanks the Premier for his contribution of \$1,000 to headspace Wollongong for the birthday celebrations. The celebration day was a beautiful event. The function was set on Wollongong Harbour, which provided a beautiful backdrop to this birthday event. When I arrived it was wonderful to see an army of people in green shirts. I do not think I have ever previously been so excited to see anyone wearing a green shirt, but I certainly was on this occasion. The volunteers and staff of headspace Wollongong greeted all the people who attended and talked up the work in which headspace is engaged. All who attended were given a show bag of material about the contribution that headspace is making.

It was gratifying to see representatives of all levels of government in attendance at the celebration. I acknowledge the attendance at the function of Reg Jago, who represented the member for Wollongong, as he does so admirably at many events across the Illawarra. I was grateful to see the founders of the organisation, who attended to raise the profile of headspace and who have done so much to deliver this service. Right across the Illawarra headspace does great work. An office recently was opened in the Shoalhaven, and I attend the opening event. I was delighted with the attendance at the function and the community's enthusiasm for the work headspace is doing.

There is no doubt that mental health is an issue of emerging significance. I know that Winston Churchill referred to his mental health problem as the black dog. At some time or another perhaps many members of this Parliament have suffered from mental illness, but one thing is certain: community attitudes are changing. There is greater empathy and feeling for people who have had to tread the path of mental illness. No longer do they need to tread that path alone, and they no longer need to feel isolated. There are passionate and dedicated servants of our community who wish to ensure that people can not only survive their trials and tribulations but thrive as a result of their experience. I thank the House.

Ms NOREEN HAY (Wollongong) [12.24 p.m.]: Unusual though it may be, I support and endorse the motion moved by the member for Kiama in relation to headspace Wollongong. I am very proud of this service. As the member for Kiama rightly acknowledged, I was unable to attend the fifth birthday celebration as it was held on a parliamentary sitting day. I was represented by Reg Jago, who does a sterling job when my attending Parliament prevents me from being present. Headspace Wollongong is located in my electorate of Wollongong, and I congratulate all those associated with that organisation on the recent fifth birthday celebration, which was held at Belmore Basin, also in the Wollongong electorate. I understand that there was a sausage sizzle, face painting and a number of outstanding performances by young people.

I am not sure whether the member for Kiama had his face painted, but I suggest he give it a try at the next celebration. In fact, I am prepared to paint his face. The Wollongong centre was first established and opened on 7 February 2008 and provides multidisciplinary care to young people between the ages of 12 and 25, which is a very important age category in relation to the young and mental health. I know from personal experience with my family that sometimes mental health issues begin in the mid-to-late twenties but are not evident until people reach their thirties. The type of intervention and support offered by headspace Wollongong is essential to prevent mental illness from becoming worse.

Headspace Wollongong's Youth Health Centre is a place where young people can find out about healthy living and link with groups and services in the community that focus on their wellbeing. Headspace helps young people dealing with emotions such as depression or anxiety. It meets the needs of young people to talk to someone about drinking alcohol or taking other kinds of drugs. Headspace can provide information on anything by referring people to a range of people, including youth workers, counsellors, legal advisers, doctors and psychologists who can help. Headspace also helps link youth into education, training and employment programs, and assists with housing issues.

In the past year 914 young people were referred to the service for support and assistance. I understand that more than 10,000 manifestations of service have been delivered. Since headspace's inception in 2008, 3,250 young people have attended the Wollongong centre. Over the past 12 months the service has been involved with local schools across the Illawarra by undertaking activities and community awareness presentations. The service has reached more than 2,220 students and young people and 250 school teachers, counsellors and other staff. I take this opportunity to congratulate headspace manager Christine Comber and all her staff on their outstanding dedication to the local youth and for striving to make a difference to their lives.

I join the member for Kiama in recognising the dedication and work of Dr Andrew Dally, Kelly Marshall, Chris Comber and the whole headspace team. I call on everybody to encourage young people who

may benefit—they may be suffering some type of depression—to contact headspace. When young males especially experience many changes at approximately 12 years of age, such as puberty, and while they are trying to find themselves—something with which many in that age group struggle—other young people can be incredibly cruel. Young males can be subjected to bullying or just exclusionism. At that time young people need support, encouragement, counselling and all the other help they can get.

As members of this House know, from the very first day I was elected to Parliament the issue of mental health has been my number one priority and my number one interest. On a number of occasions I have mentioned that a very long time ago my first husband was diagnosed as manic-depressive and he later had a bipolar disorder. The signs of that mental illness began to show when he was in his very early twenties. Back in those days men were not encouraged to seek help and support. My first husband, and others like him, tried to hide the fact that he was struggling with mental health issues. As I have said to many suicide support groups, if we recognise the symptoms early and groups such as headspace step in and provide support at that early stage, we could avoid a lot of youth suicides, as well as deaths of males aged up to their forties.

My husband was 46 when he took his own life. That was after 20 years of trying to help him overcome his condition, but it was too late. Early intervention is necessary. I thank God that people, particularly men, can now seek help and support without the stigma that was attached way back then. I am encouraged by the changes, but we have a long way to go. We have a lot more work to do, and a lot more support, encouragement and investment are needed to ensure that those who have mental health problems get all the assistance and support they need. I commend the member for Kiama for introducing the motion in relation to this service, albeit it is located in my electorate. I congratulate the people at headspace on the work they do and plead with them not to give up. I know it gets tough and resources are scarce but we are all beneficiaries of the services they provide to the community.

Mr STUART AYRES (Penrith) [12.31 p.m.]: I support the motion moved by my colleague the member for Kiama relating to headspace. Since my election I have worked closely with the former shadow Minister for Mental Health and now Minister for Mental Health, Mr Kevin Humphries, to raise awareness of youth-related mental health issues in western Sydney, in particular, in the Penrith area. That work has paid off, particularly the Minister's representations and close work with the Federal Government, and headspace centres are opening across New South Wales. A headspace centre is located in Wollongong and one will be opening soon in Penrith. I am looking forward to the opening of that centre, which will provide a service to young people in the outer western suburbs of Sydney.

During many debates in this House members have mentioned the importance of early intervention when dealing with mental health issues. The headspace website lists some interesting statistics, including that 75 per cent of mental health issues emerge before the age of 25. That statistic highlights the importance of mental health programs and centres like headspace. High suicide rates in early-to-mid adulthood are often related to untreated mental health problems in the late teenage years. I am looking forward to headspace's ability to integrate with other community service providers across New South Wales.

Recently I was in an area in Penrith called the Mondo. It is located outside the Joan Sutherland Performing Arts Centre next to the Westfield shopping centre. Young people often congregate in this area on a Thursday night. I was attending the launch of the Nepean Youth Channel, an online media channel that gives young people in the Penrith community an opportunity to create their own videos, talking in their own language, and to post the videos online. It is supported by an organisation in Penrith called CuriousWorks and Substance.org. For the launch, young people were interviewed about alcohol and its consequences. They talk about the issues in their own words and in the way they want to communicate. It is a poignant way of getting the message across.

A headspace centre in Penrith will provide an open door for young people to come in and communicate with professionals about some of the challenges they face around depression and anxiety. Some young people will always feel a degree of anxiety but do not know how to develop methods to deal with those feelings. Headspace will be able to assist them. It would be remiss of me not to acknowledge that UnitingCare has been identified as the lead agency supporting headspace in Penrith.

In closing, I once again acknowledge the work of the Minister for Mental Health and his advocacy for mental health issues across New South Wales. He has visited Penrith on a number of occasions. The Government is investing heavily in acute bed space at Nepean Hospital, but I am most appreciative of the

Minister's support for subacute care. We are able to provide plenty of support to people if we can intervene early. Headspace is fundamental to early intervention in relation to the younger members of our community. I thank the member for Kiama for bringing this motion before the House.

Mrs BARBARA PERRY (Auburn) [12.35 p.m.]: I acknowledge the member for Kiama and thank him for bringing this motion to the House. It is a significant motion that recognises the important work of headspace in his area. I also note the work of headspace throughout Australia. I acknowledge in the gallery today June and Kevin Clarke, whose work with young people over many years is quite remarkable. June and Kevin, and people like them, know well the needs and mental health issues of young people who have not had the best start in life. What June and Kevin have done is incredible. They are amazing people and I thank them for what they have done for all the children who have passed through their house.

The mental health of children and adolescents is a major public health issue that is vital to the future wellbeing of individuals, families and the community. During debate on this motion members have commented on research relating to the onset of mental illness. From my knowledge, international research indicates that the majority of adults with mental health disorders have recognisable symptoms by the age of 15. That is why early intervention services such as headspace are important. I spoke with Pat McGorry, just before he was named Australian of the Year, about the increased need for governments across Australia to put money into early intervention services. That is what we are seeing with headspace.

Recently, the Federal Minister for Mental Health, Mark Butler, provided funding to headspace centres across the country. This money enabled headspace to broaden its services to young people and families by providing early psychosis intervention services. I am sure the Wollongong community will also benefit from these services. I thank the professionals who work at headspace, Dr Andrew Dally, Kellie Marshall, Chris Comber and the entire headspace team. As a former Minister for Mental Health, I know the extraordinary work that is done by professionals across the State in public health facilities and in the non-government organisation sector. The work of people such as school counsellors, mental health nurses in subacute and acute units, doctors and psychologists is remarkable. I make the point that we need a comprehensive system. The State needs strong partnerships with generalist and youth-related health services, general practitioners, drug and alcohol services, government agencies, community services and non-government organisations such as headspace. We must get in early. Support for young people at an early stage is crucial. I congratulate headspace on its fifth birthday.

Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) [12.39 p.m.]: I commend the member for Kiama for moving this motion and I shall speak briefly in support of it. Headspace does amazing work across the country and is particularly supportive of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex [LGBTI] community in the areas in which it works. Headspace has dedicated teams focused on providing important counselling and support to the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex community. That is vitally important because research shows that suicide rates are up to 14 times higher for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people than their heterosexual peers—and even higher for younger and Indigenous lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people. Headspace provides particular support and services for them. Approximately 80 per cent of young lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people report suffering verbal and physical abuse at school. Headspace does important work particularly for youth. Those who have been abused are three times more likely to think about harming themselves.

In the inner city and in my electorate of Sydney many service providers support the gay and lesbian community from a mental health perspective. Indeed, the inner-city areas are some of the most welcoming and tolerant of gay and lesbian people, particularly gay and lesbian youth. But that is not necessarily the same in all areas. Young gay and lesbian people in areas such as Wollongong can feel isolated as they do not have the same access and support as the inner city. That is why the work of headspace in Wollongong is so important. I thank headspace for the work it does around the country, particularly in Wollongong, and the outreach and important service it provides. I commend the member for Kiama for moving the motion and I commend the motion to the House.

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) [12.41 p.m.], in reply: I acknowledge in the gallery Miss Margot Johnson, a constituent of my electorate who is visiting Parliament today. Margot also is a dedicated volunteer in my office and, first and foremost, does some wonderful things to support her community. Thank you, Margot, for being in Parliament today. I acknowledge the member for Wollongong, the member for Penrith, the member for Auburn and the member for Sydney for their contributions to this debate. The member for Wollongong spoke exceptionally well about the issues that confront her community. So many contiguous issues flow through the Illawarra. No doubt our support on this particular issue is united. I thank the member for Penrith for talking

about his community, which will receive a headspace establishment shortly. I was interested to hear that the project is spreading across Sydney. The member for Auburn gave a considered contribution of the issues as she understands them, as she always does. The member for Auburn has a considerable background with Juvenile Justice. Her comments were extraordinarily sensible. Of course, I thank my friend the member for Sydney for his remarks on a number of matters, including lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex issues as they relate to his electorate of Sydney and to regional New South Wales.

On Tuesday I held a youth forum in this place for 60 school leaders from around my electorate. The number one issue constantly raised was support for mental health. It was not just a catchphrase; it was quite an in-depth discussion about issues those young people had or had experienced. It is important that Parliament not just acknowledges the issues and seek to address them, as we all do, but also celebrates success in mental health support, as in this instance. Obviously, we can acknowledge the work of dedicated community service workers who make an enormous contribution not just in redirecting lives but in saving lives. That is why I am pleased that so many members made a considered contribution on an issue close to my heart. The member for Hornsby was unable to make a contribution due to other commitments in his electorate, but he also has raised this issue in this place.

I hope mental health services continue to receive bipartisan support. Everyone tries to do the best they can in this particular area but, without doubt, those doing over and above are on the front line. Every time I walk into a headspace office, either in Wollongong or the Shoalhaven, the optimistic feeling for its work is enormous. It must be so rewarding to be able to identify a problem firsthand and then take that person by the hand and turn their life around. I thank all members who participated in this debate. I sincerely hope that this House continues to be a positive forum for discussion and support for the changes required in this important area of health policy.

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

Motion agreed to.

KIAMA DOWNS SURF LIFE SAVING CLUB

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) [12.45 p.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) thanks the Minister for Sport and Recreation for visiting the electorate of Kiama;
- (2) commends Josh Douglas and the Kiama Downs Surf Life Saving Club for their outstanding dedication to surf lifesaving in the Illawarra; and
- (3) sincerely thanks the Minister for the grant of \$52,000 for an accessibility lift for the Kiama Downs Surf Life Saving Club.

I acknowledge in the Chamber a number of people who are strong supporters of the surf lifesaving movement. I acknowledge my friend the member for Hawkesbury and my very good friend the member for Wyong, whose contribution I look forward to hearing as he has had a great deal of personal experience with surf lifesaving. My good friend the member for Shellharbour, who will be contributing to this debate, also has experience with the surf lifesaving movement. I look forward to hearing her comments about surf lifesaving in her region, which adjoins my region. I note that the member for Gosford also has history with surf lifesaving. Regardless of the type of service, organisations always are looking for dollars. I do not believe many causes are greater served by government support than surf lifesaving. We live in a great country where swimming is an important pastime.

Enjoying our beautiful beaches, particularly on the South Coast, is simply part of our lifestyle. Often we rely on those dedicated men and women, both paid and unpaid, who patrol our beaches. My region has council-sponsored and volunteer lifeguards who spend countless hours dedicating their time to the protection and safety of people on our beaches. As more international travellers arrive on our shores, that protection has become more difficult. Sadly, beaches and waterways often have been the scene of loss of life. However, those tragedies have been minimised and many lives have been saved by the surf lifesaving movement doing what it does best. I want to make sure that organisations such as the Kiama Downs Surf Life Saving Club do not waste time selling raffle tickets but, instead, spend time saving lives. That is why I campaigned for this particular grant.

I remember when I first came to this place as the member for Kiama that Josh Douglas, who is the captain of the Kiama Downs Surf Life Saving Club, showed me the club's wonderful venue. For those who have

not seen it, the club is in a beautiful part of my electorate on the beautiful South Coast of New South Wales. It has an expansive view. The member for Orange is more than welcome to visit any time. I extend an invitation to him and to any other member who wishes to visit the South Coast to see the best electorate in New South Wales. The Kiama Downs Surf Life Saving Club is used for many functions and events. During the election campaign I attended a Fisheries forum with the Hon. Duncan Gay. One aspect of not using this space effectively is accessibility. Josh told me that he needed government support to get the project across the line.

I made representations to the Government and the Minister for Sport and Recreation, Graham Annesley, who is doing an amazing job in this portfolio. It is commendable for this portfolio to have someone with experience and passion from a sporting background. I am pleased with the great job he is doing for sport. Minister Annesley came to the Kiama electorate to announce that the Government would be gifting \$52,000 to the Kiama Downs Surf Life Saving Club. I appreciate receiving that grant and thank everyone in the Minister's office who worked so diligently to see these funds distributed. For many years I have enjoyed attending the annual South Coast Branch Surf Life Saving Awards. In fact, the member for Shellharbour and I sat together at the last awards at Shoalhaven Heads. Group president Stephen Jones—not to be confused with the member for Throsby—has a real passion for surf lifesaving.

He is committed to supporting the clubs in his group and he makes an enormous contribution to surf lifesaving. The awards presented by the clubs for the hours that people spend surf lifesaving reminded me that so much of this country is built on a spirit of volunteerism. Whether it is surf lifesaving, Meals on Wheels, Lions, Rotary, Apex or Zonta, they all make an extraordinary contribution. The difference is that surf lifesavers are on the front line, making an enormous contribution to the safety of the community in situations that can be harrowing and dangerous. I am delighted with the contribution they continue to make. The Kiama electorate has a number of surf lifesaving clubs. They are Shoalhaven Heads, Gerringong, Kiama, Kiama Downs and Shellharbour, and they all have great support from local communities.

I want to place on the record that in celebration of the 100-year anniversary of the Kiama Surf Life Saving Club a history of the club was compiled by Peter and Margaret Rasin. It is important that organisations such as the Kiama Surf Life Saving Club remember their history and whence they came. Those who drink from the well should acknowledge those who have dug it. Peter and Margaret Rasin have been strong advocates for and historians of surf lifesaving. Kiama Downs Surf Life Saving Club has played various roles in our community, not just in patrolling the beaches. During the recent Kiama storms, the power had been disconnected at the Kiama Leagues Club and the roof had been lifted off the leisure centre. The next place for emergency evacuation overnight accommodation was the Kiama Downs Surf Life Saving Club.

During those tragic events it is important to recognise that the surf lifesaving club played a critical role. When I walked into the State Emergency Service situation room during the crisis, I saw a member of the Kiama Downs Surf Life Saving Club providing assistance by way of emergency management. This person is an example of the volunteers we have in our community. Our volunteers come from many professions. Many of the surf lifesavers are involved in emergency services in their professional life, which shows a real commitment to the people they seek to serve. I am proud that this grant has been forthcoming. I am proud of the people at the Kiama Downs Surf Life Saving Club. They are community-minded people who are incredibly hospitable and do an amazing job. I commend the motion to the House.

Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) [12.52 p.m.]: I congratulate the member for Kiama on moving this motion. I support it 100 per cent. I have a deep commitment to and great admiration for surf lifesavers across the country. In my view, every child who grows up on the eastern seaboard of New South Wales should become involved in surf lifesaving. Anyone who lives live near a beach needs to understand water conditions and how to read the surf. I made sure that my two children attended nippers; it was one of the best things I did for them as a parent. I knew when they went swimming at the beach they could get themselves out of trouble as well as help other people. Surf lifesavers are a group of people who do so much for our community.

When I attend surf lifesaving award presentation nights I think, "How good are these people?" These amazing people put their own lives at risk in order to save others. I have been on the receiving end of a rescue at an unpatrolled beach. I was lucky that surf lifesavers were present and realised I was in trouble. I thought I was a strong swimmer. When I was a child our family holidayed near the beach—I lived at the beach as a child—but you never know when you are going to need assistance. I have such a huge admiration for surf lifesavers and the work they do. I commend Shellharbour Surf Life Saving Club and the Warilla Barrack Point Surf Life Saving Club and appreciate the hard work they do over summer.

Both Shellharbour and Warilla Barrack Point are fantastic clubs that never have a problem filling their rosters to perform duties each weekend and on public holidays during summer. They are an amazing group of people. Sadly, last year at Shellharbour Beach a person drowned. The effect that it had on the surf lifesavers was profound. They blamed themselves because they could not save this person. The person had been swimming alone in the dark, at around seven o'clock at night, but the surf lifesavers dropped everything, raced down to the beach and did their best to revive him. He could not be saved and they took his death personally. It was a demonstration to the community of the service they provide. They deal with human life and there is nothing more important than to save another's life.

I support the member for Kiama in congratulating club captain Josh Douglas, treasurer Jan Horspool, secretary Blake Hornsby, vice president Steve Lewis and president Steve Schweitzer. They are amazing people. I have competed with my children at Kiama Downs Surf Life Saving Club. The club hosts a great carnival. Parking is available, the clubhouse bathrooms have hot showers—which is important to me—and the members are friendly and hospitable. However, that does not mean they are not competitive.

Mr Gareth Ward: They flogged Shellharbour.

Ms ANNA WATSON: As Shellharbour is the best electorate in New South Wales, there is competition amongst the clubs but also camaraderie amongst all the surf lifesavers. Surf lifesaving promotes a healthy lifestyle by teaching and promoting an anti-drugs and anti-smoking lifestyle. Surf lifesaving clubs are places where people make friends for life. My two children, who are now young adults, still have friends from Shellharbour Surf Life Saving Club that they made when they were 10 and eight years old. That says everything to me about surf lifesaving in this country. It is an Australian way of life. I used to love going to the beach on Sunday mornings and talking with the other parents about surf lifesaving, watching the beach events and the run-swim-run and the surf boat competitions.

Surf lifesaving is an amazing institution and one I am proud to be a part of. I congratulate Shellharbour Surf Life Saving Club on its awards presentation last Saturday night. Zoe Elkerton is a member of the Shellharbour Surf Life Saving Club and an amazing athlete. She has so many feathers in her hat in relation to surf lifesaving but remains humble and appreciative of the support she receives from the club. I cannot say enough wonderful things about this organisation. I look forward to all the branch award nights that the member for Kiama and I attend. It is a good opportunity for the member and I to brag about our electorates. We disagree but we always leave as friends.

Mr DARREN WEBBER (Wyang) [12.58 p.m.], by leave: I commend the member for Kiama for bringing this motion before the House at a timely point in the surf lifesaving year. Most members of Parliament who represent electorates on the coastline of New South Wales will be attending local surf club or branch presentations. They are the culmination of a long summer season and provide an opportunity to reflect on the hard work of the volunteers and their achievements in sporting and surf lifesaving activities throughout the year. I acknowledge the contribution made by the member for Shellharbour. The member has contributed previously to a similar motion I brought before the House and she is a strong supporter of surf lifesaving. I will use the opportunity today to highlight the great work that Surf Life Saving NSW performs throughout the State, particularly in my region on the Central Coast. Throughout New South Wales there are 129 surf lifesaving clubs, including 15 on the beautiful Central Coast and two in the Wyong electorate—Lakes Beach Surf Life Saving Club and Soldiers Beach Surf Life Saving Club.

These are all run mostly by volunteers, who do a magnificent job keeping our coastline safe. In fact, the number of volunteers within the organisation is simply amazing. As at the end of March 2013 there were 75,768 registered volunteers with Surf Life Saving NSW, which is a wonderful reflection on our fellow New South Welshmen and women. In fact, whilst most volunteer organisations struggle with falling numbers, the Surf Life Saving movement in New South Wales continues to see a steady increase in its volunteer numbers each year, including female members, which is very good. One has only to look at the statistics for the 2012-13 surfing season to understand the important role that Surf Life Saving NSW plays in protecting beachgoers. I am pleased to report to the House that no lives were lost between the famous red-and-yellow flags this past summer season.

According to Surf Life Saving NSW, as at latest count, for the same period there were 3,922 rescues, an amazing 124,637 preventative actions and 18,561 first-aid actions. That is an amazing contribution to the State. It is impossible to know just how many lives have been saved by those actions, but certainly Surf Life Saving NSW is continuing to do everything it can to increase public awareness and safety along our coastline.

We will continue to conduct coastal public safety risk assessments for every beach and rock platform in New South Wales through Project Blueprint, a program funded by the New South Wales Government through its Water Safety Black Spots Fund. Currently 9,000 members are from the Central Coast, including 3,700 junior members aged between five and 13 years. It is important to remember the contribution of nipper members, who are the future of surf lifesaving. The member for Shellharbour outlined the contribution that the movement had made to both her children.

As Chair of NSW Parliamentary Friends of Surf Life Saving, I have written recently to all 129 clubs in this State passing on our sincere thanks and gratitude for their outstanding work and dedication during the surfing season. Personally signing those 129 letters highlighted to me how much of the New South Wales coastline is patrolled by our volunteers, from the North Coast to the South Coast. Finally, I thank all 75,000 volunteer surf lifesavers who keep our surf clubs going. I pay tribute to the member for Kiama for working to get funding for his local surf club and to all members of Parliament who will contribute this year under the Community Building Partnership program.

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

LEGISLATION REVIEW COMMITTEE

Report: Legislation Review Digest No. 37/55

Report: Legislation Review Digest No. 38/55

Motion by Mr Stephen Bromhead agreed to:

That in accordance with Standing Order 306 (7) the reports of the Legislation Review Committee, being Orders of the Day (Committee Reports) Nos 1 and 2, be considered together.

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

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) [1.02 p.m.]: I appreciate the opportunity to update the House on the comments made by the Legislation Review Committee in its recent digests, which were tabled on 21 and 28 May. These are the thirty-seventh and thirty-eighth digests that have been prepared by the Legislation Review Committee of the Fifty-fifth Parliament. I will address first the bills reviewed in Legislation Review Digest No. 37. Of the eight bills that were introduced, the committee made comments on four of them. Of those four, two raised various issues that the committee referred to Parliament.

In relation to the Motor Accident Injuries Amendment Bill 2013, the committee noted its concern that the scheme may lead to some individuals receiving less compensation for their injuries than they would receive under the current scheme, resulting in such individuals not being adequately compensated for the injuries they have suffered. Similarly, the bill proposes various thresholds that injured persons must meet before they will be entitled to compensation. On this point, the committee again noted its concern that some individuals may miss out entirely on compensation under the proposed scheme because they do not suffer permanent impairment greater than 10 per cent. The committee noted that such individuals may nevertheless suffer from injuries that continue to have a negative impact on their lives.

Proposed amendments to the bill will also allow for regulations to fix the maximum legal costs that a claimant is entitled to recover. The committee noted that claimants may not be able to recover all their reasonable and necessary legal costs under the changes proposed by the bill. The committee expressed its concern that if claimants are required to cover part of their own legal costs, claimants may have to use a portion of their statutory benefits to fund the remainder of those costs. Alternatively, claimants may not be able to afford adequate legal representation, which may affect the compensation outcome in their matter. The committee also took issue with some provisions that may constitute an inappropriate delegation of legislative powers. This includes provisions to narrow the jurisdiction of the courts in determining impairment assessments, the commencement of the majority of the provisions to be on proclamation and the power of the regulations to specify circumstances in which amendments made by the bill extend to claims that occurred before the commencement of the amendments.

I turn now to the second bill about which the committee referred matters to Parliament—the Victims Rights and Support Bill 2013. This bill replaces the statutory scheme for compensation for victims of crimes of

violence and approved counselling under that Act with a new support scheme. The committee referred to Parliament whether differences in the financial compensation structures between the current scheme and the provisions under the proposed scheme will unduly impact on a victim's rights, in particular, their right to compensation. The committee also referred to Parliament issues with respect to the retrospective application of part of the bill.

In particular, the bill requires compensation applications that have not been finalised before the bill was introduced into Parliament to be dealt with under the new support scheme proposed by the bill rather than under the current scheme. Lastly, the committee expressed its concern with the absence of a provision to enable the Commissioner of Victims Rights the discretion to accept victims support applications that are beyond the statutory time frame for applications to be lodged. The committee noted that this ability exists in the current scheme. Legislation Review Digest No. 38 reviewed nine bills. The committee made no comment under the Legislation Review Act in relation to three of the bills. Of the other six bills, the committee made the following comments:

The Child Protection Legislation Amendment (Children's Guardian) Bill 2013 gave rise to comments in relation to additional reporting requirements for offenders, security of sensitive personal information and disclosure of spent convictions but did not make any referral to Parliament in relation to these issues.

The Courts and Other Miscellaneous Legislation Amendment Bill 2013 saw the Committee comment on the right to information. The Committee was concerned that information and records held by the DNA Review Panel that should be accessible to the public will be shielded from view by the exemption afforded to the Panel for most of its functions and the Committee referred this matter to Parliament for its consideration.

In relation to the Government Sector Employment Bill 2013, the committee commented on procedural fairness, right to information, removal of appeal rights, and commencement by proclamation. However, the committee did not refer any of these issues to Parliament for further consideration. The committee also made comments in relation to matters being included in regulation instead of the principal Act and referred to Parliament whether it is appropriate to include grounds for termination in the regulations. When considering the Members of Parliament Staff Bill 2013, the committee referred to Parliament for its consideration the issue of termination of employment due to concerns about unfair dismissal with respect to current employees. The committee also referred to Parliament whether the removal of a right of appeal was reasonable in the circumstances. The committee noted that providing a power to the Premier to create staffing positions and determine the employment conditions for such staff in those positions may constitute an inappropriate delegation of legislative power.

In its review of the Petroleum (Onshore) Amendment Bill 2013 the committee resolved to refer to Parliament the strict liability offences contained in the bill and clauses relating to self-incrimination. The committee also referred the commencement by proclamation clause. The Work Health and Safety (Mines) Bill 2013 gave rise to a number of issues, including strict liability clauses and the right to silence and privacy. However, given the safety objectives of the bill, the committee did not refer any of those issues to Parliament for further consideration. As always, the digest is a frank and detailed assessment designed to assist members in their deliberations on the legislation before Parliament. I recommend that all members familiarise themselves with the digest so that debates in Parliament remain robust and considered. I thank the staff for their assistance in light of the short turnaround time. Also, I pay tribute to Emma Matthews, who will be leaving in the near future to go on maternity leave. I wish her all the very best for a happy and healthy outcome—whenever it occurs. It may well be in the next fortnight, so I may not have the opportunity to wish her well in the next sitting week.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) [1.08 p.m.]: On behalf of the Opposition, I speak on Legislation Review Digest Nos 37 and 38 of the Fifty-fifth Parliament. I take this opportunity to acknowledge the committee members, including the chair, the member for Myall Lakes.

Mr John Williams: You weren't there; another apology.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK: I note that the member for Murray-Darling would like to start a debate with me by suggesting that I did not attend the meeting. The meeting was held at lunchtime, at 1.30 p.m., and I was in attendance. I note that Emma Matthews' will soon be on maternity leave, and I wonder whether the committee will be more accommodating to women returning from maternity leave. I will raise several issues. The digest considered a couple of bills, notably the Motor Accidents Injuries Amendment Bill 2013. The Legislation Review Committee raised some reservations about the trespass on personal rights and liberties, and stated:

Because of the various caps and exclusions in the compensation scheme proposed by the Bill, the Committee is concerned that the scheme may lead to some individuals receiving less compensation for their injuries than they would under the current scheme, resulting in them being not being adequately compensated for the injuries they have suffered.

The committee further noted concerns surrounding the impairment figure, and stated:

The Committee is concerned that some individuals may miss out entirely on compensation under the proposed scheme because they do not suffer permanent impairment greater than 10%. The Committee notes that such individuals may nevertheless suffer from injuries that continue to have a negative impact on their lives.

There is no doubt that the Legislation Review Committee had concerns about the bill, and I thank the committee secretariat for ensuring that the committee received a very comprehensive review of that legislation. During consideration of committee reports on Tuesday two bills stood out: the Members of Parliament Staff Bill 2013 and the cognate Government Sector Employment Bill 2013. I will raise some of the issues noted by the committee in relation to trespass on rights and liberties. The committee was very concerned about the effect of a particular provision that under current arrangements would deny existing staffers with a grievance or issue regarding their employment conditions to seek recourse through review bodies to have their grievance considered. The committee stated:

The Committee is concerned that provisions that deny an employee access to review bodies to have their employment grievance or issue considered may make rights unduly dependent on non-reviewable decisions. The Committee refers this matter to Parliament for its consideration.

The committee also raised concerns about another section in the Legislation Review Act in relation to delegation of powers, and stated:

The Committee notes that the power for the Premier to create staffing positions, and determine the employment conditions for such staff in those positions, may constitute an inappropriate delegation of legislative power.

The committee made it very clear that there were issues with this legislation. Despite that, the Coalition Government has persevered with the legislation—as it often does. Despite the clearly stated information received by the Legislation Review Committee, much of the Government's legislation often trespasses unduly on people's rights and obligations.

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

Reports noted.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE

Report: Report on the Australasian Council of Public Accounts Committees Conference

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

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson) [1.13 p.m.]: I am pleased to speak on this report of the biennial Australasian Council of Public Accounts Committees conference held at New South Wales Parliament House in April this year. The Australasian Council of Public Accounts Committees was formed in 1989 and provides a unique forum for the exchange of information and opinions relating to public accounts committees, providing committees with the opportunity to share experiences, best practice and matters of mutual interest. Its aim is to improve the quality and performance of public accounts committees, particularly in Australasia. The conference that I chaired as chair of the New South Wales Public Accounts Committee was entitled "Public Accounts Committees: Adapting to a Changing Environment". The conference examined key factors that allow public accounts committees to flourish in, and take advantage of, changing financial, policy and technological environments and not be stymied by new challenges.

The conference sought to implement the five aims defined in the Australasian Council of Public Accounts Committees constitution: first, to facilitate the exchange of information and opinion relating to public accounts committees, thereby allowing also for discussion of matters of mutual concern; secondly, to improve the quality and performance of public accounts committees in Australasia; thirdly, to liaise with Auditors-General so as to improve the effectiveness of both the auditors and the public accounts committees; fourthly, to communicate with individuals and organisations knowledgeable about matters of concern to public accountability; and, fifthly, to provide an educational service for elected members of Parliament, the media and the general public as to the purposes and activities of public accounts committees.

The conference program included key national and international speakers from public accounts committees and audit offices and academics—all experts within their fields and on the nature and function of

public accounts committees and related matters. I thank in particular the Treasurer, and Minister for Industrial Relations; Michael Egan, former New South Wales Treasurer and former New South Wales Public Accounts Committee chair, who was our keynote speaker; and Mr Peter Achterstraat, the New South Wales Auditor-General, for contributing to the success of the conference. Finally, I put on record the appreciation of the committee and all those in attendance at the conference to the Public Accounts Committee secretariat for their work in organising the conference, particularly Rachel Simpson, Abigail Groves, Jennifer Gallagher and Sasha Shevtsova. We look forward to gathering for the next biennial conference in Victoria in two years.

Mr JOHN WILLIAMS (Murray-Darling) [1.16 p.m.]: As a member of the Public Accounts Committee it gives me great pleasure to speak on the most recent Australasian Council of Public Accounts Committees conference held here in Parliament House. It is an event that allows public accounts committees in Australia to gather and listen to the wisdom of others. Ever-evolving audit patterns and changes to audits were highlighted. At the annual general meeting of Australian public accounts committees from all State and Federal jurisdictions two motions were moved by the New South Wales Public Accounts Committee. I will reflect on those two motions today. The first motion states:

That ACPAC:

1. Notes the trend for an increasing number of non-government organisations (NGOs) to be funded by governments to manage public service delivery.

That is part of the Auditor-General's triennial review and it is obviously an area of concern. The second motion states:

2. Subject to individual jurisdictional circumstances, supports in principle "follow the money" powers for Auditors-General, to provide independent assurance about the service delivery outcomes and financial accountabilities in these arrangements with NGOs.

At the conference the former Auditor-General of Victoria gave a presentation on "follow the dollar". Follow the dollar is about current trends and some of the pitfalls that we might encounter. We put forward another motion at the conference. The motion was concurrent with the information and communications technology review and some of the recommendations that we will put forward to the Government about threats to information and communications technology services, procurement and the value for money that departments may or may not be getting. It motion states:

That ACPAC:

1. Notes the rapid development of online commerce and e-government, as well as other ICT applications such as e-health and e-education.
2. Notes the growing global awareness of risks from cyberspace, including the internet, wider telecommunications networks and computer systems.
3. Acknowledges the role of PACs and parliaments in helping to ensure that efficient and effective measures are in place to ensure the safety, security and resilience of cyberspace.
4. Supports increased inter-jurisdictional collaboration in addressing these challenges.

Obviously, that is subject to the circumstances of each jurisdiction but it is recognition that the environment is changing. Trends in technology are providing more and more challenges for public accounts committees.

Mr BART BASSETT (Londonderry) [1.20 p.m.]: I support the report on the Australasian Council of Public Accounts Committees conference. I repeat the congratulations that the committee chair offered to the secretariat staff for their work to make it a success. Many delegates remarked on what a good conference it was, how much they got out of it and how much they enjoyed Sydney. People get a lot out of conferences, and it is important that we swap information between jurisdictions to ensure that we benchmark where we are going and what we are doing at our level.

Conferences are also a time for people to enjoy the country they are visiting. I thank the Australian Turf Club, which made sure that our friends from New Zealand had a special day at the races on Saturday when Black Caviar won her final race. I might add that I was not there; I just made sure that our friends from New Zealand were looked after. I also thank the member for Wagga Wagga, who at short notice assisted a delegate from Africa to travel to a sheep property. The delegate was a sheep farmer in Africa and he wanted to see an Australian farm. The member for Wagga Wagga made sure that the visit took place.

The conference was not only about public accounts committees. As the member for Murray-Darling said, a motion was moved at the annual general meeting about the capacity and security of information technology. Recently, on behalf of the Government and the Federal Parliament, I took a motion to be read out during the keynote speech of the Commonwealth Telecommunications Organisation conference in Cameroon that was put forward by our chairman and concerned the international importance of information technology, especially in developing countries. Upon my return from that conference our Public Accounts Committee wrote to the national Parliament and encouraged it to again become a member of the Commonwealth Telecommunications Organisation.

Until a few years ago, Australia was a member of the organisation. Unfortunately, that membership was not continued. We strongly encourage the national Parliament to become a member again. The Commonwealth Telecommunications Organisation, which operates out of the United Kingdom, assists many developing countries throughout Africa with their information technology capacity and security. It wants to ensure that it has a senior player in the Pacific region and it is looking to Australia to fill that role. There has been a void since our membership lapsed. In the strongest terms I encourage the Federal Parliament to again become a member of the Commonwealth Telecommunications Organisation.

I thank the chair of the Public Accounts Committee for ensuring that the motion was carried at our annual general meeting so that I could take it to the conference. I thank everybody who was involved in this year's excellent Public Accounts Committee conference. The chair has already thanked a number of people, but I again thank the secretariat staff, the Auditor-General of New South Wales and the other people who spoke at the conference. I congratulate them on conducting a good and highly respected conference.

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 1.25 p.m. The House resumed at 2.15 p.m.]

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

The SPEAKER: I welcome to gallery today very special guests of the New South Wales Parliament, the Consul General of the Independent State of Samoa, Mr Etuale Loane, and his wife, Mrs Safuanua Loane, who are guests of the Speaker and the member for Campbelltown.

ADMINISTRATION OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE STATE

CHAIR: I report the receipt of the following message from the Administrator:

MARGARET BEAZLEY
Administrator

Office of the Governor
Sydney, 29 May 2013

The Honourable Justice Margaret Beazley, Administrator of the State of New South Wales, has the honour to inform the Legislative Assembly that, consequent on the Governor of New South Wales, Professor Marie Bashir, having assumed the administration of the Government of the Commonwealth, and as a result of the Lieutenant-Governor being absent from the State of New South Wales, she has assumed the administration of the Government of the State.

REPRESENTATION OF MINISTERS ABSENT DURING QUESTIONS

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I inform the House that during the absence from the Chamber today of the Minister for Resources and Energy, Special Minister of State, and Minister for the Central Coast, the Deputy Premier, Minister for Trade and Investment, and Minister for Regional Infrastructure and Services will answer questions relating to the Resources and Energy portfolio.

QUESTION TIME

[Question time commenced at 2.21 p.m.]

VICTIMS OF CRIME COMPENSATION

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: My question is directed to the Attorney General. Given that only five families of the 11 residents who tragically died in the Quakers Hill Nursing Home fire have received victims' compensation, will he explain to the other families why his Government is retrospectively slashing the assistance they will receive?

Mr GREG SMITH: The tragic fire at Quakers Hill Nursing Home on 18 November 2011 resulted in the death of a number of residents and serious injury to many other residents. It is the State's most deplorable tragedy. I understand that an aged care nurse, Roger Kingsley Dean, has pleaded guilty to 11 counts of murder and eight counts of recklessly causing grievous bodily harm as a result of fire. He will be sentenced later this year. As the matter is before the courts, I cannot discuss it any further.

As to the issue of victims' support, the death of a loved one is a traumatic experience for family members and can be particularly difficult when the death is sudden or unexpected. Families of homicide victims can make application for Victims Services to cover funeral expenses. Victims Services consults police and other relevant agencies when assessing whether a family is eligible for family payments and financial assistance. While Victims Services empathises with all families who have lost a loved one, it is not able to cover the expenses of the funeral of a person who died of natural causes.

The bill that was passed last night in the upper House gives a much fairer distribution of the same amount of money as previously provided under the Victims Compensation Act. The Labor Party failed this State and the victims of the State miserably, having been warned several times by the Auditor-General that the system was blowing out and that the delays were getting longer every year, out to 31 months, with a deficit of more than \$400 million. It was a failed scheme that Labor failed to do anything about. We are continuing to clean up the mess left to us by Labor as we had to do with the death and disability scheme and the solar bonus scheme, both of which blew out enormously. I say to the Leader of the Opposition: If you can hold your hand to your heart and say that you did the best by victims of crime, you will fool me, mate.

ROADS INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr CHRIS SPENCE: My question is directed to the Premier. How is the Government working to deliver vital road infrastructure for New South Wales?

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I thank the member for his question and I thank all members on the Central Coast for their continuing interest in improving transport and road services across that region—an area that, like the rest of the State, was too often ignored by those opposite. Today the Government announced that the unsolicited proposal for a motorway link between the F3 and the M2 has progressed to stage two under the Government's unsolicited bids proposal. It does not have the final go-ahead, but this is an important step forward for those of us who want to see that link built. The Government received a proposal from the private motorway operator Transurban and Westlink M7 shareholders last year. Their proposal is to construct an eight-kilometre link under the Pennant Hills Road corridor connecting the F3 at Wahroonga with the M2 exit at Pennant Hills Road.

It is a key missing link in Sydney's motorway network. An F3-M2 link has the potential to significantly relieve traffic congestion on one of Sydney's busiest road corridors. It can save motorists up to 15 minutes travelling time in each direction and will remove thousands of trucks from Pennant Hills Road every day. The link will improve efficiency along Sydney's north-south freight corridor by linking the F3, via a continuous motorway, with the Hume Highway. Not only will this deliver economic benefits to the State but it will also provide relief for long-suffering motorists and residents who live adjacent to the roads that are otherwise used. It has the potential to benefit commuters from the Central Coast and the Hunter as well as motorists across western Sydney.

Moving to stage three means that the proponents, working with government, can start the detailed planning to determine the final cost and to finalise that route under Pennant Hills Road. Stage three will involve Roads and Maritime Services and Transport for NSW working with the proponents to commence community consultation, with the exhibition of an environmental impact statement and lodgement of an application for environmental and planning approval. The proponents will also work with government to undertake a competitive tender process to select a design and construction contractor. The proposed project, if it proceeds, is expected to cost up to \$2.6 billion and will be funded by Transurban and M7 shareholders, from tolls, and by the New South Wales and Federal governments. I want to put things into perspective for the member: the Federal Government's contribution of \$400 million represents something like 15 per cent of the total cost.

I make that point given the statements I heard the Prime Minister and Central Coast Labor candidates making in that region over the weekend, suggesting that the Federal Government's \$400 million was somehow like a magic pudding and that it would deliver the full, potentially, \$2.6 billion project. Again I emphasise that

moving to stage three is not a green light, but it is an important next step in securing this project, which has the capacity to deliver value for New South Wales taxpayers and motorists, while at the same time delivering real benefits for local residents and, of course, users of the link. That is what stage three will assess. Taxpayers do not need to be reminded of how Labor approached such major projects. Labor squandered half a billion dollars and did not build a single centimetre of rail track for the discredited Rozelle Metro, because it did the work—as Nathan Rees admitted—on the back of an envelope.

Mr Nathan Rees: Rubbish.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: So it was not the back of an envelope; it was a post-it note, was it? Unlike those opposite, we will do the detailed work and we will get it right, because that is what taxpayers and the users of these infrastructure projects expect. We are taking the same approach with WestConnex, which will be the biggest road project in Australia. We are also delivering the largest rail project in the nation, the North West Rail Link. The South West Rail Link continues to track ahead of schedule and we are getting on with the job of widening the M5 West, something that those opposite promised but could not deliver. That is currently underway because we got it started nine months after we came to office. I see it regularly—as do other members on this side of the House—as I travel to the west and to the Macarthur area of Sydney.

The Government is getting on with the job of road construction across this State, easing congestion, creating jobs and connecting communities. Whether it is the Pacific Highway, the Princes Highway, in which the member for Wagga Wagga and the member for Kiama have an interest, the Erskine Park Link Road, which also is long overdue and soon to be opened, Richmond Road or those key pinch point intersections across western Sydney, we are delivering projects that make people's road journeys safer and easier and delivering benefits to the communities affected by those roads. I hope that shortly we will be able to add the F3 and M2 projects to that list of achievements.

VICTIMS OF CRIME COMPENSATION

Mr PAUL LYNCH: My question is directed to the Attorney General. Given Martha Jabour of the Homicide Victims Support Group has said that she is disappointed and saddened by the victims compensation changes, and that they will be catastrophic for the families of homicide victims, did the Minister mislead the House on 9 May when he said all victims groups backed his bill?

Mr GREG SMITH: I thank the member for Liverpool for his question. It must be my day.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Attorney General will be heard in silence.

Mr GREG SMITH: For eight months members opposite ignored me, but lately they have been giving me a go. It is very nice of them; I really feel the warmth and love coming across the table. All I can say is that Ms Jabour, Howard Brown, Ken Marslew and the lady in charge—

Mrs Barbara Perry: Karen.

Mr GREG SMITH: Yes, Karen Willis from the Rape Crisis Centre. They were all present at the meeting when I told them what was happening. Not one of them objected. In fact, they said they supported it. Indeed, Howard Brown and Ken Marslew have come out in support of the Government in the media as well. The member for Liverpool wants to go round whipping up hysteria among victims groups to make their lives unhappy and throw the fraud that he and members opposite did so much for victims of crime.

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

Mr GREG SMITH: All they did was allow a system to blow out to \$400 million with about 25,000 victims waiting nearly three years to get any benefits.

The SPEAKER: Order! Opposition members will cease interjecting or risk being placed on calls to order.

Mr GREG SMITH: We make a good effort—

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

Mr GREG SMITH: —based on good advice on how to have a system that works, rather than to persist with the Opposition's incompetent system when it was in government.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Liverpool, the member for Kogarah and the member for Wollongong will come to order.

Mr GREG SMITH: That system was found out by the Auditor-General. Those opposite ignored the Auditor-General and tried to blame departmental officers. The Auditor-General's report to Opposition members said they needed to fix up this scheme because it was going deeper into the red.

MAJOR EVENTS AND EXHIBITIONS

Mr MATT KEAN: My question is addressed to the Deputy Premier, and Minister for Trade and Investment. How is the Government boosting the economy through major events?

Mr ANDREW STONER: I thank the member for his question and congratulate him on his interest in major events in this State. I am pleased to advise the House that our State's events calendar is bigger and better than ever. Current events include Vivid Sydney, CeBIT Australia, the Archibald Prize exhibition and the upcoming State of Origin. We also cannot forget that major event in the Northern Tablelands last weekend. With more than nine out of 10 voting against Labor, the good people of the Northern Tablelands sent a strong message of endorsement of our policies, which are boosting the New South Wales economy. With reports that numbers of first-time visitors to the New England north-west region have increased following campaign visits by the Leader of the Opposition and other members of his front bench—the member for Toongabbie and the member for Maroubra notwithstanding—things are looking up for that local economy.

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

Mr ANDREW STONER: The member for Canterbury is not interested in the contribution of major events to our State, which, over the past two years, have generated revenue of \$1.2 billion—and the member sneers at that—and created countless associated jobs. That is why this Government is determined to attract even more major events to New South Wales to boost our global appeal. We are getting on with the job of delivering new, world-class convention, exhibition and entertainment facilities at Darling Harbour. Anyone who has been to Darling Harbour, Circular Quay, The Rocks, Walsh Bay or North Sydney over the past week will say that Vivid Sydney, which I was pleased to launch last Friday, is going gangbusters. If the first week is anything to go by, visitor numbers look set to top 550,000 this year, with an injection of over \$10 million in new money for our State economy. The Vivid display literally lights up Sydney helping retailers, bars, cafes, restaurants and hotels during the traditionally quieter time of the year. This morning I was pleased to launch yet another exciting event for families. Monster Jam is coming to ANZ Stadium in October in an Australia Pacific region first. I can assure all fans that Monster Jam is bringing a host of monster trucks.

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

Mr ANDREW STONER: For example, there is the Grave Digger—no, I am not talking about the member for Wollongong; there is Northern Nightmare, and I am not talking about the member for Cessnock; there is Maximum Destruction and, no, I am not talking about the Leader of the Opposition's impact on Labor's brand in the Northern Tablelands; and there is Monster Mutt. Now who over there could be Monster Mutt? Speaking of Monster Jam—I am sorry, I mean the Labor Party, the Leader of the Opposition put his foot in his mouth again. Last week he revealed Labor's plan to shut down the coal industry, axe tens of thousands of jobs and raise power prices.

Mr Nathan Rees: What about Jock Laurie's job? Give Jock a job.

Mr ANDREW STONER: Why not ask me a question about it?

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

Mr ANDREW STONER: But now he has set his sights on the State's \$20 billion tourism and major events industry. On Friday the Leader of the Opposition issued an alarmist press release claiming that New South Wales was in line to lose major events and exhibitions to other States. I am pleased to say that the industry refused to have a bar of it. The Accommodation Association of Australia labelled the Leader of the

Opposition's comments as his "latest unnecessary outburst" and said, "It's disappointing that John Robertson is continuing to use the tourism industry as a political football." Shame on him. It is clear that just like the monster trucks, the member for Blacktown is hell-bent on destruction. In the words of Paul Keating, he is like a banshee on a rampage with our State's economy. Let us be glad that we have two incredibly capable Ministers looking after his former portfolios of energy and transport. [*Extension of time granted.*]

Ms Linda Burney: Why are you answering George's question?

The SPEAKER: Order! Why is the member for Canterbury asking any question at all?

Mr ANDREW STONER: It is little wonder that during the Northern Tablelands by-election the Leader of the Opposition turned to the little book for some guidance. When spotted reading this book, *How to Be In Opposition*, at Armidale airport he had flicked through to chapter seven.

Dr Andrew McDonald: Point of order: I know the book does not have many pictures, but it is a prop.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Deputy Premier has cited the title of the book many times, which he is entitled to do. He can quote from it if he cites the source.

Dr Andrew McDonald: He can read that one?

The SPEAKER: Yes he can.

Mr ANDREW STONER: I need to quote from the book.

Mr Nathan Rees: Did you underline in crayon?

Mr ANDREW STONER: Chapter seven is titled "Ignored, Irresponsible and Irrelevant".

Mr Nathan Rees: Can you do joined-up writing?

Mr ANDREW STONER: Listen to the member for Toongabbie sparking off over there.

Ms Carmel Tebbutt: Point of order: My point of order relates to relevance under Standing Order 129. The question was about major events, not about some book that the Deputy Premier seeks to read into *Hansard*. I ask that you draw him back to the question.

The SPEAKER: Order! Although the question was fairly general, major events could be covered by the Deputy Premier's reference to the book he is quoting from. The Deputy Premier has been generally relevant to the question he was asked. The Deputy Premier has the call.

Mr ANDREW STONER: The relevance is that policies involving a tax on tourism and the events industry affecting the economy are destined to keep Labor in Opposition for a long time. On page 185 it states, "Faced with the reality of their irrelevance it can be hard to keep Opposition MPs in good spirits for too long." So watch your back, mate. Watch out for the member for Toongabbie and the member for Maroubra, and leave the events industry alone.

CROSBY TEXTOR POLITICAL LOBBYING

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: I direct a question to the Premier. Lobbyist Crosby Textor has written to New South Wales businesses stating that it is specifically mentioned in the Premier's victory speech and businesses should contact the firm if they want advice on how to directly align themselves with his Government. On what issues has the Premier been lobbied by the firm Crosby Textor?

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I am happy to check the transcript, but I am almost certain that there was no mention of Crosby Textor's firm in my victory speech. That is the first point. The second point is that the first thing the Coalition Government did when it came to office was strengthen lobbying laws in this State by, in part, putting in place a ban on success fees. This Government has been open and transparent. I have repeatedly stated that no-one needs to employ a high-cost lobbyist to see a Minister in this State. Anyone who does spend their client's money on a lobbyist thinking that they will get a favourable decision, or a more favourable decision on a

meeting, is wasting their money. This Government has absolutely no intention of repeating the mistakes that Labor made for 16 years, which resulted in the biggest event in this State being the Independent Commission Against Corruption inquiry involving former Labor Ministers. This is a Government that will act with honour.

This Government has placed limits on outside influences to ensure decisions are made on merit and in the public interest. Whether those decisions involve the F3-M2, investing in hospitals or the tough but necessary action to staunch the losses in a WorkCover scheme, the Coalition Government will make those decisions on the basis of fact and what is in the public interest, and it will do so with integrity. If the Leader of the Opposition wishes to suggest that the Government would act other than with integrity I invite him to join his Labor colleagues at the Independent Commission Against Corruption and to make that claim to the Independent Commission Against Corruption. The Leader of the Opposition cannot ascribe to this side of politics the grubby motives of the Labor Party. As the Attorney General stated in answer to a question on Tuesday: The Leader of the Opposition has found a new interest in corruption and in the process—

Mr John Robertson: Point of order: I would like an answer. My point of order is relevance under Standing Order 129. The question was specifically about what issues the Premier has been lobbied on by the firm Crosby Textor. So far the Premier has danced around the question but he has not answered the question.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Premier has been relevant to the question he was asked. There is no point of order. The Premier has the call.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: Earlier this week the Leader of the Opposition gave the independent Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions a backhander by suggesting that there ought to be a special prosecutor appointed who is given the responsibility of prosecuting the former colleagues of the Leader of the Opposition. As the Attorney General has stated previously, this is a new-found interest of the Leader of the Opposition who sat in Cabinet whilst allegations of corruption emblazoned the front pages of newspapers in this city. The Leader of the Opposition did not challenge any of the allegations or reports. The Leader of the Opposition has on the front bench a member in the upper House who once represented an electorate in the lower House. That member entered this Chamber and stated that former Minister McDonald had been given a clean bill of health.

Mr John Robertson: Point of order: If you want to talk about members on the front bench and the Independent Commission Against Corruption just look at this bloke over here who has an adverse finding against him and he is on your front bench.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition will resume his seat. There is no point of order. I call the Leader of the Opposition to order. The Premier has the call. I call the Leader of the Opposition to order for the second time.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: The Leader of the Opposition did nothing when coal seam gas leases were issued across 40 per cent of the State and when his mates, the person who made him Leader of the Opposition, Eddie Obeid, handed out coal seam gas licences to enrich the Obeid family by \$70 million to \$100 million—the Leader of the Opposition did not say a word.

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order: My point of order is under Standing Order No. 73.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: For the benefit of the member for Pittwater, I will not go anywhere near the Currawong situation where, in exchange for dollars from developers, the Leader of the Opposition sold out the State interest.

Mr Ryan Park: Point of order: My point of order is relevance under section 129. This is completely unrelated to the question.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition might not like the answer, but the Premier is being relevant to the question that was asked of him. There is no point of order.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I welcome the question in order to illustrate the distinction between that grubby side of politics and those on this side of the House who protect the public interest.

PORTS TRANSACTIONS FUNDS

Mr BART BASSETT: I direct my question to the Treasurer, and Minister for Industrial Relations. Will the Treasurer inform the House when funds will be available to invest in infrastructure across the State?

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I thank the member for his question. The member is doing an incredible job for his community. I commend his interest in the responsible financial management of the State. The good news for everyone in this House and the State is that the funds from the port transaction will be available tomorrow. There will be \$4.3 billion invested in infrastructure in this State. It is good news for the member for Northern Tablelands. I am pleased to see him in the House. It is great for the people of New South Wales and for those in the community that will utilise WestConnex—\$1.8 million will be invested in its infrastructure. The Pacific Highway, the Princes Highway and Bridges for the Bush will benefit. This is going to be a great day for the people of New South Wales. This Government is doing something very different: It is raising funds for infrastructure up front and getting on with the job. That is what will happen tomorrow. I will advise the new member for Sydney and the new member for Northern Tablelands of the speed at which the Opposition works.

It moves like a panther. It is incredible. If there is an issue the Opposition is there. It is unbelievable. Members should watch Opposition members in action. The Government announced the port transaction in September 2011 and last week the Leader of the Opposition made a marquee speech. A couple of people turned up. The Leader of the Opposition put his stake in the ground and took a stand against the long-term lease of the port. That is fair enough. If he wants to be against the port, that is fair enough. The only problem is that the issue arose 20 months ago. The Government announced the proposal, asked for expressions of interest, legislation was enacted, there was a tender process and a successful tenderer was chosen. It is all over. But recently the Leader of the Opposition stated that the Opposition does not think it is a good idea. That does bring into focus the cunning plan of the Leader of the Opposition for the State. The plan is starting to come into focus and the Government is starting to get a sense of it.

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order: The question was about when funds were going to be released. If the Treasurer is flush with cash he might want to open the ward at Prince of Wales Hospital. Can I have the 37 beds back?

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: The Leader of the Opposition has not included the member for Maroubra in his plans. The Leader of the Opposition wants to shut down coalmining in this State. In the Cessnock electorate it will mean the loss of 10,000 jobs. There will be a loss of 20,000 jobs across the State. He is very happy for Mount Penny and Doyles Creek to keep going; there is a lucrative bounty there. The broad economic plan is to shut down the economy, which means that the ports are not needed. What will he put in place of the ports?

Mr Ryan Park: Point of order: This has nothing to do with the question.

The SPEAKER: There is no point of order. The Treasurer is being relevant to the question he was asked.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: They have been working on it for a long time. They are going to put Disneyland there now. We can all imagine the shadow Cabinet working out what to do and the member for Cabramatta on the *Pirates of the Caribbean* ride. Where will that go?

Dr Andrew McDonald: Point of order: My point of order is relevance under Standing Order 129. The Treasurer has gone into fantasyland. The question was about the ports.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Treasurer has been relevant to the question he was asked. The member for Macquarie Fields might not like the answer, but it has been relevant. Government members will come to order. The Treasurer has the call.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: My favourite, which is what the member for Keira is interested in, is where the teacups are going to go; he loves the teacups. While Opposition members are dealing in fantasyland we are getting on with responsible budget management in this State. Tomorrow \$4.3 billion will be allocated to infrastructure that even the Opposition spoke about. However, the big difference between Opposition members and Government members is that we are going to deliver that infrastructure with that money that will be released tomorrow.

CROSBY TEXTOR POLITICAL LOBBYING

Mr MICHAEL DALEY: My question is directed to the Premier. Lynton Crosby has been the subject of a serious probity question because of a conflict of interest between his role as an adviser to the British Prime Minister and as a lobbyist. In the interest of transparency will the Premier commit to publicly releasing all records of contact and meetings he has had with Mr Crosby, Mr Textor and their representatives?

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: First, I have had no meetings with Lynton Crosby since I became Premier. Secondly, the claim made by the Leader of the Opposition in an earlier question was that somehow or other I had singled out Crosby Textor, the firm, in my victory speech on election night. I am embarrassed that that speech is available on YouTube. I am embarrassed that anyone out there who does a jot of research can check that because there it is, larger than life, this head on YouTube, having a good night. I mentioned the electorates of Parramatta and Campbelltown and the people of my favourite suburb. All I said was that I thank Mark Neeham, Mark Textor and the entire Liberal team. Mark Textor was the Liberal Party's pollster. I thank the member for the question and the opportunity to correct the record.

FOSTERING NSW

Mr TROY GRANT: My question is addressed to the Minister for Family and Community Services, and Minister for Women. How is the Government encouraging more people to open their hearts and foster a child in New South Wales?

Ms PRU GOWARD: I thank the member for Dubbo for his question and acknowledge his ongoing support for disadvantaged groups in his community, and the great work he is doing on the estates in Dubbo. Today I was pleased to launch a year-long million dollar foster care and recruitment campaign Fostering NSW with the Association of Children's Welfare Agency. I acknowledge the many wonderful carers and non-government organisations that are in the gallery today and thank them for their care and great work. It is wonderful to have all of them here to mark the launch. Their work is truly invaluable; they are life-changers and we thank them for the love and care they give our children. Currently 18,169 children and young people are in out-of-home care in New South Wales, with 52 per cent in foster care placements. We need more carers across New South Wales to love and support these children.

Fostering NSW is a major foster carer recruitment campaign aimed at raising awareness about fostering, and finding more carers for children and young people who urgently need stable and caring homes. There are now more than 53 non-government agencies delivering foster carer services across New South Wales—what an extraordinary change in two years. The campaign is a fantastic partnership between the Government and the non-government sector and is part of broader reform to improve services and lives, including the transfer of foster care to the non-government sector. The campaign complements and feeds into grassroots, community-based work, to spread the word about the joys and rewards, as well as the challenges, of being a carer for children who are unable to live safely with their parents. The campaign aims to reach as many people as possible, especially through social media. There is a great forum on Facebook and there will be online advertising on lifestyle, news and entertainment websites. The Fostering NSW website has been refreshed and boosted. In addition, there will be targeted local strategies.

Aboriginal children, who are overrepresented in the New South Wales child protection system, will be a particular focus. This campaign aims to attract Aboriginal carers, as well as carers from culturally diverse backgrounds, to ensure all children stay connected to culture and family wherever possible. Deciding to become a foster carer is a life-changing decision. I am told by foster carers that it takes time to work through the process, to learn what is involved and to include family members in the decision-making process. All carers receive support, training and an allowance to cover a child's needs. Today's launch and the campaign encourage people to really think about and discuss fostering in their lives. Children and young people need more people to share this message in their communities.

New South Wales carers, including the carers sitting in the gallery today, are exceptional people. I am really touched by their stories of dedication and the heartfelt love they provide on a daily basis to the children in their care. As one of them said to me at the launch, "You may not be able to change the world, but you can change the world of one child." Thank you. I thank foster carers across New South Wales not only for their wonderful work but also for being ambassadors and spreading the word about the work they do. The call to action is for people to visit www.fosteringnsw.com.au or call the 1800 number, 1800 2 FOSTER, to find out more about foster care and the variety of agencies where they can apply to become carers. I cannot stress enough how important it is that we find people from all walks of life to care for vulnerable children and young people.

People can be single, married, living with a partner, with or without children and from any religious or cultural background. People may be interested in temporary foster care or in moving to permanent care. I say to anyone who is interested in helping vulnerable children and young people that now is a great time to think about becoming a foster carer. This is another way in which the O'Farrell Government is working to improve services and lives for vulnerable children and young people in our State and, more importantly, we are doing it in partnership with our great non-government organisations, pillars of social policy reform. I thank the foster carers of NSW for their wonderful work and for opening their hearts. I invite communities and people throughout New South Wales to open their hearts too and to think about becoming a foster carer.

PALLIATIVE CARE SPECIALIST POSITIONS

Mr GREG PIPER: My question is directed to the Minister for Health, and Minister for Medical Research. Will the State Government commit to continuing the funding of 55 specialist palliative care positions created under the National Palliative Care Strategy once the Council of Australian Governments seed funding runs out on 30 June and end the uncertainty for staff employed in these positions, and patients and carers who rely on these services?

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: I thank the member for Lake Macquarie for this very important question. Some months ago now, in response to a petition, the Premier and I both addressed this House on concerns raised about cuts to funding for palliative care by the former Labor Government. In that debate not only did we commit and follow up with restoration of that funding but we promised to develop a palliative care plan for New South Wales. I am very pleased that we launched that plan following that commitment. In so doing, we identified some \$86 million already allocated to palliative care in New South Wales and we made a promise to provide a further \$35 million over a four-year period. We have called for expressions of interest from organisations to seek that funding because our focus was on providing much greater care in the community. We are going through those submissions, and I am pleased to say that some very good submissions have been received.

In response to the provision of subacute care that was funded through the Commonwealth's National Partnership funding, which concludes at the end of this financial year, I have been involved in ongoing discussions with the Federal Minister for Health, and they have been very positive. I regard this as a very high priority area and I am committed to continuing to provide not only the current acute care services that are so important for families right across the State but also to enhance funding for palliative care over the next four years. When developing this plan and looking at some of the studies—and we work very closely with some of the peak bodies in this area—it was interesting to note that a survey found that 70 per cent of people said they want to die at home when in reality only 16 per cent were able to do so, which is why we placed our focus on providing new funding for palliative care in the community.

I have seen some absolutely wonderful work done by volunteers, non-government organisations, community nurses and others in this area. One of the most heartwarming programs I have ever seen—and some of my colleagues might have been in attendance at this presentation—was a link between palliative care, community-provided care and eHealth. I watched a video about a family of a child who was dying. He had been treated in a children's hospital—his family came from a fairly isolated country town—he had then gone back to the local district hospital and finally he was allowed to go home with his family, who desperately wanted him to be at home. With the support of general practitioners, other community nurses and an iPad linking that family to all the care services, he was able to go home.

The video of that family, with grandparents, siblings, friends and neighbours with this little boy as he ended his life, was the most heartwarming thing I have seen. It told the story of the importance of providing support for families through linking acute, subacute and community care with modern technology so that people can get the relief that they need from pain and all those other experiences so that they can die with dignity. I can assure the member for Lake Macquarie that this issue is high on my agenda and one that I regard as a great priority as we reach our conclusions about budget allocations this year.

SOUTH-WEST SYDNEY MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mr ANDREW ROHAN: My question is directed to the Minister for Mental Health and Minister for Healthy Lifestyles. What is the Government doing to improve mental health services for the people of south-west Sydney?

Mr KEVIN HUMPHRIES: I thank the member for Smithfield for his ongoing support and interest in the area of mental health. I also thank the member for Menai, who attended the opening of the Liverpool

\$12.8 million subacute unit this morning as well as opening a diabetes symposium with more than 200 clinicians from around the State, targeting the growing rate of morbidity in people with diabetes. Following on the good work that the Minister for Health is undertaking with the Federal Government, the subacute program was quite extensively engaged with mental health in how we could vary and grow the continuum of care across the State, given that a number of gaps have been identified for people living with mental illness, and how they can access services.

National partnership agreements are fundamentally important because without such agreements, which we signed up to with the Federal Government, we cannot grow or expand services, particularly in areas of need. As we come up to the budget and the Federal election I will continue to call on our Federal counterparts to ensure that they stay committed to the subacute program. There are seven locations for subacute mental health services, and we opened three of those today. Those three facilities are up and running in Broken Hill, supported by the member for Murray-Darling; Dubbo, supported by the member for Dubbo; and Liverpool. Those 20 beds will service the areas of Cabramatta, Wetherill Park, and places like Canterbury and Auburn.

The next four facilities that will be opened shortly will be in Wagga Wagga; the Shoalhaven; the St George area, which will target older people living with a mental illness; and Blacktown. The Leader of the Opposition might like to know that work has just commenced on a site in Blacktown. I acknowledge the area chief executive Amanda Larkin and Associate Professor Victor Storm, who is the Director of Mental Health, who were at the opening of the unit in Liverpool this morning. I also acknowledge Clair Edwards, who is the Director of Mental Health Nursing, and Claire Jones, who is the Director of Clinical Services. On the Liverpool site there are 81 nurses who have just graduated, a number of whom are very interested in mental health and were at the opening this morning. Liverpool has 51 registrars in training this financial year. It is emerging as a hub and will continue as an area for training and placement for our medical workforce. Anthony Schembri is the Chief Executive of Liverpool Hospital. Liverpool has 5,000 employees on that site; it is a very large site and it does a great job.

Dr Andrew McDonald: Who rebuilt it?

Mr KEVIN HUMPHRIES: We will continue to build it. We will finish what we said we would do—and that is the difference. A number of consumers, carers, staff and people from Health Infrastructure and Lend Lease attended the opening of the facility at Liverpool. The facility was opened by a person who summed it up for me—Barry Butler. Barry has worked as a consumer advocate and as a mental health peer support worker in the Liverpool Hospital precinct for 24 years. As he said, it was his unit, but he represented the community effort that has gone into the establishment of that site. Why do we need these subacute beds? We need them because when people become mentally ill two things happen, and I have said this before in this House: they are robbed of being able to make a good decision for themselves and they are robbed of being able to make a good decision for other people.

Gaps were clearly identified in the system in New South Wales right across the continuum of care. Half of the people experiencing mental illness who present to our emergency centres or our triage centres do not need to present there. They go there because we do not have the transition centres and community services that we would like to have. This is all about filling in those gaps. It is a fundamentally important platform for the O'Farrell-Stoner Government in building that continuum of care and building better access to services for people who are living with mental illness. It is breaking down the stigma that surrounds mental health. Mental health is everybody's business. We are getting on with the job and we are growing quality care. I congratulate the people of Liverpool Hospital and, in particular, the local health district.

CROSBY TEXTOR POLITICAL LOBBYING

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: Today in question time I was asked a question by the Leader of the Opposition about Crosby Textor. I need to supplement the answer I gave in relation to that question. I have now checked my diary and I have to correct the record to say that on 29 November last year a request came from Crosby Textor to meet with an Italian trade delegation. There was a function involving that Italian trade delegation. It will disappoint the Opposition, but I did not attend that function; the Minister for Finance and Services, Minister Greg Pearce, represented me. The answer is that I have never met or been lobbied by Crosby Textor since I became Premier.

Question time concluded at 3.08 p.m.

OMBUDSMAN**Report**

The Speaker tabled, pursuant to section 31AA of the Ombudsman Act 1974, a report entitled, "A level playing field? HSC Disability Provisions", dated May 2013.

Ordered to be printed.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE**Report**

Mr Jonathan O'Dea, as Chair, tabled the report entitled, "Procurement and Management of ICT Services in the NSW Public Sector", dated May 2013.

Ordered to be printed on motion by Mr Jonathan O'Dea.

LEGAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE**Report**

Mr Dominic Perrottet, as Chair, tabled the report entitled, "Law Reform Issues Regarding Synthetic Drugs", dated May 2013.

Ordered to be printed on motion by Mr Dominic Perrottet.

COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND REGULATION**Inquiry**

Mr Chris Patterson, as Chair, informed the House that, pursuant to Standing Order 299 (1), the Legislative Assembly Committee on Environment and Regulation had resolved to conduct an inquiry into the management and disposal of waste on public lands, the full details of which are available on the committee's home page.

PETITIONS

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

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**.

Woolloomooloo Public Housing

Petition calling for certain actions in relation to Housing NSW property and for priority for supported housing at the Camperdown project to be given to rough sleepers in Woolloomooloo, 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**.

Pet Bans in Accommodation By-laws and Tenancy Agreements

Petition requesting the prohibition of blanket pet bans in accommodation by-laws and rules and tenancy agreements, received from **Mr Alex Greenwich**.

Container Deposit Levy

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

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

Gonski Education Reform

Petition requesting that the Government implement immediately the full recommendations of the Gonski report, received from **Mr Kevin Anderson**.

Rocky Hill Coal Project

Petition requesting the rejection of Gloucester Resources Limited's application to operate the Rocky Hill Coal Project and calling on the Government to revoke coal exploration licences 6523, 6524 and 6563, and to declare the area covered by those licences exempt from all future coal exploration and mining, received from **Mr George Souris**.

Mount Thorley Warkworth Mine

Petition calling on the Government to support workers and their families by fixing the planning system and supporting policies that strengthen mining at Mount Thorley Warkworth and throughout New South Wales, received from **Mr George Souris**.

VICTIMS RIGHTS AND SUPPORT BILL 2013

Consideration in Detail

Consideration of the Legislative Council amendment.

Schedule of amendment referred to in message of 30 May 2013

No. 1 Page 26, clause 40. Insert after line 8:

- (7) This section (other than subsection (6)) does not apply to an application for financial support, being for financial assistance of a kind specified in clause 8 (2) (b) or (d) of the *Victims Rights and Support Regulation 2013*, or a recognition payment for a person who is a primary victim of an act of violence that occurs in the course of the commission of a sexual offence against the person when the person is under 18 years of age. There is no time limit on when such an application can be made.

Mr GREG SMITH (Epping—Attorney General, and Minister for Justice) [3.14 p.m.]: I move:

That the House agree to the Legislative Council amendment.

The Victims Rights and Support Bill 2013 comes back for this House to consider an amendment that was moved unopposed by the Christian Democratic Party in the Legislative Council. The effects of this amendment are threefold. First, it removes the time limit in the bill for victims of child sexual abuse. In recent days much has been made of the impact on victims of child sexual abuse in circumstances where they are required to lodge a claim within 10 years of the date of the abuse or 10 years from their eighteenth birthday. Stakeholders have submitted that many victims of child sexual abuse do not come forward for many years after the date of the abuse because of the shame or embarrassment which they suffer. The Government understands these arguments and has agreed to support the amendments, which would allow such victims to lodge their claims at any time.

Secondly, victims of child sexual abuse will be able to make a claim at any time for out-of-pocket expenses of up to \$5,000 and expenses relating to being involved in related criminal proceedings of up to \$5,000. Finally, victims of child sexual abuse will be able to make a claim for a recognition payment at any time. I stress that, in addition to these benefits, such victims will also be entitled to up to 22 hours of counselling, which can be extended at the discretion of the Victims Commissioner. Again, this service can be accessed at any time.

We have additionally improved the ease with which applications can be made. Victims do not have to wait for a conviction of an offender; all that is required is that a complaint be lodged with the police or another government agency such as the Department of Community Services. The lodging of that complaint shall be sufficient to trigger access to services. This bill is about delivering a much more efficient way of assisting victims. The Greens and the Opposition in the other place are fixated on dollars. Their view of the world is that dollars fix everything. That was not the view of the victims who were surveyed by PricewaterhouseCoopers. The results of the survey showed that overwhelmingly victims wanted ready and quick access to services to help them recover and get on with their lives. This bill has delivered that.

Those opposite, who wear the badge of fiscal irresponsibility with honour, have charged the Government with avoiding questions relating to reductions in funding for the new scheme. Let us be clear: this bill is not about reducing funding to assist in the support of victims. The Government has committed the same \$72 million of funding to this scheme as it did to the previous scheme. The difference is that we have redirected the manner in which services are delivered to more efficiently provide for the needs of victims at the time they need them most.

The Government supports the amendments that have been made by the Christian Democratic Party. We accept that victims of child sexual abuse need special consideration. I thank Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile and the Hon. Paul Green for the courteous and constructive manner in which they conducted the negotiations relating to the amendments that they sought while at the same time wishing to ensure that the new scheme had every chance of success. Unlike the fundamentalists opposite, who created a scheme which became dysfunctional and who were paralysed and did not do anything to fix it, the Government has worked together with the Christian Democratic Party to deliver a new and sustainable approach to victims.

Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool) [3.19 p.m.]: The Opposition supports the amendment that was moved by the Christian Democratic Party in the upper House. The amendment, which had to be redrafted three times before the Attorney General got it right, is a minor improvement to an appallingly bad bill. Through you, Mr Deputy-Speaker, the Attorney General, as usual, is breaching standing orders. He has utter contempt for the institution of which he is a member. That is evidenced by the fact that he misled the House. When he addressed the House a moment ago in support of the motion he referred to the attitude of victims and the alleged support of victims organisations for this bill.

Several weeks ago he told the House that Martha Jabour supported the bill. She does not. He misled the House. She said she was very disappointed and sad that the bill had passed through the lower House in its current form after very little consultation or consideration given to the more than 3,000 families that she supports. She not only said that to me but also wrote to the Attorney. The Attorney either is misleading the House or does not read his mail and has an office that is so dysfunctional that staff do not bring to his attention matters that I would have thought are reasonably important to him in the capacity he is purporting to fulfil. You have misled the House. You have betrayed victims. You are frankly an embarrassment to this House.

Mr Greg Smith: Ha, ha, ha.

Mr PAUL LYNCH: And he should get something for that cough.

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

Motion agreed to.

Legislative Council amendment agreed to.

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

CHILD PROTECTION LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (CHILDREN'S GUARDIAN) BILL 2013**Consideration in Detail****Consideration of the Legislative Council amendment.**

Schedule of amendment referred to in message of 29 May 2013

No. 1 Page 8, Schedule 2 [3]. Insert after line 13:

- (j) to encourage organisations to develop their capacity to be safe for children as referred to in section 38 of the *Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012*.

Ms PRU GOWARD (Goulburn—Minister for Family and Community Services, and Minister for Women) [3.22 p.m.]: I move:

That the House agree to the Legislative Council amendment.

The amendment is an acceptable improvement to the bill.

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

Motion agreed to.

Legislative Council amendment agreed to.

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

PROTECTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT OPERATIONS AMENDMENT (ILLEGAL WASTE DISPOSAL) BILL 2013

Bill introduced on motion by Ms Robyn Parker, read a first time and printed.

Second Reading

Ms ROBYN PARKER (Maitland—Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) [3.24 p.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I am pleased to introduce the Protection of the Environment Operations Amendment (Illegal Waste Disposal) Bill 2013. The bill makes it clear that this Government will not tolerate serial waste dumpers—those who flout the laws that are there to protect the health of our communities and the health of our environment. I know that the community is with the Government on these changes. We are all sick and tired of people who take the law into their own hands, flout the law, and illegally dump. Illegal dumping is a despicable criminal act. The Government is taking action to ensure that those people's illegal actions are dealt with by application of the full force of the law.

The bill provides additional powers to the Environment Protection Authority [EPA]. Under our Government the Environment Protection Authority has been strengthened, and this bill will confer further powers on the authority. The bill will increase sentencing and penalty provisions to enable courts to crack down on illegal waste dumpers and break the business model of organised illegal waste activities. For the information of people who adopt as a business practice doing the wrong thing I point out that there are plenty of people in the waste disposal industry who are capable of running a business within the law and that they are doing so quite successfully. It is a shame for those participants in the industry to see rogue operators who continue to do the wrong thing. However, the illegal dumping of waste is proliferating. The Government intends to stop it, and that is the purpose of the bill. The bill is all about breaking the business model of organised criminal groups who think that they can get away with illegal waste disposal.

The Government estimates that each year \$100 million is lost to the New South Wales Government from incidents causing significant and long-lasting environmental harm, associated clean-up costs and unpaid waste levies. There is a strong expectation from the community that companies and individuals that are polluting

the environment and placing human health at risk as a result of those actions should face heavy penalties. They have been getting away with illegal waste dumping because the fines and penalties for environmental crimes, which we inherited from the previous Government and were imposed by the courts, have been low enough to be regarded by unscrupulous operators as simply a cost of doing business. The cost of fines and penalties was factored into their business model. It has been a case of paying the fine and carrying on with whatever they were doing.

Illegal waste dumpers sometimes choose a site that is a vacant block in a residential area, and communities suffer the consequences. Not all illegal waste comprises asbestos, but asbestos is a large part of it. Illegal waste also comprises mattresses, tyres, building waste and a whole range of things. The communities on the fringes of rural lots often suffer more than others. However, it is not only rural communities that are adversely affected by illegal waste dumping. To put the scale of illegal waste dumping into perspective, I remind the House that during the stint of the member for Blacktown as environment Minister—brief as it was; only 82 days, during which he gave us the Solar Bonus Scheme—he presided over 58 reported incidents of illegal dumping, which equates to well over one incident every second day. As we all know, the member for Blacktown did nothing about it. Most of us agree that, no matter how small the scale of illegal dumping is, under the current system it continues to be a lucrative business. The Government is closing that opportunity.

Recently some particularly abhorrent examples showed that some waste operators have no regard for the wellbeing of the environment or the community. The examples include emptying truckloads of asbestos outside preschools and flouting court orders to stop illegally dumping waste on innocent people's private property. Prior to the introduction of this bill some waste operators were serial illegal waste dumpers and they did not face a custodial sentence for their crimes. However, the issues are not limited to a couple of individual rogue operators. Over the past 12 months the Environment Protection Authority conducted the largest covert intelligence operation in the organisation's history. We have been on the case for a while, uncovering organised illegal dumping and waste levy fraud, and more information will be coming forward on what is systemic in some parts of the industry.

The current options available to the courts to penalise both individuals and businesses that break the law do not outweigh the profits that can be made from these unlawful waste-related actions. As the Minister for the Environment and a member of the New South Wales community I find this unacceptable. I have visited sites across New South Wales where rubbish has been trucked and dumped, left for councils and government to clean up and communities to bear the eyesore, not to mention any associated health risks. A site that becomes an illegal dumping site is often used by a number of operators or individuals. By introducing this bill the Government will ensure that sufficient penalties are in place to deter environmental criminals, and courts are empowered to punish them appropriately.

The bill includes five significant reforms that crack down on illegal dumping and waste activities and strengthen the penalties available to address and deter serious and repeated environmental crimes. These are: introducing a new penalty of imprisonment available to the courts to punish repeated waste-related strict liability offences; providing the Environment Protection Authority with powers to seize vehicles for repeated waste-related offences and allowing forfeiture of the vehicles on conviction of an offence; introducing a new offence that includes an imprisonment penalty for fraudulently providing false or misleading information in relation to waste; restructuring the waste levy to remove the incentive for illegal waste disposal; and to ensure an even playing field is evident across the waste industry ensuring that a monetary benefits calculation model can be prescribed by regulation for use by the courts.

The bill includes a new offence for committing a repeated waste-related offence within a period of five years that may be prosecuted in the Land and Environment Court. Upon conviction of the offender the court may sentence the offender to a term of imprisonment. This will act as a strong deterrent to those offenders who feel that the current fines are too small to warrant changing their unlawful behaviour. This important amendment will apply to specific waste offences regardless of whether that waste is disposed of to land, water or to an unlicensed industrial premises. Recalcitrant illegal waste operators will be put on notice that waterways and land in New South Wales are not dumping grounds. The Government will review the effectiveness of this offence within three years to make sure that what we think will happen does happen. The waste levy is the Government's key economic instrument to drive waste avoidance and recycling in New South Wales. It has traditionally been applied at the landfill gate to drive increased waste avoidance and the recovery, reuse and recycling of materials.

The idea with the waste levy is that it is a marketplace mechanism to drive down what goes to landfill and increase recycling. The more recycling there is the less that goes into landfill. We know from Environment

Protection Authority intelligence that illegal waste activity is occurring at waste storage, recycling and transfer facilities. Waste transported from these facilities for disposal is not showing up at lawful landfills and is likely to have been illegally disposed of on private property, in State forests and national parks. Other unscrupulous operators have been stockpiling large volumes of waste at recycling yards in the name of recycling, but these waste piles are never processed. The community wears the risk for the eventual clean-up of these alleged recycling sites. They are eyesores, the odour is quite significant sometimes, and if a rogue waste operator walks away from these stockpiles the community will have to pay for them to be disposed of appropriately.

To break the business model of these illegal waste operators it is proposed to apply the waste levy whenever waste is received at all licensed waste facilities, not just landfills. A waste levy rebate or reimbursement will then be available where waste is sent off-site for recycling. By requiring the levy to be paid upfront at all facilities we are removing the incentive for unscrupulous operators to transport waste long distances to dump their waste at unlicensed sites to avoid paying the levy. It removes the incentive for unscrupulous operators who run illegal waste dumping or dubious stockpiling operations to use waste storage, recycling and transfer facilities. This scheme is a clear message to those operators. It will have no effect on those legitimate recycling businesses that are currently paying the levy on waste going to landfill. Any additional levy they pay in the short term will be returned to them once they apply for a rebate. This new system will provide an even regulatory and financial playing field for the lawful operators and expose the illegal operators.

Certain waste facilities are currently exempted from the waste levy under the Act. As part of implementing the new approach the bill will repeal the current exemptions so that all waste facilities will be subject to the levy. We hope this new approach will break the business model of shonky operators. That is certainly the aim. The bill also includes provisions for the Environment Protection Authority to seize vehicles used to commit repeat waste offences and for the court to be able to order those vehicles to be forfeited if the offender is found guilty. This is an important amendment that will act as a circuit breaker for repeat offenders who would otherwise continue to break the law while they have access to their vehicle.

Recent Environment Protection Authority investigations have also uncovered sophisticated waste levy evasion schemes. In a recent example the authority uncovered a levy evasion scheme between a landfill and recycler which amounted to \$3 million in unpaid waste levies. These operators are not only defrauding the New South Wales Government of millions of dollars, but they are also distorting the waste market and undermining legitimate waste and recycling businesses. These are serious crimes. While there is already a tier two, strict liability offence for providing false or misleading information about waste, this bill includes a new offence for knowingly supplying false and misleading information.

This new offence carries significant fines of \$500,000 for corporate offenders and \$240,000 for individual offenders. It also allows the court to sentence individual offenders to up to 18 months imprisonment instead of or in addition to a fine. This will ensure that the penalties for waste levy evasion schemes are consistent with penalties in other legislation for fraudulent activities. Of course, it is for the courts to impose the fine, and we certainly hope they do. A court can currently order a person convicted of an offence against the Protection of the Environment Operations Act to pay an additional financial penalty equal to the monetary benefit they gained from committing the crime. The monetary benefit could include, for example, avoided waste disposal costs and additional market share or business acquired by undercutting legitimate waste operators.

The bill will enable the regulations to prescribe a protocol that can be applied by the courts to consistently and transparently calculate the size of the monetary benefit. The use of an agreed or prescribed calculation model will allow the courts to readily and consistently calculate the size of the monetary benefit penalty and ensure that the offender does not benefit from the offence. It will also act as a greater deterrent to all offenders. The only people who would oppose this bill are those rogue operators who undercut the market, pollute our environment and put public health at risk. Those dodgy dumpers should consider themselves on notice. As Tony Khoury from the Waste Contractors and Recyclers' Association of NSW told 2GB this morning:

The system is in need of reform and the Government has recognised that with the announcement of the last 24 hours ... these changes send a strong message to a rogue operator he could find himself facing a jail term in the future.

Indeed, the intention of this bill is to create a meaningful deterrent to the act of illegal dumping. It is an important enhancement of the range of powers available to the Environment Protection Authority and the courts to crack down on illegal waste operations and environmental criminals. In an industry where the monetary

incentive to break the law often outweighs the existing penalties, this bill provides a range of strengthened and expanded penalties and sentencing options to seriously deter unscrupulous operators from continuing to commit illegal waste activities. I commend the bill to the House.

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

**LAW ENFORCEMENT AND NATIONAL SECURITY (ASSUMED IDENTITIES) AMENDMENT
BILL 2013**

Second Reading

Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed—Parliamentary Secretary) [3.39 p.m.], on behalf of Mr Greg Smith:
I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I am pleased to introduce the Law Enforcement and National Security (Assumed Identities) Amendment Bill 2013. This bill was introduced in the other place by the Hon. Michael Gallacher, the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, and introduced in this place by the Attorney General, the Hon. Greg Smith. The bill implements recommendations of the Statutory Review of the Law Enforcement and National Security (Assumed Identities) Act 2010 and makes minor amendments to that Act. The Act commenced on 29 September 2010 to facilitate cross-border recognition of assumed identities. The Act was based on model laws endorsed by the then Standing Committee of Attorneys-General in 2004, with provision to allow individual jurisdictions to make non-critical variations. An assumed identity is a false identity used by an officer or other person for a period of time to investigate an offence, gather intelligence in relation to criminal activity or administer witness protection programs.

The Act permits chief officers of authorised law enforcement agencies to approve the acquisition and use of documents in assumed names. The Act requires the Minister for Police to undertake a review of the Act as soon as possible after 12 months from the commencement of the Act, and to table a report on the review within three months of that date. A delay in tabling the report was due to the time taken to complete consultation with stakeholders, including the Australian Security and Intelligence Organisation [ASIO], which proposed amendments to the Act independently of the review. The Act is an important piece of legislation—we want to get these amendments right. The review found that the policy objectives of the Act remain valid and no substantive amendments are required. However, four minor amendments were recommended. I refer to the bill's provisions.

As the Commonwealth does not administer a register of births, deaths and marriages, Commonwealth agencies rely on mutual recognition provisions of State and Territory assumed identities laws to obtain evidence to support their assumed identity authorities. Under section 11 of the Act, the chief officer of a law enforcement agency under a corresponding law can apply for an order to require the Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages to make or cancel an entry of an assumed identity in the NSW Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages. This enables, for instance, the NSW Police Force to request a driver licence registry in another jurisdiction to issue a driver licence in the assumed name of an undercover officer from the NSW Police Force. The Australian Security and Intelligence Organisation advised that under the Act it may not be able to rely on its Commonwealth assumed identity authorities to apply for an entry in the NSW Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages as the Australian Security and Intelligence Organisation is defined as an intelligence agency and not a law enforcement agency under the Commonwealth Crimes Act 1914.

Consequently, Commonwealth intelligence agencies would generally need to obtain an assumed identity authority under both the New South Wales Act and the Commonwealth Act in order to support their assumed identities. This duplication is an impediment to both cross-border recognition of assumed identities and reducing red tape. The amendment to section 11 will address this by ensuring that law enforcement agencies and intelligence agencies, as defined under corresponding laws such as the Commonwealth Crimes Act 1914, can apply to an eligible judge for an entry in the NSW Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages. Sections 11 (3) and 14 (3) of the Act provide that applications to make or cancel entries in the NSW Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages must be heard in a closed court. These provisions were introduced to the Act as part of the model laws process in recognition that details regarding assumed identities need to be highly confidential for the safety of those adopting assumed identities and for the success of the operation being undertaken.

A consequence of these amendments appears to be that where some applications were previously heard in chambers, they now are being heard in a closed court with the requirement to lodge affidavits with the Supreme Court Registry and matters being listed on the Supreme Court schedule. The Australian Security and Intelligence Organisation considers that hearing applications in chambers rather than in a closed court, without the need for listing in the Supreme Court registry or lodging affidavits with the registry, would better protect the confidentiality of applications. Obviously, when dealing with organised crime, cybercrime and street crime the ideal approach is to maintain high confidentiality of those assuming names. I support the highly trained police officers, men and women, who work in this environment. They put their lives at risk, and sometimes their family's lives also, for the betterment of the local community. Overall, we owe them a great deal of gratitude for their dedication, diligence and integrity in performing these tasks. The bill will amend sections 11 (3) and 14 (3) to provide for applications to be heard in judges' chambers.

Hearing applications in chambers will mean that applications will not be listed in the Supreme Court's daily schedule. The Supreme Court of New South Wales will institute procedures that will guarantee the confidentiality and security of affidavits made in support of such applications, if any. The Supreme Court has advised that such affidavits could be dealt with similarly to affidavits made in support of applications for surveillance device warrants. The third amendment concerns delegations of chief officers of law enforcement agencies. Under section 39 of the Act, a chief officer may delegate to a senior officer of a law enforcement agency any of the chief officer's functions under the Act. No more than four delegations per law enforcement agency may be in force at any one time, which is in keeping with the model laws on assumed identities.

Under section 39 (4) (a) of the Act a senior police officer means an assistant commissioner or a deputy commissioner. At present, the commissioner has delegated his functions to officers attached to the specialist operations arm only of police. There is a growing demand for assumed identities within the field operations arm of police to gather intelligence and investigate cybercrime. Cybercrime is increasing at a rapid rate. Local area commands, part of field operations, are responsible for investigating much of the criminal activity taking place on the internet, including through social media sites such as Facebook.

I think it would be remiss of me at this point not to congratulate the Minister for Police and Emergency Services on his Eyewatch initiatives on Facebook, which provides community-oriented information on crime. Particularly in regional areas, Eyewatch has been accepted by the wider community. The Deputy Speaker and I both have the pleasure of serving on the Rural Crime Advisory Council. Eyewatch is of great assistance to the Police Force today. Consequently, the bill will increase the number of delegations a law enforcement agency may have in force from four to five. Finally, the bill proposes amending sections 39 (4) (c) and (g) of the Act to reflect organisational changes of the NSW Crime Commission and the Australian Crime Commission, which are authorised law enforcement agencies under the Act.

In many electorates, including the electorate of the recently appointed member for the Northern Tablelands and the members for the electorates of Monaro, Murray-Darling and Albury, there are cross-border issues. This Act will improve cross-border connections in order to simplify the movement of those officers during joint operations with Queensland and the Australian Capital Territory. Anything that can be done to reduce red tape and to improve the tools used by police to ensure they can carry out the difficult work they do is worthwhile. Working under assumed identities places them at risk on a daily basis. This will assist the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation and other State agencies in relation to witness protection programs.

I take my hat off to people who put their own lives and the lives of their families at risk. Anything that can be done should be done to ensure their identities are protected, but at the same time still operating under the broad umbrella of the Supreme Court, a transparent and well-respected institution. These are straightforward amendments that serve a good purpose. They will strengthen the cross-border recognition of assumed identities and help our law enforcement agencies investigate and prevent crime. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr NATHAN REES (Toongabbie) [3.53 p.m.]: I lead the debate for the Opposition on the Law Enforcement and National Security (Assumed Identities) Amendment Bill 2013. The bill will not be opposed. It is a sensible bill. The Opposition has been through it with a fine tooth comb. The first object of the bill is:

- (a) to require that applications for orders under the principal Act to make or cancel entries for assumed identities in the Births, Deaths and Marriages Register be heard in chambers,

The reasons for that are straightforward. In the event that an undercover officer in any jurisdiction needs an assumed identity for the purposes of carrying out undercover or covert operations it is important that the

application and granting of the identity be kept confidential. That application being heard in chambers goes as far as it possibly can towards avoiding the risk of identification by those who the officer is seeking to arrest presumably. The second object of the bill is:

- (b) to make it clear that the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation and the Australian Secret Intelligence Service may apply for orders under the principal Act to have entries for assumed identities made in the Births, Deaths and Marriages Register,

That clarifies and codifies an area of potential legal uncertainty were it to be subject to challenge. The member for Tweed has indicated that the bill increases from four to five the number of delegations of a chief officer's functions under the principal Act that may be in force at any one time. The bill updates references to certain offices, the holders of which may be delegated a chief officer's functions under the principal Act. The changes arise from efforts to improve and harmonise Commonwealth law and arise out of a review of the Federal statute. Parliament is aware that assumed identities are taken for a range of proactive or reactive purposes and the intention to hear those applications in chambers makes perfect sense. Having hearings in open court holds the real possibility of undermining the effectiveness of the newly assumed identity. The schedule states:

Schedule 1 [2] makes it clear that the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation and the Australian Secret Intelligence Service may apply for orders under the principal Act to have entries for assumed identities made in the Births, Deaths and Marriages Register, and such entries cancelled, even though they are defined as an "intelligence agency" (rather than a "law enforcement agency") under the corresponding law of the Commonwealth.

This codifies that they are one and the same for the purposes of application of the provisions in the bill. The third object increases from four to five the number of delegations and that is largely administrative and of no great consequence. The fourth object of the bill updates references to "officer" in relation to the Crime Commission in New South Wales and its Federal counterpart, the Australian Crime Commission, respectively:

... the holders of which may be delegated the functions under the principal Act of the chief officer of the agency to which the office relates.

Again that is largely an administrative and procedural simplification. The Opposition will not oppose the bill.

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON (Camden) [3.56 p.m.]: I speak on the Law Enforcement and National Security (Assumed Identities) Amendment Bill 2013. As a result of the report on the statutory review of the Law Enforcement and National Security (Assumed Identities) Act 2010 these recommendations will be implemented making minor amendments. After the endorsement of the Standing Committee of the Attorneys-General in 2004, the Act commenced on 29 September 2010 facilitating cross-border recognition of assumed identities and allowing individual jurisdictions to make non-critical variations.

An assumed identity is a false identity used by an officer or other person for a period of time to investigate an offence, gather intelligence in relation to criminal activity or administer witness protection programs. Under the Act, chief officers of authorised enforcement agencies are permitted to approve the acquisition and use of documents in assumed names. The Minister for Police is required to undertake a review of the Act as soon as possible after 12 months from commencement of the Act and table a report on the review within three months of that date.

Time was taken to complete consultation with stakeholders who proposed amendments independently of the review, therefore resulting in a delay in the review. As the Act is an important piece of legislation, getting these amendments right was imperative. Four minor amendments were recommended. Commonwealth agencies rely on mutual recognition provisions of State and Territory assumed identities laws to obtain evidence to support their assumed identity authorities, as only States and Territories administer a register of births, deaths and marriage. To make or cancel an entry of an assumed identity in the NSW Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages, chief officers of a law enforcement agency can apply for an order.

Commonwealth intelligence agencies would generally need to obtain both an assumed identity authority under the New South Wales Act and the Commonwealth Act in order to support their assumed identities. This duplication is an impediment to both cross-border recognition of assumed identities and reducing red tape. Amendments to the Act will address this by ensuring that law enforcement and intelligence agencies can apply to an eligible judge for an entry in the NSW Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages and this must be heard in a closed court, keeping identities highly confidential. A consequence of these amendments appears to be that where some applications were previously being heard in chambers they are now being heard in a closed court with the requirement to lodge affidavits with the Supreme Court Registry and matters being listed

on the Supreme Court schedule. It was considered that hearing applications in chambers rather than in a closed court without the need for listing in the Supreme Court Registry or the lodging of affidavits with the registry would better protect the confidentiality of applications.

The Australian Security and Intelligence Organisation considered that hearing applications in chambers rather than in a closed court without the need for listing in the Supreme Court Registry or the lodging of affidavits with the registry would better protect the confidentiality of applications. Amendments to the bill will provide for applications to be heard in judges' chambers. Hearing applications in chambers will mean that applications will not be listed in the Supreme Court daily schedule. The Supreme Court of New South Wales will institute procedures that will guarantee the confidentiality and security of affidavits that are made in support of such applications, if any. The Supreme Court has advised that such affidavits could be dealt with in a similar way to affidavits made in support of applications for surveillance device warrants.

A further amendment will enable a chief officer to delegate to a senior officer of a law enforcement agency any of the chief officer's functions under the Act. No more than four delegations per law enforcement agency may be in force at any one time. Under the Act a "senior officer in police" means an assistant commissioner or a deputy commissioner. There is a growing demand for the use of assumed identities to gather intelligence and investigate cybercrime by a broader range of units within all law enforcement agencies authorised under the Act.

Unfortunately, cybercrime is increasing at a rapid rate. The spread of technology-based crimes requires legislation to keep pace and agencies to have the capacity to respond at hand. This bill will increase the number of delegations a law enforcement agency may have in force from four to five even though a request for four to six was requested. After consultation with the New South Wales Police Force a compromise will see the number of delegations increased to five. Participating law enforcement agencies will be required to conduct regular reviews of authorities granted to determine whether the use of the assumed identities is still necessary.

Audit and reporting requirements under the Act are required, with agencies needing to report on the number of assumed identities that were granted or revoked, a description of activities undertaken by officers who were granted an assumed identity, and information on any fraudulent or unlawful activity. This will not change. The Act will reflect organisational changes of the New South Wales Crime Commission and Australian Crime Commission, which are authorised law enforcement agencies under the Act. These are straightforward amendments that serve a good purpose in strengthening the cross-border recognition of assumed identities and help our law enforcement agencies investigate and prevent crime. As the member for Toongabbie and Opposition police spokesman stated, this is an extremely well thought out, sensible bill with the full blessing of all members of the House. We take that commendation on board and thank the Opposition for its support. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr KEVIN CONOLLY (Riverstone) [4.03 p.m.]: I make a brief contribution in support of the Law Enforcement and National Security (Assumed Identities) Amendment Bill 2013. I welcome the fact that the Opposition has indicated that it will not oppose this sensible bill. It is in the interests of all members to stand united behind our law enforcement authorities—the police, the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation [ASIO] and the Australian Secret Intelligence Service [ASIS]—in their endeavours to grapple with the ongoing threat of organised crime to our society. This particular menace in our community is a difficult one to confront and at times it requires unorthodox methods. Clearly, officers working under an assumed identity is one of the measures necessary to protect the community from this threat.

This bill implements recommendations from the report on the Statutory Review of the Law Enforcement and National Security (Assumed Identities) Act 2010. The original Act required a review at periodic intervals to ensure that it is achieving its objectives and to remove any problems that may have emerged. The bill has four objectives. The first is to require that applications for orders under the Act to make or cancel entries for assumed identities in the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages be heard in the chamber of the judge authorised under the Act to hear such applications and not in open court. That requirement is for the simple and obvious reason we need to protect the confidentiality of these assumed identities if these officers who put themselves at risk in the course of our protection are to be protected from the ramifications of their operations.

The second objective is to make it clear that the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation and the Australian Secret Intelligence Service are included in the definition of those agencies under the Act which can have entries or assumed identities made in the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages and to have such entries

later cancelled. That is simply to clarify that those agencies are included in this legislation and have that capability. The third objective is to increase the number of delegations that may be in force at any one time from four to five of a chief officer's functions under the Act. The working experience of this legislation has shown that that will increase the operational capability of these agencies, given that only specific people can be delegated with this kind of authority and from time to time not all of them may be available. That practicality will allow police and security services to carry out the function we are delegating to them.

The final objective is to update references to certain offices, namely, the New South Wales Crime Commission and the Australian Crime Commission, the holders of which may be delegated a chief officer's function under the Act. These are fairly confined, practical and sensible amendments to improve the workings of an Act that is in place to protect our community. It is one tool in the toolbox of our law enforcement agencies to protect our community from organised crime. I, too, join with the previous speakers in commending the courage of the officers who volunteer for this kind of role and put themselves at significant personal risk to prevent crime, apprehend offenders and protect our community. Those officers deserve our support and this is one practical way in which we can provide them with some support. I am pleased that the House will be united in support of the bill.

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT (Baulkham Hills) [4.08 p.m.]: I make a brief contribution on the Law Enforcement and National Security (Assumed Identities) Amendment Bill 2013. As the House is already aware, this bill is a result of a far-reaching review of the Law Enforcement and National Security (Assumed Identities) Act 2010. I commend the Minister in the other place, the Hon. Michael Gallacher, for this timely bill and the necessary reforms that it represents. I note also that the majority of members in this House have agreed to pass this bill with due support. The bill is good reform and reduces a large amount of red tape surrounding the Act. However, this modest suite of reforms indicates that the current arrangements are working well and merely requires that the system be updated based on the model laws of the Standing Committee on Attorneys-General in 2004. The system at present does not allow for cross-border recognition of assumed identities but that will change under this bill. The review concluded that overall the Act is satisfactory in its service to counterterrorism and, indeed, the entire State of New South Wales and its public.

The review acknowledged that cross-border assumed identities is a matter that needs to be addressed. Assumed identities are used for physical and electronic surveillance, financial administration, undercover duties and witness protection. It is good to note that no acts of fraud or unlawful activity were identified in the report. Assumed identities are an important part of surveillance and protection of the public. Assumed identity applications are becoming increasingly frequent. In the last reporting year, the NSW Police Force established 194 assumed identities and the Independent Commission Against Corruption used three. That is a significant increase on previous occasions. Shockingly, Commonwealth agencies have not been able to access the Register of Births, Deaths and Marriages to establish their assumed identities. I am sure all members understand that in this age of cybercrime and counterterrorism, infiltration of certain unsavoury and threatening organisations is an important part of our security and intelligence network. This bill makes it easier for Commonwealth agencies to create their assumed identities, which is very difficult to do at the moment.

Currently, only State-based law enforcement agencies have access to such provisions, and that is obviously inadequate. It is astounding that organisations such as ASIO and the Australian Secret Intelligence Service currently have to have the support of a State-based organisation, such as the NSW Police Force, in order to establish necessary assumed identities. Another core component of these reforms that has been part of a consultation process involving other Australian jurisdictions is the general increase in cooperation between Australian jurisdictions regarding assumed identities. This bill will assist our States and Territories to work together to help each other pursue criminals and terrorists, no matter where they hide. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr RYAN PARK (Keira) [4.11 p.m.]: I join with my colleagues on both sides of the House in supporting the Law Enforcement and National Security (Assumed Identities) Bill 2013. This is an important bill that will hopefully reduce red tape for law enforcement officers but will also enable some of the key Commonwealth intelligence organisations to access important information as a part of undertaking an assumed identity. I have seen firsthand some of the fantastic work that these officers do in the NSW Police Force, in the New South Wales Crime Commission and in Independent Commission Against Corruption in confronting very dangerous situations each and every day and some of the most sophisticated organised crime groups in the world. These officers go out of their way to protect others. Most of their work is carried out in very secretive environments. As lawmakers, we never get an opportunity to see most of their work—and that is probably a good thing because we are not exposed to the consequences if things go wrong.

But we should always support their ability, through assumed identities, to reduce crime, to detect crime, to prevent crime, to deal with crime and to bring the perpetrators before the courts. This side of the House will continue to support, as best we can, the men and women who work in these very dangerous and challenging occupations. They are often not singled out for praise and they are often not publicly recognised because their work is so secretive. I take this opportunity to publicly say thank you to the men and women who do these very difficult jobs in a range of crime-fighting organisations, both at a Federal and a State level. I thank them for keeping our community safe and I thank them for their expertise and their dedication. I want them to know that, above all, this place—the oldest Parliament in the country—will continue to support any efforts, any initiatives and any legislation they or their colleagues feel is important to reduce crime in New South Wales and across our borders.

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth) [4.13 p.m.]: I support the Law Enforcement and National Security (Assumed Identities) Bill 2013. The term "assumed identities" conjures up images of undercover police gathering intelligence on organised crime syndicates, such as those involved in drug trafficking and child pornography. As my colleagues in the other place have stated, that is certainly one of the uses of assumed identities. In New South Wales assumed identities are generally granted to law enforcement officers and, on occasion, to civilian staff. In most cases an assumed identity is required when officers must have direct contact with suspects, or to enable covert investigations into corrupt police or public officials. In New South Wales, authorised law enforcement agencies include the NSW Police Force, the New South Wales Crime Commission, the Independent Commission Against Corruption, the Police Integrity Commission and Corrective Services NSW.

As a member of the committee that oversights some of those law enforcement agencies, I recognise and acknowledge all too well the work that these officers do; it is dangerous work on a daily basis and I think we need to drill down behind the names and the titles of the law enforcement agencies, such as those I just listed, and think about the people who make up those law enforcement agencies and the work they do. They are the mums and dads of our communities, and they do an outstanding job. They have children and they have mortgages; they are in our communities. They are members of sporting organisations and community groups. They support the communities they live in and make a contribution every day of the week, yet they do a very, very special job indeed. When they walk out the door and say goodbye to their loved ones to go to their workplace, they do not know what they are going to find; they do not know what problems they may encounter—what appears to be a routine job could turn horribly wrong in an instant.

We need to provide those men and women who enforce the law with every resource possible to keep them safe in the first instance and to ensure that they have the tools, the backup and the environment in which to do their job to the best of their ability. Division 1 of part 6 of the Act contains sanctions to ensure against the misuse of an assumed identity. For example, an authorised person is guilty of an offence, punishable by a maximum penalty of two years imprisonment, if the person's acquisition or use of an assumed identity is not in the course of duty or is not in accordance with an authorisation condition. Examples of misuse of an assumed identity include obtaining a financial advantage by deception, invasion of fines and credit card fraud.

The Act also requires that a senior law enforcement officer supervise the acquisition or use of the assumed identity where an authority is granted to a civilian. Civilians are only granted authorities where it will be impossible or impractical in the circumstances for a law enforcement officer to acquire or use the assumed identity for the purpose sought. Sometimes when it is necessary to arrest those who have broken the law, engaged in criminal activity or sought to be involved in criminal activity in a range of areas—whether it be alcohol-related crime, drugs or illegally imported guns—the best-placed law enforcement officers are those who are not wearing a uniform, who are assuming an identity that will enable them to bust open a drug ring, bust open a gun cartel or bust open some form of criminal activity that otherwise would not be discovered. In those cases, a person in blue approaching or moving in that environment would have less opportunity to bring down the full force of the law.

Officers who are able to assume a false identity are sometimes the best-placed officers to crack a crime ring and to bring to justice those who are breaking the law. We need to back up those officers with every resource possible to keep them safe in their job. The Law Enforcement and National Security (Assumed Identities) Amendment Bill 2013 has bipartisan support. I listened intently to the contribution of the member for Keira, who thanked the police and law enforcement agencies for the job they do. I join with him, as I am sure do members of the community. When they are running in, most others are running out. We need them and we thank them for the work they do. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla) [4.20 p.m.]: I make a brief contribution to debate on the Law Enforcement and National Security (Assumed Identities) Amendment Bill 2013. On 20 September 2010 the Law Enforcement and National Security (Assumed Identities) Act commenced to facilitate cross-border recognition of assumed identities. In 2004 the then Standing Committee of Attorneys-General endorsed model laws, and the 2010 Act was based on those model laws. An assumed identity is a false identity used by an officer or other person for a period of time to investigate an offence, gather intelligence in relation to criminal activity or administer witness protection programs.

The Act allows chief officers of authorised law enforcement agencies to approve the acquisition and use of documents in assumed names. The Act has a statutory requirement that the Minister for Police and Emergency Services undertake a review. There has been a delay in completing that review because of the need to consult various stakeholders, including ASIO. The bill makes four minor amendments that were recommended as a result of that review, which found that the policy objectives of the Act were still valid and no substantive amendment to the Act was required.

The bill amends the Law Enforcement and National Security (Assumed Identities) Act 2010 in four minor ways: first, to require that applications for orders under the principal Act to make or cancel entities for assumed identities in the Births, Deaths and Marriages Register be heard in chambers; secondly, to make it clear that ASIO and the Australian Secret Intelligence Service can apply for orders under the principal Act to have entries for assumed identities made in the Births, Deaths and Marriages Register; thirdly, to increase from four to five the number of delegations of a chief officer's functions under the principal Act that can be enforced at any time; and, finally, to update references to certain officers in relation to the New South Wales Crime Commission and the Australian Crime Commission respectively, the holders of which may be delegated a chief officer's functions under the principal Act.

As I said, the bill makes a number of minor amendments. In particular, because the Commonwealth does not administer a births, deaths and marriages register, it is necessary for Commonwealth agencies to rely on mutual recognition provisions of State and Territory laws to obtain evidence to support their assumed identity authorities. At the moment section 11 of the New South Wales Act provides that the chief officer of a law enforcement agency under a corresponding law can apply for an order to require the Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages to make or cancel an entry or an assumed identity in the New South Wales register. For example, that enables the NSW Police Force to request the equivalent of Roads and Maritime Services in another jurisdiction to issue a drivers licence in the assumed name of an undercover officer from the NSW Police Force.

The advice from ASIO is that it may not be able to rely on its Commonwealth assumed identity authorities to apply for an entry in the New South Wales register under the Act because ASIO is defined as an intelligence agency and not a law enforcement agency under the Commonwealth Crimes Act 1914. Therefore, there would generally be a need for Commonwealth intelligence agencies to obtain both an assumed identity authority under the New South Wales Act and the Commonwealth Act in order to support their assumed identities. That duplication impedes cross-border recognition of assumed identities. That will be addressed by the amendment to section 11 to ensure that law enforcement and intelligence agencies as defined under corresponding laws such as the Commonwealth Crimes Act 1914 can apply to an eligible judge for an entry in the New South Wales Register of Births, Deaths and Marriages. These amendments will facilitate the use of assumed identities. Previous speakers have highlighted the importance of that in law enforcement. This legislation is the result of a review that found that the principal Act still has a valid policy purpose. I commend the bill to the House.

Debated adjourned on motion by Mr Paul Lynch and set down as an order of the day for a later hour.

BUDGET ESTIMATES AND RELATED PAPERS

Financial Year 2012-13

Debate resumed from 21 November 2012.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD (Wakehurst—Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Infrastructure NSW) [4.25 p.m.]: I propose that the House now consider the question that this House take note of the budget estimates and related papers for the financial year 2012-13. Over some months

members have had the opportunity to speak to the take-note debate. As the Treasurer will be handing down the budget on 18 June 2013, it is appropriate that the debate relating to the 2012-13 financial year be brought to its conclusion. I formally ask that the question be now put: That this House take note of the Budget Estimates and related papers for the financial year 2012-13.

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

Motion agreed to.

COMMUNITY RECOGNITION STATEMENTS

SPECIAL OLYMPIAN TEILA BULMER

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) [4.27 p.m.]: I inform the House that Teila Bulmer of Blueys Beach has been selected to swim for Australia in the Special Olympics Asia-Pacific Games in December. Teila will compete against swimmers from more than 30 countries in the 50 metres and 100 metres freestyle, 50 metres and 100 metres breaststroke, and 150-metre individual medley. Teila's selection comes as a result of years of consistent performances and gold medals at State and regional levels. This includes a five-medal haul at the recent Special Olympics Centenary Championships in Canberra. Now 24, Teila began swimming at the age of six and apart from a couple of breaks she has been swimming ever since.

AUSTRALIA'S BIGGEST MORNING TEA

Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK (South Coast—The Speaker) [4.28 p.m.]: On 23 May members of the New South Wales Parliament joined with ambassadors and members of the New South Wales Cancer Council to raise important funds for cancer research at an Australia's Biggest Morning Tea event held at Parliament House. This year saw the celebration of the twentieth anniversary of Australia's Biggest Morning Tea. Over the past 20 years, events held across Australia have raised over \$110 million to help beat cancer. Attendees on the day included Channel 7 personalities Chris Bath, Sally Bowrey and Jim Wilson, as well as *My Kitchen Rules* contestants Scott and Luke, who judged the celebrity cake decorating contest, which was won by the Premier. The Premier and the Minister for Health, as well as many other members, attended the event. It was a fantastic success, raising an amount of \$1,660.65. I sincerely thank all those involved, particularly the members of the Cancer Council of New South Wales, Carolyn Grenville and Anita Tang, for their assistance.

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT OF THE YEAR MOHAMED EHSAN EBRAHIM

Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend) [4.29 p.m.]: I congratulate Newcastle University medical student Mohamed Ehsan Ebrahim on being named the 2013 New South Wales Higher Education International Student of the Year. This honour recognises Mr Ebrahim's commitment to a range of community causes. Newcastle University Vice-Chancellor Professor Andrew Parfitt points in particular to Mr Ebrahim's promotion of "cross-cultural understanding between Muslims and non-Muslims". I commend Mr Ebrahim for balancing the demands of his medical studies with his community commitments and thank him for his contribution to tolerance at the university and in the greater community.

SYDNEY PRAYER BREAKFAST

Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa) [4.30 p.m.]: Last Friday nearly 800 Christians attended the Sydney Prayer Breakfast at Darling Harbour to pray for the needs and challenges facing our community and the world. The Sydney Prayer Breakfast is an annual prayer gathering of Christians from all denominations who work or live in the Sydney central business district. Mr Tim Morris-Smith, Dr Megan Best, Mr Tom Watson, Mr Leigh Hatcher and Mr Glenn Stevens attended and offered prayers. General David Hurley, AC, DSC, Chief of Defence for our nation, addressed the meeting. He defined the challenges facing the world in modern warfare as "VUCA", which stands for volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity. General Hurley gave a powerful, life-changing personal message of hope. He said that as a believer in Christ Jesus, Jesus exchanges volatility for stability, certainty for uncertainty, simplicity for complexity and clarity for ambiguity. I thank the organising committee members for hosting the breakfast and I encourage the Australian Christian church to continue to shine its light brightly.

LEBANESE COMMUNITY COUNCIL FEAST OF THE RESISTANCE AND LIBERATION

Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool) [4.31 p.m.]: On 24 May the Lebanese Community Council of New South Wales held the Feast of the Resistance and Liberation. The function was addressed by the President of the Lebanese Community Council, Ali Karnib, who is also a councillor on Liverpool City Council. The liberation referred to was the retreat of Israeli military forces from the south of Lebanon in May 2000 following their brutal invasion in 1982. The invasion resulted in a range of atrocities, including the massacres of Chatilla and Sabra Camps which prompted the Kahan inquiry. As was said on the night, liberation from occupation and the desire for self-determination are universal human wishes and, indeed, human rights. They are common to all people at all times. A number of people spoke on the night, including two poets. I congratulate the Lebanese Community Council and Ali Karnib on arranging the function.

IAAF WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP QUALIFIER JARROD GEDDES

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Menai) [4.31 p.m.]: Illawong track sprinter Jarrod Geddes has qualified for the world championships in Moscow after winning selection in the Australian four by 100 metre relay team. This achievement is particularly remarkable given that Jarrod Geddes is only 19 years old. Jarrod has been involved in Little Athletics from the age of 10. Despite running competitively, Jarrod insists he is a normal teenager off the track. Jarrod has the potential to be one of Australia's next big athletic stars and I am excited to see what is in store for his future. I congratulate Jarrod and wish him and his team all the best for the world championships in August. I recently attended the Illawong Little Athletics annual general meeting and I also wish that club all the best.

TRIBUTE TO PAUL "CRACKERS" COLLINS

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) [4.32 p.m.]: Paul "Crackers" Collins has been awarded life membership of the Wingham Rugby League Club Junior League. His award comes after an involvement with the club spanning more than 44 years, from player and coach to respected referee. Paul's passion for the game and the club is clear. He has followed the Wingham Tigers no matter where he has lived and has often travelled from Tamworth to watch the kids play. Paul's father was a life member of the senior league. Paul has inspired his three sons Jared, Beau and Mitch to follow their dad through the ranks, but his daughter, Tahlia, has followed a different path and plays hockey.

WORLD YOUTH NETBALL CHAMPIONSHIPS

Mr RICHARD AMERY (Mount Druitt) [4.32 p.m.]: The World Youth Netball Championships will be held in Glasgow in August. I am pleased to advise the Parliament that two local young women have been named in the Australian side. They are Paige Hadley from St Clair and 18-year-old Kristina Brice from Hassall Grove in the Mount Druitt electorate. In wishing both young women every success for the world championships I also commend them for making the local district proud and greatly encouraging local netballers.

NOWRA-CULBURRA SURF LIFE SAVING CLUB

Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK (South Coast—The Speaker) [4.33 p.m.]: On Saturday May 25 I had the pleasure of attending the Nowra-Culburra Surf Life Saving Club Annual Presentation. The Nowra-Culburra Surf Life Saving Club is a fantastic organisation. It has approximately 310 members and also runs a successful Nippers program that has 197 members. Members of the Nowra-Culburra Surf Life Saving Club patrol Warrain Beach, also known as Main Beach, and do roving patrols on Culburra Beach during peak periods. The local members of the Nowra-Culburra Surf Life Saving Club do an outstanding job patrolling our beaches and are an integral part of the local community. They provide an invaluable contribution to water safety on the South Coast. I congratulate all members who received acknowledgement for their tireless work. I particularly congratulate Mr Roger Mearns, who I think has been club president for 30 years or more, and Mr Peter Adlington, the club secretary, on their extraordinary work for the Nowra-Culburra Surf Life Saving Club and their local community.

HUB SYDNEY

Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) [4.34 p.m.]: I acknowledge the innovative and creative new businesses that are emerging in my electorate and draw the attention of the House to the co-working spaces that are supporting new entrepreneurs. Last week, together with Sydney Lord Mayor Clover Moore, I helped launch

the Sydney Hub. The City of Sydney has provided buildings in Oxford Street and William Street to kick-start new businesses. The Sydney Hub is part of a national network that provides space for people to work in and learn from experts about business coaching, marketing, legal issues and cash flow. They provide a sense of community through a supportive network of other business owners who are also setting up small businesses.

The hub provides a financially viable foundation for new businesses and fosters innovation and collaboration. Australia has the highest density of co-working spaces per capita. An inaugural co-working conference was held in March and an industry body is being developed. I am proud that my electorate hosts this vital support for small business and I acknowledge those energetic and creative people working in the hub. They are the lifeblood of innovation and entrepreneurship in Sydney.

NEW SOUTH WALES COUNTRY SOCCER SQUAD MEMBER TAYLA LLOYD

Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst—Parliamentary Secretary) [4.35 p.m.]: I acknowledge Lithgow City Rangers Soccer Club star Tayla Lloyd, who has created club history as the first female player to be selected in a State side. Tayla was named in the New South Wales Country Under 13 team. She is no stranger to representative football; she has been in representative teams since the age of nine. For the past two years Tayla has been an important member of the Western New South Wales Mariners Football Club that competes in the State Super league and comes up against some of the best female football players in the State. Tayla's selection in the State's country squad sets a new and proud page in the development of football history for the Rangers club and the Lithgow area.

UNIVERSITY OF NEWCASTLE FAST FOOD CHALLENGE

Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend) [4.35 p.m.]: I commend the University of Newcastle nutrition and dietetics team for hosting a Fast Food Challenge to raise awareness of unhealthy eating habits among young women. The challenge pitted teams of staff and students against each other in an attempt to create faster, cheaper and healthier alternatives to fast foods. I acknowledge the importance of the work of nutrition and dietetics students in identifying ways to reduce obesity rates among young Australian women.

ORANGE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL *MIKADO* PRODUCTION

Mr ANDREW GEE (Orange) [4.36 p.m.]: I acknowledge the efforts of the Orange Christian School in its performances of the *Mikado* at the Orange Civic Theatre on 7 and 8 June. Teacher Peter Cooper is director of the show and the stars include year 12 students James Scheepers, Thom Dwyer, Caelan Maxon and Daniel Parton. Melissa Brown is a wonderful principal of the Orange Christian School. She is ably assisted by Business Manager Andrew Kent and the board, which includes Chairman Tim Chapman-Mortimer, Vice-chairman Stephen Pearson and Treasurer Nellie McCarthy.

SANTACRUZAN AND FLORES DE MAYO FESTIVAL

Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool) [4.37 p.m.]: The Santacruzán and Flores De Mayo festivities were held on Sunday May 26 at the parish hall of All Saints Catholic Church, Liverpool. The festival was organised by Fil-Oz Liverpool and Districts Inc. The festival is an annual event and a traditional Filipino celebration. Jhun Salazar was the master of ceremonies. Other speakers included Josephine Maynard, President of Fil-Oz Liverpool and Districts Inc.; Anne Jalandoni-Louis, the Philippine Consul-General; founding president of the Alliance of the Filipino Community Organisation Inc., Dr Cen Amores; and, of course, Father Remy from the All Saints Parish. Chris Hayes, the Federal member for Fowler, was also present. The Filipino community adds to the vibrant cultural diversity of Sydney and especially south-west Sydney. It was a pleasure to be invited to the event and to attend.

OUTSTANDING NURSES AWARDS RECIPIENTS

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby) [4.37 p.m.]: I congratulate three Hornsby Hospital nurses who were recipients of Outstanding Nursing Awards on International Nurses Day. Julie Laherty, a registered midwife, was recognised for her active involvement in the midwifery group practice. She is a well-respected and innovative midwife. She goes above and beyond the call of duty and is a role model to novice midwives. Parisa Nazapour is praised by her colleagues in the medical assessment unit for her clinical practice. She is an advocate for patient and staff and is involved in several initiatives to improve patient experience. Parisa provides clinical leadership and a consistently high level of care to her patients. In the intensive care unit, Sara Treloar is known as a reliable

and proactive nurse and is respected by all the nursing staff at Hornsby Hospital. Sara led the implementation of the REACH Initiative at Hornsby Hospital. I thank all of the hardworking nursing unit managers at Hornsby Hospital and executive staff Kathleen Thorpe and Michael Peregrina. Nurses do remarkable work in our community. They are dedicated, skilful and compassionate and make a wonderful contribution.

CRICKET AUSTRALIA AWARD RECIPIENT JOHN CHALMERS

Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron) [4.38 p.m.]: John Chalmers, Assistant Secretary to the Moore Park South East Cricket Association, has been honoured by Cricket Australia with a 50-year service award for service to cricket. The Moore Park South East Cricket Association is the home of senior cricket in the Moore Park, eastern and south Sydney areas, and includes some 27 clubs. For almost six decades thousands of local players have benefited from John's dedication, expertise and service to the game. John Chalmers has given 59 years of service to cricket, and from 1983 to 1998 he was the secretary of the association. His playing career began in 1954. By the time he retired in 1988 his playing career totalled 34 years. John is a life member of the Moore Park Cricket Association and the Moore Park South East Cricket Association. I join with Cricket Australia in recognising John's outstanding contribution to cricket. On behalf of my community, I thank him most sincerely for his generous and expert service to the game.

ST JOSEPHS CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL STUDENT ACHIEVEMENTS

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Menai) [4.39 p.m.]: After reading the *About Catholic Schools* magazine, I wish to congratulate some past St Joseph's Catholic Primary School students for winning the 2012 Primary Sparkathon title. Now in their respective high schools, Justin Michael, Alex Parinetto, Emmanuel Abosh and Adam Jackson came out best in the annual competition which tests Mathematics, Engineering, English, General Knowledge and Performing Arts. The Sparkathon challenge is organised by Aquinas Catholic College, Menai and Mount St Joseph College, Milperra. The competition enables gifted students in year 6 to collaborate with year 7 students to engage in creative teamwork skills. I wish all these students the best in their journey through High School.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Gareth Ward): Order! With the leave of the House additional community recognition statements may be given.

WESTMEAD CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL BANDAGED BEAR APPEAL

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) [4.40 p.m.]: The Children's Hospital at Westmead, Fairfield Police Local Area Command and Bonnyrigg Sports Club hosted the Bandaged Bear Night Out on Friday 26 April, 2013 at the Bonnyrigg Sports Club. The event was to raise funds for the Children's Hospital at Westmead. The evening's success would not have been possible without the work of Senior Constable Ece Hassan from the Fairfield Local Area Command and Mr Jason Woods from the Bonnyrigg Sports Club. The Serbian Community Dance Group provided the entertainment and a major raffle was held to raise additional funds. Congratulations to local businesses and community leaders who supported the Bandaged Bear Night Out fundraising event.

STAN AND JOAN BLANCH SIXTY-FIFTH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) [4.41 p.m.]: I inform the House that Taree residents Stan and Joan Blanch celebrated their sixty-fifth wedding anniversary on 22 May 2013. Stan and Joan were married in Gloucester in 1948 when they vowed to spend a lifetime together and 65 years later, their love and respect for each other is clear to see. Stan joined the Royal Australian Air Force when he was 18 and he was first stationed in various Australian cities until the end of the war. Stan is the president of the Manning River branch of the Royal Australian Air Force Association and in 2012 he was made a life member of the National RAAF Association. Stan and Joan have two children, Lorraine and Rodney, four grandchildren and five great grandchildren, who affectionately call Joan "Old Nanna".

HELLO SUNDAY MORNING HEALTH PROGRAM

Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) [4.42 p.m.]: I congratulate the Hello Sunday Morning health program, which is an online community aimed at changing Australia's binge drinking culture. Most campaigns try to reduce binge drinking by focusing on the consequences, but Hello Sunday Morning provides positive support to people who want to change their drinking habits through peer support and alternative activities. The over 9,000 users create a network of people sharing their experiences of not drinking and encouraging each other. I understand sign-ups double every six months.

Hello Sunday Morning has achieved amazing results in spreading its message to young people in New South Wales. In a very short time—between 26 January 2013 and 22 March this year—their website had nearly 83,000 visits, with the average user spending more than eight minutes on the website. I congratulate founder, Jamie Moore, on his creative approach to tackling this difficult and important health, mental health and social issue.

TRIBUTE TO STEVE HILL

Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst—Parliamentary Secretary) [4.42 p.m.]: This House congratulates Steve Hill of Bathurst on receiving a NSW Police Certificate of Appreciation at the Chifley Local Area Command's award ceremony. When bushfires swept through the Bathurst region in 2009, Mr Hill, a retired firefighter, saved the life of his friend, Bernie Schulte. Mr Schulte sustained burns to 80 per cent of his body when the bushfire ravaged his property. Mr Hill drove his meat delivery van to the property and when the rescue helicopter was unable to land, he delivered Mr Schulte to safety. This is a remarkable act of bravery and I commend Mr Hill for the actions he took that day. He is truly deserving of this recognition.

CALVARY MATER MERCY HOSPICE VOLUNTEERS

Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend) [4.43 p.m.]: The great spirit of volunteerism and engagement with the community is alive and well in Wallsend. The Calvary Mater Hospital's Mercy Hospice relies on volunteers to create and maintain the peaceful, restive atmosphere essential to the hospice. Recently, long-time volunteer Elaine Hough was celebrated for the work and time she has dedicated to the organisation in almost two decades of tireless, caring service. Congratulations to Mrs Hough and all the volunteers at Mercy Hospice.

COMBINED HIGH SCHOOLS OPEN GIRLS HOCKEY CHAMPIONSHIP

Mr ANDREW GEE (Orange) [4.44 p.m.]: After years of close calls, I wish to draw the attention of the House to the fact that Western took out the New South Wales Combined High Schools Open Girls Hockey Championship, courtesy of a dominant round performance, to secure gold in the final against the South Coast. The effort was marked by a brilliant effort by Orange High School girls Rachel Divali, Madie Smith, Chloe Barrett and Haley Butcherine. Rachel, Madie and Haley earned selection in the NSW Combined High Schools side to take on combined independent schools and Catholic colleges in a tri-series in June. Well done to Western and well done to the hockey stars of Orange High School.

EAST TIMOR INDEPENDENCE ELEVENTH ANNIVERSARY

Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool) [4.44 p.m.]: I draw to the attention of the House a celebration on Sunday 26 May of the 11th anniversary of the restoration of the independence of the Democratic Republic of East Timor. The event was held in my electorate at Hinchinbrook. Present at the event were: the Ambassador, His Excellency Abel Guterres and Consul-General Maria Fonseca. The organisers and their representatives responsible for the event included Lucio Tilman, of the Timorese Australia Council; Nie Feng Leong, from the Timor Chinese Association; Mr Peter Lay, from the Timor Chinese Association and Mr Alito Jong from the Timor Active Seniors Group B. Also present was Carlos Pereira, a long-time activist in the community. Masters of Ceremony were Filomena Whitcher and Eusebio Sam. As someone who has been interested in East Timor since 1975 and who has regularly attended East Timor community events for well over 20 years, it is a delight to be able to attend events celebrating Timor Leste's independence. It is tempered with sadness and regret at the loss of life and suffering necessary to obtain that independence.

MOUNT COLAH EMBROIDERERS GUILD

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby) [4.45 p.m.]: I congratulate the Mount Colah Embroiderers Guild of New South Wales on stitching up 25 years. It was started 25 years ago by Pat Langford of Mount Colah. Today the group meets twice monthly to create original works based on their life experiences. Whilst enjoying a stitch and a chat, these fantastic ladies create Trauma Teddies for Hornsby Hospital as well as quilts for the maternity section. The ladies celebrated 25 years with a morning tea, complete with elegant china and homemade treats. As part of the celebration of the group's quarter century, they will hold an exhibition from 4 to 14 November at Hornsby Shire Library. I thank members of the group, in particular Tory Crabtree and Caitlyn Nicholas who do a great job of supporting the local hospital with the provision of such things as quilts to people in need.

AUSTRALIAN CHINESE BUDDHIST SOCIETY

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) [4.46 p.m.]: On Friday 17 May 2013, the Australian Chinese Buddhist Society celebrated the Buddha's Birthday Festival. Congratulations to the Australian Chinese Buddhist Society for hosting the celebrations at the Ming Vue Lay Temple, Bonnyrigg. The society aims to support its members and promote interfaith dialogue across the wider community. The joyous ceremony included the traditional bathing of Buddha with floral arrangements adorning the interior of the temple. All guests were invited to join in sharing a traditional Chinese morning tea. Holy water and a Buddha memento were given to all present to mark the occasion. Congratulations to the President, Mr Vincent Kong, the Vice-President, Mr James Chan and the organising committee.

CROQUET CHAMPION JOE DIMECH

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) [4.47 p.m.]: I inform the House that 73-year-old Taree resident, Joe Dimech, will compete for the third consecutive year in the National Croquet Championships to be held in Maitland. Joe represented Australia in 2011 but has declined the offer to play for his country at the world titles in Egypt, due to the political unrest there. Joe is in good form as he recently won the New South Wales Open Men's Croquet Championship held in Sydney. He was second in the State titles last year and achieved his ambition to go one better this year. The event was held over four days, with Joe winning 16 of the 18 games he played, finishing two games clear of his nearest rival. Joe's wife, Lyn, also played extremely well as she was second in the women's event.

Community recognition statements concluded.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

WORKERS COMPENSATION SCHEME

Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool) [4.48 p.m.]: I draw to the attention of the House the circumstances of two constituents of mine who have similar concerns. Joanne Coggin is a constituent of mine who lives in the suburb of Ashcroft. My constituent wrote to me on 13 March this year setting out the circumstances in which she finds herself through no fault of hers as a result of decisions relating to workers compensation legislation taken in this Parliament. Mrs Coggin sustained two injuries in the course of her employment with Bunnings, at the Bonnyrigg store, where she had worked for approximately eight years. On 6 May 2003, as she was walking down a set of stairs, she sustained an injury to her left knee. That resulted in a referral to an orthopaedic surgeon and surgery on her left knee. She sustained a further injury on 7 August 2004 when lifting a heavy tin of paint. That resulted in an injury to her lower back.

She struggled on with light duties but then could not continue with those duties and her employment with Bunnings ceased. However, she kept trying to work. In 2008 she worked at a BP service station. However, that was unable to continue because she was not able to stand for the required periods as a result of the combined effect of the injuries to her neck and back. Mrs Coggin received workers compensation payments until September 2011. The workers compensation insurer then unilaterally ceased making payments. That decision was disputed by Mrs Coggin and a claim was instituted. In the normal course that would have been determined. However, it has been obliterated by changes to legislation. But Mrs Coggin continues to be in pain, and her bills are mounting up. Mrs Coggin's letter to me states:

I have been advised by my solicitor that the new workers compensation changes essentially preclude me from claiming weekly payments from the workers compensation insurer beyond 31 December 2012. I believe this is unfair. I was looking for employment during 2011 and 2012 and have been unable to find employment as a result of my injuries to my lower back and my left knee.

My solicitor has basically informed me that "the pendulum has swung too far in favour of the insurance companies" and against injured workers. I agree with this and I have had ongoing significant problems. I cannot find employment. Even if I found that employment I do not think I would be able to work. I am not receiving any Centrelink. My husband works on a full time basis and I do not want to go on to Centrelink.

This is not a case of an employer's responsibility being transferred to Centrelink. Because Mrs Coggin's husband works she cannot receive Centrelink payments at all. A second constituent of mine to whom I refer is Michael Dimech, who lives in the suburb of Hinchinbrook. He also wrote to me. In part, his letter states:

I am writing this letter to inform you of how the New South Wales Government work cover changes to workers compensation affects me.

In 1994 I injured my lower back quite severely; I had it operated on with a bone graft and was off work for 12 months. Unfortunately the graft was unsuccessful and therefore I had my vertebrae fused.

In 1995, due to the hardware failing, I had to be readmitted to hospital for the 3rd time and the whole procedure was done again this time replacing the hardware.

In 1994 I decided not to take a lump sum, and I was told by numerous doctors, surgeons and specialists, that I would require ongoing care, and more than likely more operations in the future. I therefore decided for the option to have a wage top up and medical expenses (relating to my injury) taken care of until I turned 65.

I had to fight to convince all involved that I couldn't stay home due to my injury, as I found myself extremely depressed due to not being able to have a normal life. QBE, my specialist and my GP all agreed for me to return to work, I therefore only work 25hrs a week, hence the wage top up which was agreed to be paid until I retire. I have now been told my earnings for 25 hours is equal to the new work cover limit. This amount is only a fraction of what I could be earning now, if I was uninjured and in the same field of work.

Also all my medical expenses will stop after a year from when my wage top ups stop. If ever there is a possibility in the future of having another operation to try and alleviate my pain level, I simply will not be able to afford it.

Mr Dimech explains that he recently took out a loan with a bank calculated on his wage top-up. The disappearance of that top-up, as he says, puts him in a very difficult position. His letter goes on to state:

I feel this is unjust for people like myself, that laws can just be changed and back dated, which affect claims that have already been agreed upon. Everything [that] was agreed upon then will now be taken away from me.

He goes on to state:

I have been working since I was 15 years of age; I have never been on Centrelink payments of any kind or any other type of assistance, until I broke a vertebra and bulged 2 discs in my back at work.

BLAZE AID

TRIBUTE TO PAUL TOBIN

Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON (Burrinjuck—Minister for Primary Industries, and Minister for Small Business) [4.51 p.m.]: On 14 May I informed the House of the devastating fires that ravaged parts of the Burrinjuck electorate in early January and of the fantastic way in which the emergency services and many volunteers responded. Once the fires were extinguished the clean-up began. I personally have seen the aftermath of too many bushfires and I know that this is perhaps the most heartbreaking of times for a primary producer. More than 10,000 head of sheep and 170 head of cattle were lost and some 1,200 kilometres of fencing was destroyed across almost 19,000 hectares of open grazing and timbered grazing land. The economic impact of the fire was estimated at almost \$19 million.

However an amazing thing happened in the form of the BlazeAid organisation. BlazeAid is a volunteer-based organisation that works with farmers and families in rural Australia after natural disasters such as fires and floods. This year alone it assisted with the floods in Queensland and bushfires in Victoria, Tasmania and New South Wales. As the Minister for Primary Industries I was able to assist BlazeAid by providing disaster relief funding to councils to help to meet the costs of establishing base camps for the volunteers. A BlazeAid base camp was established at Bookham and coordinated by Gary and Colleen Waterman from Kempsey, who are BlazeAid volunteers. Over the past three years they have spent nine months volunteering for BlazeAid in Victoria, Western Australia and also in Bribbaree following the floods in May 2012. I thank them so much for their wonderful contribution to my electorate at this difficult time.

In all, 316 volunteers arrived to help with the recovery effort. Altogether they contributed approximately 2,514 volunteer days of work on 16 properties. They cleared almost 70 kilometres of fencing and put up 172 kilometres of new fencing. Three year 12 students from the Yass High School also joined the volunteers to undertake their vocational education and training work placement. The camp recently closed after almost five months of activity and assistance. A farewell function was held recently at the Bookham Hall for the BlazeAid volunteers. It was attended by more than 300 people and a permanent monument to the BlazeAid assistance was unveiled. The sculpture, which was built by Bookham locals Doug Painting and Peter Southwell, is called *Rusty and Incline*, and consists of a section of fence set into a large boulder at an incline of approximately 45 degrees. It is a humorous reference to the rough, rock-strewn terrain in which many of the BlazeAid volunteers toiled. At the farewell function Gary and Colleen Waterson were recognised by the Yass Rotary Club for their contribution to the local community. They were each awarded a Paul Harris Fellowship, which is the highest recognition that can be given by Rotary International.

BlazeAid's fantastic effort contributed much more to the community than the purely economic measure of their work, which has been estimated at approximately \$1.6 million. Gary and Hansie Armour's Te Kooti

property was one of the worst affected, with almost all of their grazing land and fences destroyed. But the volunteers repaired much of the fencing, which allowed the Armours to control their remaining stock and have them shorn. With the lack of any recent rain, the countryside around Yass is looking a bit average at the moment as far as feed goes, but Gary and Hansie are still receiving offers of hay to keep their stock fed. Gary said that the recovery task facing him, at 71 years of age, seemed overwhelming, but the support that he received from the local community and the BlazeAid volunteers was probably worth more than the actual recovery assistance undertaken. It is the caring attitude exemplified by the BlazeAid volunteers and locals right across the electorate of Burrinjuck that makes such a difference when a disaster such as this strikes.

Unfortunately, the BlazeAid assistance had a very sad and tragic end. Just as the BlazeAid assistance was winding down and the volunteers were going home, one of them, Mr Paul Tobin, who was originally from Nowra, died in a single vehicle car accident little more than a week ago. The details of this terrible accident are still under investigation by the police. Paul Tobin was 41 years old and had been working on the property of Gary and Hansie Armour for approximately five weeks. The whole community of Bookham was shocked at his passing. Mr Tobin was a very popular man with a strong work ethic. One Yass local wrote of him:

He had a heart of gold, the first time I met him he was made to take the weekend off as he had worked three weeks straight—his hands had cuts all over them and he had worked his butt off to help.

Mr Tobin had reportedly made the decision to stay and work in the Bookham area and had been offered paid employment; but he refused to immediately take up the offer, saying that he would continue working as a BlazeAid volunteer until the Bookham base camp was closed. The whole community of the Yass Valley owes a debt of gratitude to all of the BlazeAid volunteers such as Gary and Colleen Waterson and Paul Tobin. I am sure that all members of this House would join me in recognising the great contribution made by BlazeAid to the bushfire recovery effort and also in extending their most sincere condolences and love to Paul Tobin's family, friends and workmates at his tragic passing. Vale, Paul Tobin. May you rest in peace.

Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst—Parliamentary Secretary) [4.56 p.m.]: I thank the Minister for Primary Industries for drawing to the attention of the House the hard work done by the BlazeAid organisation. BlazeAid is a very good volunteer-based organisation that works with farmers and rural communities. The Minister is well aware of what a devastating time it is for families when they are faced with disasters such as fires or floods. At different times people in rural communities are quite down, but when the BlazeAid volunteers are working alongside the communities to rebuild fences or simply working with rural people it lifts the spirit of rural communities. It must be remembered that some families do not face disaster only once; they may have experienced floods or fires on a number of occasions. I commend the Minister and the work of BlazeAid. I thank all those involved in BlazeAid for the work they do with our rural constituents are right throughout the State.

ULLADULLA MARINE RESCUE NSW

Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK (South Coast—The Speaker) [4.57 p.m.]: On Saturday May 18 I was pleased to join members of the Marine Rescue Ulladulla unit, including the unit's commander, Ken Lambert, and board member, Doug Musker, as well as the whole Marine Rescue NSW organisation, particularly the New South Wales commissioner, Stacey Tannos, to celebrate two important milestones at the Ulladulla base. The day included the commissioning of a new \$650,000 38-foot-cabin Steber rapid response rescue vessel bearing the name *Ulladulla 30* and also *Warden II*. The vessel's name reflects its work as a guardian of the region's boaters and the southern headland to the Ulladulla Harbour, Warden Head, which was named after the region's pioneering boat-building brothers, David and James Warden. *Ulladulla 30* is a beautiful addition to the fleet of Marine Rescue–Ulladulla. It is capable of travelling up to 30 nautical miles offshore, and it is equipped with state-of-the-art navigation, electronics and communications equipment.

Ulladulla 30 is Ulladulla Marine Rescue's first new vessel. It replaces the unit's former boat, the Arun-class *Encounter*, which had been retired due to the increasing cost and effort needed to keep it at its peak rescue readiness. This is just one of more than 30 new and refurbished vessels delivered to local units across the State at a cost of \$9 million as part of Marine Rescue NSW's major fleet upgrade. That will ensure that volunteers have safe, reliable and modern boats for the vital safety work undertaken in our communities. I have been reliably informed that the vessel already has been put to good use, with crew already having utilised the modern equipment to respond swiftly and efficiently to a number of incidents on local waters.

The day also included the opening of the new \$132,000 Ulladulla Marine Rescue training centre. I was pleased to officially open the new centre and announce an additional grant from the NSW Government of

\$50,000 under the Community Building Partnership program that will enable Marine Rescue to acquire and install a disability access lift. Prior to the construction of the new training centre volunteers and trainees were provided with training in a very small room that adjoined the base entrance, the kitchen and a shop. The location was completely unsuitable for training. The new centre is fitted out with electronic training equipment, including training computers, a computer-linked smart TV and electronic whiteboard. It will be used for radio and boat crew training for unit volunteers, as well as for public boating licence and radio courses and testing. The centre will also be available for community use.

Construction of the new training centre would not have been possible without the hardworking members of the Marine Rescue Ulladulla branch. Members contributed labour, materials and money in order for the centre to become a reality. Much of that came from the Ulladulla community as well. Particular mention must be made to Mr Sean and Mrs Laura Grabia, who not only raised a significant amount of money and obtained thousands of dollars worth of savings from suppliers but whose company managed and carried out construction of the new facility, saving the volunteer organisation even more money.

Whilst construction of this centre was fully funded by the hardworking volunteers of Marine Rescue Ulladulla and the local community, I am pleased the New South Wales Government has contributed an additional \$50,000 towards completion of the overall project. The \$50,000 will be utilised to construct a new disability access lift, enabling full access to the centre. As the radio room is located on the upper level of the centre, it is envisaged that following the installation of the lift Marine Rescue Ulladulla will be able to recruit new radio operators who may not have previously been able to access the centre. Formed in 1971, and then known as Ulladulla Sea Rescue, it was made up of local leisure fisherman utilising their own boats to provide a sea safety assistance service. That service continues today.

I congratulate all members of Marine Rescue Ulladulla for their continued hard work to raise funds to upgrade their local facilities. I have had a long association as patron of this organisation since my election in 2003. I was certainly pleased to open the centre last Saturday, but also to join the Federal member, who launched the new vessel, and the Liberal candidate for Gilmore, Ann Sudmalis, who was also present on the day. It was a wonderful day. The many people there were joyous in their recognition of the fact that the community and Marine Rescue work so hard to achieve what is a virtually new and rebuilt centre. I note that the Minister, the member for Bega, is at the table. He would be very well aware of Ulladulla Marine Rescue; it was originally in his electorate. He was certainly aware of the challenges that Marine Rescue faced, and helped when and where he could. Congratulations to everybody on a great day; and onwards and upwards for Ulladulla Marine Rescue.

NAROOMA QUOTA INTERNATIONAL

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE (Bega—Minister for Ageing, and Minister for Disability Services) [5.01 p.m.]: This afternoon I congratulate Narooma Quota on its service over the past 12 months to the local community. This organisation of about 25 members raised more than \$25,000 and gave those funds to a whole raft of community initiatives throughout the year and last Saturday night, when Narooma Quota held its installation dinner. I particularly recognise Quota's President Susan Pryke, who has done a wonderful job of steering the Quota ship over the past 12 months, as she will during her presidency over the next 12 months.

Quotarians in Narooma made donations to a whole raft of organisations, including Snowy Hydro SouthCare, the Westpac Life Saver Rescue Helicopter, the Special Olympics, HeartKids, Narooma Out-of-School-Hours Care, Bodalla Public School, Central Tilba Public School, Narooma High School, IRT Dalmeny, the Narooma Historical Society World War Two plaque, Narooma District Little Athletics, the Troy Stever Lyme Disease Fund, the Starlight Foundation, the Rural Fire Service and the Bluewater Dragons. Particularly pleasing is that last Saturday night Quota gave out additional moneys: it gave support for speech therapy for two students at Narooma Public School and supported that school in particular. Moruya Women and Children's Services also benefited from a donation.

Particularly pleasing also is that Narooma Quota made a \$3,000 donation to Moruya Cancer Carers. I was very pleased to be present on the night as patron of the organisation but also to be there with my great mate Ron Snape, and Tralee. These great friends of mine established Moruya Cancer Carers to raise community moneys to go towards the redevelopment of the oncology unit at Moruya Hospital. I might add that this oncology unit is in a dire state. I know that the health district board has been looking very closely at the unit, along with Health Infrastructure, with a view to redeveloping it. It is a very old building, with no privacy for those using the chairs at the facility. It is very pleasing that the community is getting behind Moruya Cancer Carers, helping them in their work to raise funds for the redevelopment.

Ron Snape and his team—and I particularly recognise that Narooma Lyons has been involved in the establishment of the account—have raised more than \$65,000, benefiting from community service clubs across the community. Very pleasingly, Narooma Quota made its contribution on Saturday—providing ongoing support. These valuable dollars ultimately will go to the provision of better oncology services by this unit. I might add that this unit has the highest number of patients in the region. The unit and its staff are doing an enormous job. But, of course, the facility needs redevelopment.

Narooma Quota has been a leading light in the Narooma community for many years now. It has celebrated 26 years of community service. Particularly pleasing on the night was that Margaret Saker received a special commemorative pin to mark her 25 years in Quota. As part of the celebration she joined charter member Maureen Young in cutting the twenty-sixth birthday cake. Margaret Saker has given enormously to her local community over many years. I am proud to call Margaret Saker a friend. She is someone who gives her all in the interests of her local community. She was very humbled by her recognition on the evening last Saturday. Narooma Quota is one of the many wonderful Quota clubs and service organisations up and down the coast that quietly go about their business of assisting the community, without much gratitude. It is very fitting as the organisation was able to raise \$25,000 over the past 12 months, at a time when things are fairly tight due to costs of living. The contributions that they have made to improve the lives of others are enormous. I congratulate them on doing so.

SHELLHARBOUR ELECTORATE INFRASTRUCTURE

Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) [5.06 p.m.]: News this week that the Planning Assessment Commission has approved a \$250 million residential and employment lands development at Tallawarra places more pressure on the New South Wales Government to fund major road infrastructure works in areas in my electorate. The Shellharbour electorate is the location for the biggest, and final, of the greenfield developments in both the Wollongong and Shellharbour local government areas. West Dapto continues to develop, as does Flinders. Tallawarra, next-door to Haywards Bay, is the new development kid on the block. Very shortly it may be followed by the approval of the Calderwood development at Albion Park, located in the Kiama electorate, if the Land and Environment Court finds in favour of Lend Lease. Each of these new developments means that many more houses and services will be needed. There will be new jobs and construction activity. The developments also mean a bigger population for the Illawarra region, particularly the local government areas of Wollongong and Shellharbour. The developments will place more pressure on existing infrastructure, particularly the road network around Dapto and through Albion Park Rail.

The Tallawarra development will add some 1,000 new homes to the Dapto catchment. It will create new employment lands, which are much needed in the southern Illawarra area. It is said that there are two things in life that one cannot avoid: death and taxes. You could add to this demography. Over the next two decades, if not sooner, the big land release sites I have mentioned will create a substantial population around Dapto and West Dapto that may come close to rivalling the Shellharbour local government area. It will become a compact mini-city of its own. In time its population may become big enough to have its very own electorate based around its own community of interest. This massive wave of development just means that governments, particularly at local and State levels, need to work together to deliver the infrastructure that these new release areas will demand. It is for this reason that I am lobbying in every way I can to have the New South Wales Government take seriously the big challenge ahead.

The key to any large-scale land release development is the scale of its road network. We have been tacking new land release sites onto old, established suburban areas in the southern Illawarra for too long, hoping we could just muddle through. We cannot muddle through with an old thoroughfare through the Dapto central business district anymore. The bottlenecks through Dapto and West Dapto are like big car parks. The new Tallawarra development, like its sister developments at West Dapto, needs new road infrastructure so that traffic can flow smoothly while spilling out onto the F6 to travel north or further south. For this reason I again call on the New South Wales Government to commit substantial funding under its Resources for Regions program and the \$100-million Illawarra Infrastructure Fund to build new on-off ramps at Kanahooka, Fowlers and Emerson roads. Funding will also be required for the new link road currently under design between Fowlers Road and Fairwater Drive. This new road infrastructure alone may require investment in the order of \$100 million, and that does not include building the Albion Park Rail bypass, which is a big road project.

NEWCASTLE VARIETY BASH

Mr TIM OWEN (Newcastle) [5.10 p.m.]: Tonight I sing the praises of a charity very close to my heart, Variety—the children's charity. Last week I had the honour of taking part in the twenty-second annual

AHA Newcastle Variety Bash. From 19 May to 25 May, a record number of 240 bashers set out in regional New South Wales, ablaze in outrageous costumes and themed vehicles to raise money for sick and disadvantaged children. The event is proudly sponsored by the Australian Hotels Association New South Wales, and is a key regional fundraising event for Variety. The bash is not a race or rally but rather a drive through Central Western New South Wales, where everyone is driving the miles for the smiles. The money raised during the adventure will fund the purchase of special needs equipment for the many children in the Newcastle and Hunter region who may be sick or disadvantaged or who have special needs.

So it was with a big smile on Sunday 19 May that I, along with Sonia Tamplin, waved off this year's bashers as they left the Newcastle foreshore. Sonia Tamplin is the wife of the late Senior Constable Tony Tamplin, who died recently and unexpectedly at work. As I have stated previously in this House, Senior Constable Tamplin was a much-loved community identity—a fine police officer, marriage celebrant and the chairman of Variety. Last year I made a commitment to Senior Constable Tamplin that I would take part in the 2013 Variety Bash and so it was important that I remained true to that promise. On behalf of Variety, I thank Sonia for joining me that morning in honour of her late husband. As the cars drove out of Newcastle, participants began their seven-day, 2,643-kilometre motoring adventure. Towns visited over the course of the bash included Coolah, Dubbo, Bourke, Walgett, Moree, Manilla, Armidale, Bobin, Port Macquarie and Gloucester before finishing up in Muswellbrook and returning to Newcastle.

I was fortunate to join the bashers in Armidale on the Wednesday and remained with them for the rest of the journey. The travelling carnival made pit stops at schools to donate equipment on wish lists and delighted the locals along the way. Some of the gifts donated included playground equipment, sensory gardens, music equipment and a few individual appeals that made even the hardest basher shed a tear. Entry for the bash each year is open to pre-1974 cars only, and typically both vehicle and drivers are decked out in the most crazy and outrageous costumes that one could ever imagine. I dressed as a convict Santa in a hideous red wig and a T-shirt so tight I could hardly breathe. Bribery and blatant cheating are actively encouraged, as participants vie to complete the course while raising the most funds for the kids. So there are plenty of rogue antics at play. As such, there is a cast of colourful characters, many seasoned bashers telling their tales from bashes of the past. Offering fun and camaraderie, the bash is a great opportunity for participants to visit country towns of Australia that they may not otherwise see, while raising money to support our kids in need.

Since its inception in 1992, Newcastle bashers have raised approximately \$7.5 million collectively. This year alone the bash raised approximately \$770,000. I thank the Newcastle Permanent Building Society's charity fund for its accompaniment on the bash and for donating more than \$400,000 to Vision for Life. It was a fantastic effort. In closing, I take this opportunity to thank the wonderful Peter Harvey who was fantastic in organising my involvement in the bash. It was a pleasure to take part in such a wonderful event. It will remain with me as one of my fondest memories in this role, and in life. To touch the lives of so many children through the donation of money and gifts and to bring a smile to their face as we entertained them in our crazy costumes was a real honour and a great pleasure.

MENAI HIGH SCHOOL WAR STORIES BOOK LAUNCH

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Menai) [5.14 p.m.]: I recently joined students from Menai School and clients of Menai Community Services to launch a booklet of war stories, with the member for Hughes, Craig Kelly. It was appropriately timed for Anzac Day and was a wonderful way to learn and appreciate the contributions made by our older Australians. Six students were matched with 12 people who shared their memories of life during and after World War II. The project aimed to encourage collaboration between generations to ensure that stories of bygone eras are not lost or forgotten.

It was lovely to hear some of the incredible stories of local residents who had lived through various wars. In the age of mobile phones and social media, it is so easy to overlook the contribution of our older generations and the value of their stories. The students met with the clients and spent time getting to know each other. They captured their stories through recording and then personally interpreting the tales into a written version for the booklet. Some clients even had photos to share to show visual evidence of that particular time in their lives. Let me indulge in some of their shared memories.

Growing up in London, Freda June Barker remembers having to practise putting on gas masks at school in case they ever needed to use them. Freda started working at age 14 because there was no other option. Each night as the bombs went off she was sleeping beside her mother and sister in a corrugated iron shelter buried in their backyard. She ended up working as a parachute inspector, checking that the parachutes used to drop

supplies to troops were okay to use. Dot Brindle's youth was free from war and violence, but her husband served during World War II and was a prisoner of war, forced to work on a railway for the Japanese. Despite losing many of his fellow soldiers, he was one of the lucky ones who returned home and in a reasonably fit state. Dot still has a watch, an army pay book and photos that travelled with her husband during his time in prisoner-of-war camps. Miraculously, these photos survived thanks to their clever thinking to bury the proofs, which were later recovered and developed. They contained images that the Japanese would have wanted to destroy.

Ron Ashby can remember crying for food as a young boy. Worse still, he survived an air raid on a street full of schoolchildren by throwing himself to the ground and hoping for the best, as many of his friends were gunned down by an enemy plane. Ron counts himself incredibly lucky that day. He and his brother Fred were part of the Boys Brigade and were out one evening with them when they were told their family home had been bombed. He lost his younger brother and his parents were badly injured in the blast. Like many other children at the time, he was forced to give up schooling in order to work to get by. It was not until months later that the family was reunited under one roof.

It is stories like these that make us realise how lucky we are. I doubt many of us have ever had to worry about air raids or losing loved ones in bomb blasts. Incredible stories like the ones told by Freda, Dot and Ron would otherwise be lost to our younger generation. This project helps to preserve their combined histories and experiences and hopefully will educate teenagers on what their predecessors have been through. I imagine most teenagers would find it hard to imagine life without a mobile phone, let alone having to write letters and wait for weeks or months for a reply. These war stories are a priceless record and I am honoured to have been a part of the launch and to meet the students and clients face to face.

I acknowledge the contributions made by Menai High School students Zac Rowlands, Isabella Rolfe, Jordan Harper, Samantha Turpin, Angelina Cassaniti and Anthony Yeung. It is never an easy task to tell someone else's stories, but they all did it with respect and compassion. Also, I thank the wonderful clients of Menai Community Services for sharing their incredibly personal stories: Ray Langford, Dot Bringle, Joan Decker, John Mays, Freda Taylor, Nancy Elliot, Ron Ashby, Maria Kelly, Freda Barker and Stefania Syzman. Each story highlights from a unique perspective the struggles and the danger that these young people faced for a significant part of their lives. I am glad I can do my bit to share their stories with the House today. That day we also acknowledged our citizenship with a gentleman who was to become an Australian the following day. It was a nice and significant thing to do when we were talking about being Australian and what it means to us.

ORANGE ELECTORATE EVENTS

Mr ANDREW GEE (Orange) [5.19 p.m.]: I draw the attention of the House to two significant events in the Mid-Western Regional Council area. On Friday night the grand finale for the 2013 Gulgong Eisteddfod will be held. It has been running continuously for 33 years. The gala finale will be a night of dance, poetry and music at Gulgong's iconic Prince of Wales Opera House. Pat Rowles is the coordinator for music and President of the Gulgong Eisteddfod Committee and will oversee the music competition that reaches its climax at the Roger Woodward competition on Friday night. Entries for 2013 are at record levels. Pauline Hannaford, who is the dance convenor, organised 127 dance groups for disciplines in jazz, tap, classical, modern expressive, contemporary, national costume and entertainment. Almost 500 children were involved. Pauline was also convenor of the solo dance.

Entries were up 20 per cent on last year, to a record 1,101. Marie Stahl, the speech convenor, had to organise a record 500 children in the choral verse speaking section, with each class performing two poems. Competitors came from Queensland's Gold Coast, Canberra, Condobolin, Forbes, Parkes, Bathurst, Orange, Coolah, Wellington, Dunedoo, Dubbo, Merriwa, Mudgee, Rylstone and Kandos, as well as from Gulgong. William Rowles, who came all the way from Neutral Bay; Gina Byron, for dance; Peter Leotta and Helen Campbell, for speech; and Chris Hannaford, who is a well-respected identity around Gulgong, were the announcers who kept the program on schedule. Behind the scenes, Rona Pepper, secretary, and Maureen Trego, treasurer, were kept busy with the administrative side of the event. The Gulgong Eisteddfod is one of the biggest events in Gulgong each year and is held annually through the month of May.

I also draw the attention of the House to the fact that on Sunday Mudgee hosted its inaugural first grade National Rugby League game when the Gold Coast Titans took on the Parramatta Eels. Last year Mudgee hosted the City vs Country game, but this year it hosted the home game for the Parramatta Eels. Some 9,132 people turned up to watch the game. It was an incredible turnout for the town. In the warm-up game I was pleased to see

the Mudgee Dragons triumph 26-18 over their rivals, the Bathurst Panthers. I pay tribute to Matt Stott, the captain-coach of the Mudgee Dragons and Roger Lang, who is President of the Mudgee Dragons. There were plenty of Mudgee Dragons fans present. I was sitting on the eastern hill with young Samuel Gee, who celebrated his birthday at his first National Rugby League game. The Titans, unfortunately, triumphed over the Eels 42-4.

I pay tribute to the hard work of Mayor Des Kennedy, who spoke very well on the day. He has been a great supporter of Mudgee and the new Glen Willow complex. Alana Gleeson also did a superb job of organising this event. She works with the Mid-Western Regional Council. Julie Robertson also made a wonderful effort. After the game, I saw Alana and Julie assist in directing traffic to steer people out of the Glen Willow complex. It was a superb effort. I also mention Julian Geddes, Pip Goldsmith and Brad Reynolds, the grounds curator. He received high praise for his work preparing the ground and rave reviews for the way it all panned out. Ken Sutcliffe, the famous male model from Mudgee, was on hand. He played a big role in putting this event together for Mudgee. He has always been a wonderful supporter of Mudgee. Ken raised the blue-and-gold flag on the ground before the kick-off.

It was a wonderful atmosphere. I was surrounded mainly by Mudgee Dragons fans and also Parramatta Eels fans who had made the trip to Mudgee, but there was also the odd Gold Coast fan. The crowd was well behaved. It was a great family day and I know that Mayor Des Kennedy and his team are keen to host more major sporting events, especially rugby league, out of the Glen Willow complex. I congratulate the community of Mudgee on embracing all the visitors to their town. It was a wonderful day and the people of Mudgee should be proud of their achievements. It was a great boost to the local tourism industry. Congratulations to Mudgee and the communities of its surrounding districts.

SECONDARY SCHOOL LEADERSHIP PROGRAM FOR SCHOOL CAPTAINS

Mr DARREN WEBBER (Wyang) [5.24 p.m.]: Today I highlight the successful Secondary School Leadership Program for School Captains that is conducted in New South Wales Parliament. One of the great privileges of being a member of Parliament is that we meet many inspirational young people within our schools and community groups. I am labelled as borderline generation X/Y, like the chromosome, and often hear generation Y being bashed in the media. So I understand it is important to acknowledge that the vast majority of young people are focused on achieving the best they can for themselves, their families and their communities.

The Parliamentary Education team within the Department Parliamentary Services provides the opportunity for many of our future leaders to come to the Parliament of New South Wales to experience and better understand the role of Parliament. Each year, at the invitation of the Presiding Officers, school captains and leaders from government, Catholic and independent secondary schools throughout New South Wales are invited to visit Parliament House. This activity forms part of the leadership program organised by the Parliamentary Education Section of the Parliament in conjunction with the Office of the Governor of New South Wales, the New South Wales Department of Education and Communities, the Catholic Education Office and the Association of Independent Schools. Ten days are allocated each year, with six visits from government schools that group together schools from a number of different school districts, and two visits each year from independent and Catholic schools.

The secondary school leadership program recognises the leadership role of students in their schools and offers them the opportunity to meet their elected representatives and to develop their knowledge of constitutional and parliamentary proceedings, including the role of the Governor and the workers of the Parliament. Each day the program begins at Parliament House at 10.00 a.m., usually in the Parliamentary Theatre, where their members of Parliament and the parliamentary officers address students. During the program, students visit the Chambers where, if the Houses are sitting, students view the proceedings and, if the Houses are not sitting, students are addressed in the Chamber by members from their electorates. After lunch the students leave for a visit to Government House to meet with Her Excellency the Governor, which is a special moment for them.

On Wednesday 29 May I, along with some of my parliamentary colleagues, addressed the latest group of student leaders to take advantage of this excellent program. There were approximately 100 students from 50 different high schools in attendance. I took a number of questions from these inspiring young people. It is always challenging, because one can be assured that the questions are always well researched. I was particularly pleased to meet with two outstanding students, Rebekah Bolton and Tom Carlson, from Gorokan High School in my electorate of Wyong. They had the opportunity to discuss briefly their impressions of the program and what they saw as important issues for young people on the Central Coast.

As well as attending the secondary school leadership program, the Parliamentary Education Service also assists in hosting students from many primary and secondary schools all over New South Wales. I am always pleased to welcome students from schools within my electorate. As well as attending the secondary school leadership program yesterday, I hosted 11 student leaders from Gorokan Public School. They included girl school captain Elisabeth Robbins, boy school captain Brock Cooper-Spiller, girl vice-captain Hayley Murray, and boy vice-captain Benjamin Ellison. They were accompanied by their hardworking principal, Ms Alanna Bell, Vice-Principal Ms Vicki Young and other support staff from the school.

This was a great opportunity to show these young students how the New South Wales Parliament operates and for them to have a better understanding of the role of their local members of Parliament and the workings of the parliamentary system. They were able to visit most parts of the building. They met the member for Terrigal, the Minister for Minerals, Resources and Energy, who was kind enough to donate some Fantale chocolates, and visited my office, with a view of the roof-top garden, and the office of the world-famous member for Gosford, with a view of The Domain.

The student leaders from Gorokan Public School were outstanding representatives of their school. They were well-behaved and no-one got lost. They were always kind to visitors in the lifts. Indeed, I was keen to explain to them that the public toilets did not reflect the amenities of private members. They are of a higher standard on level 7 than on level 12. It is pleasing to see so many school students taking an interest in the workings of the parliamentary and political processes. The many school visits that the secondary school leadership program hosts in Parliament are an important way of fostering and enhancing that interest, and ensuring that students engage with the New South Wales Parliament, their local parliamentarians and learn about happens here on a daily basis.

NATIONAL VOLUNTEER WEEK

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby) [5.29 p.m.]: Tonight I am delighted to recognise all the hardworking volunteers throughout the State who selflessly give their time to make the community a better place. Volunteers play a vital role in our community and help revitalise connections between people. They make our communities richer and stronger, and I take this opportunity to thank them for their contribution. Last week as part of National Volunteer Week I joined four local volunteer service providers to experience first-hand their impact on our community in Hornsby. Volunteers come from all walks of life and contribute to their preferred charity or community group in a variety of ways. National Volunteer Week has been running since 1974 and each year recognises the six million volunteers across Australia who contribute over 700 million hours of community service. These valuable achievements occur in a range of different societal areas, such as community health care, environmental conservation, emergency services, education, social justice and sports.

To recognise these community achievements and join in the fun for National Volunteer Week I invited the *Hornsby Advocate's* new editor, Brenton Cherry, to accompany me to visit four local community groups. We started the day with a visit to Hornsby hospital where we were given a tour of the aged care and stroke rehabilitation wards. We then joined Hornsby hospital's famed Pink Ladies, who visit patients and distribute books on their daily book mobile run. I thank Hornsby hospital's manager, Greg Lill, and the two Pink Ladies Marion Paul and Joan Clayton, who guided us on the day. Both ladies have volunteered at the hospital for over 20 years—an exceptional contribution of public service to our much-loved hospital. They have made many friends, including their own friendship. I thank them for the tremendous difference they have made to our community. I place on the public record also the Pink Ladies known to me, including Jen Muggleton and Peta Reedy, and various others I cannot name today.

I thank them all for their contributions to our hospital. Their efforts have hugely improved the socialisation of patients over the years since this community service began more than 30 years ago. Judging by the smiles on patients' faces, it is easy to see that this initiative deserves plenty of recognition. My volunteering day continued at Hornsby Meals on Wheels where Brenton and I met manager Jacqui Lyons. We were sent on a local food run with team driver Mario Di Bernardo. Together we visited seven houses in the Hornsby and Normanhurst areas where we stopped to talk and drop off meals. I was pleasantly surprised to learn that Mr Di Bernardo was given the opportunity by his employer, National Australia Bank, to volunteer once every two weeks through the company's Volunteer Community Service program. I take this opportunity to thank the National Australia Bank for its outstanding contribution in encouraging its staff to give back to society and help charitable organisations where possible.

After returning from delivering meals, we then visited Hornsby's St Vincent de Paul Society. This longstanding charity is close to my heart as my grandfather was a volunteer truck driver with St Vincent de Paul

Society before he died. We met Dianne Sewell, who took us on a tour of the centre and showed us where all incoming goods were sorted and then prepared for display on the shop floor. I was fortunate enough to spend some time talking to the manager and cashier, who spoke about the organisation's growing needs in the Hornsby community. This visit was a welcome reminder that the New South Wales Government must continue its work in supporting charitable organisations, such as St Vincent de Paul, to help us reach so many desperate families, particularly in times of economic hardship. It is further proof that when the Government works in tandem with the private sector so much more can be achieved in reaching families who need financial and material assistance.

My final visit as part of the volunteering program included a stop at Hornsby Bushcare in Berowra. This was a great opportunity for me to roll up my sleeves and help hardworking community members who have assisted Hornsby Shire Council officers in conserving and rehabilitating publicly owned natural bushland. Team leader Mick Marr, who is a bit of a local icon, told me that currently over 850 Bushcare volunteers are registered in the Hornsby shire. These community volunteers work on over 130 local sites and have assisted council since 1989. They make such an important contribution to our shire, known as the bushland shire. I thank each and every volunteer I met as part of National Volunteer Week and also those I meet as I go about my business as the member for Hornsby. Volunteers play a vital role in serving our community. Their hard work and selflessness has helped shape our communities and the wonderful country in which we live. Volunteers make an enormous contribution and give up so much of their time. They certainly make a huge difference and make our State a better place.

MUSCULAR DYSTROPHY ASSOCIATION OF NEW SOUTH WALES

Mrs BARBARA PERRY (Auburn) [5.34 p.m.]: Today I speak about the Muscular Dystrophy Association of New South Wales, with which the Minister for Ageing, and Minister for Disability Services has a good relationship. Recently I was privileged to attend the association's gala ball, which the Minister was unable to attend. It was a fantastic evening. I met chief executive officer Pene Hodge and David Speers, master of ceremonies and now an ambassador. I note also that Peter Debnam is the president of the association. I thank the staff for such a wonderful night: Loretta Downie, Maralyn McCann and Kags Garrard. Importantly, I thank the association for its incredible support and service to those suffering with muscular dystrophy, their carers and families. I have the permission of a young man, Joab Olding, who absolutely inspired me, to read onto the record the speech he gave at the ball. I am sure Minister Constance will be equally inspired. The Minister may even have met him. Joab said:

I would start by saying there is nothing special about me at all, except for the fact that I was born with the disease Muscular Dystrophy. My diagnosis at 15 months of age was a complete shock for my mother as it came out of the blue, with no known history of Muscular Dystrophy in our family.

There is such a wide spectrum for Muscular Dystrophy, I was born with a rare type called "Lamin AC." As a child I remember when I was attending primary school, where we had a special needs unit attached, and one day from my wheelchair I naively remarked to my mother "oh those poor disabled kids!" I never considered myself disabled as a child, as it only limited my ability to walk distances or run. But really, who cares about that when you've got an electric wheelchair that does 15 kilometres an hour? It was a wonderful tool at school, first child who bullied me was "accidentally" hit in the ankle at full speed and boy did it send out a clear message to everyone else.

I was brought up by my mother in a loving and secure environment—As the 1st child, I was my mother's dream come true. The first and most profound advice given to my mum was by Professor Morgan, who advised her to "always offer me support, but never sympathy"—that is the motto my mum has lived by. As a result, I grew up not believing that I was disabled and I had a positive attitude as a child. Sure I had numerous hospital appointments every week, but I lived according to my abilities, not my disabilities.

Things changed when aged 13, when I went through a growth spurt. Due to my weak back muscles, my spine suddenly curved to 45 degrees in a number of months. In a very short time, my walking ability was limited to only a few metres.

This was a big shock at the time as I had been so used to being independent. I really struggled at the time and a rollercoaster of events, including the loss of my beloved grandmother and father in a two week period, also contributed to me sinking into a deep depression. Many hospital admissions resulted in me not being able to complete my HSC due to prolonged absences from school. This devastated me. Along with the spinal curvature came agonising pain, which I grappled with for a long time. To try to alleviate my pain, Dr's performed Harrington Rods Spinal Surgery in 2008, which really helped my breathing and walking.

However, my back pain was not reduced, as I was still quite "bent over". So at age 13, the Palliative Pain Team prescribed me opioid analgesics. These helped in the short term, but were disastrous in the long term. I understand that the pain doctors were trying to enable me to attend school, however effective pain relief necessitated increased dosages to impact on my pain, to which my body built up a natural tolerance. My life seemed bleak and without purpose at that time. Hindsight has taught me that everything can change in the blink of an eye.

Last year on the 22 of December, I went to sleep oblivious of the copious amounts of opioids in my body. I vomited in my sleep, and aspirated into my lungs and this resulted in cardiac arrest. I was just incredibly fortunate that it was one of the very few days a year where my mother was not working and that she was trained in CPR. When my mum found me in the morning, she believed I was dead but performed CPR, with my sister Grace, for some time until the ambulances arrived. The paramedics then de-fibbed my heart back into a normal rhythm. My life hung in the balance as I was on life support in Intensive Care over Christmas and New Year. Only the expertise of a brilliant medical staff and constant prayer explain my survival.

I then spent time in the Resuscitation Rescue Unit, and a total of three months rehabilitating. I have now been weaned off the opioid medications. This experience has brought home what really matters in life. It made me realise what's important and made me question if I was really getting the most out of life.

Most people don't get a second chance at life, however I have been incredibly fortunate to have been.

Having escaped death and/or significant brain damage, what more could I ever wish for than to be standing here tonight? My recent dramatic episode in my life has made me re-evaluate my priorities. Life has to have purpose and this necessitates pushing yourself out of your comfort zone.

I am intent on making the most out of my life and I am very excited about participating in the Duke of Edinburgh award. I think I will find it thoroughly rewarding and will impact on my pain levels and overall mood. Having a goal to work towards each week is motivating and means that I will accomplish it. Although I am predominately doing it for the challenge, I think it will also be beneficial for my employment down the track. I believe most things are possible if you have a good attitude and put your mind to them.

I now try to not let pain dominate my life and control what I do. In general, I don't think people always take for granted what they have, rather than what they do not have. If you try to make the most of your life, you are bound to get the most back out of it. Life is not tied with a bow it is a gift. A recent family present of a sky dive has proved to me my legs may not walk too well, but I can fly.

I am embracing my new chance in life.

He concludes by thanking everyone for attending and helping to support the Muscular Dystrophy Association, which is helping him and others to achieve their dreams.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE (Bega—Minister for Ageing, and Minister for Disability Services) [5.39 p.m.]: One of the great joys of my job—and it is no doubt true for the shadow Minister—is that I have the opportunity to meet people like Joe. It is inspiring that he says he is living life according to his abilities and not his disabilities. I am particularly pleased that the shadow Minister has put that speech on the record because it serves to educate the wider community, and perhaps some members. The Muscular Dystrophy Association does a tremendous job. It has received funding from the former Government and this Government to assist with the Duke of Edinburgh Award camps. I will share a funny story later with the shadow Minister about those camps and a missing \$100,000 cheque. I thank her for sharing that story and I pay tribute to Joe for being so inspirational. I applaud the Muscular Dystrophy Association and the team behind it for delivering such a wonderful program.

NATURAL DISASTER ASSISTANCE

Mr GREG APLIN (Albury) [5.40 p.m.]: On Thursday 21 March a tornado with winds reaching an incredible 300 kilometres an hour ripped through the Mulwala, Rutherglen and Bundalong region, smashing caravan parks, residences and infrastructure. The response on the ground was swift. On the Thursday and over following days, the State Emergency Service, Fire and Rescue NSW and the NSW Police Force were hard at work in Mulwala, in particular around the Denison County Caravan Park and Sun Country Holiday Village. When I heard news of the tornado, I cancelled appointments for the Friday, including my commitments to the Albury Gold Cup, and headed straight to Mulwala. While inspecting the devastation I received firsthand accounts of the wild weather and the battering delivered to the community. In that first 24 hours it was important to find out what was needed and to take that critical information to the Government so that necessary services and financial assistance could follow. Disaster relief is a joint process of all levels of government, with local councils having to initiate the process, requesting the State Government then to seek input from the Commonwealth Government and to provide services.

I was fully briefed by emergency services personnel and chased the matter through the Minister's office and then with the Federal Attorney-General. Following an emergency recovery meeting, the Mulwala area was finally declared an area of natural disaster and a community meeting was held. State officials were directed to Corowa shire to provide assistance. Through all the ups and downs of that week, my office was in ongoing contact with business operators, local service providers and residents affected by the tornado. There are, however, matters of process that need attention. The tornado knew no State boundaries. It simply crossed the Murray River and went on its course, doing great damage wherever it passed.

Unlike the tornado, we live with State borders. The natural disaster of 21 March has, as collateral impact, delivered an opportunity for us to see how two adjacent States handled the same event. Unfortunately, New South Wales administration did not come out of this as well as its equivalent in Victoria. The official declaration of Mulwala as an area of natural disaster came almost one week after the tornado hit, and four days after Victoria's declaration of its affected towns. For those residents and businesses dealing with a crisis situation, those four missing days were inexplicable and distressing. Victoria learnt a lot from its handling of extreme weather events and bushfires—there was much blame laying and resulting soul-searching by governments and their agencies.

The result last March on the border was a more thorough and rapid response to the natural disaster. By no means am I talking about the response on the ground. On our side of the State border we can be proud of those emergency services and workers who quickly swung into action. No, the problems lie with the processes and preparedness of State and local agencies in coordinating what might be called the red tape or bureaucracy of disaster relief. On the New South Wales side of the border we were too slow to convene community meetings, too slow to get the affected region declared an area of natural disaster, too slow to get emergency relief money into people's hands and unprepared to supply information, both printed and online, about what was happening.

My office in Albury was inundated with requests for information from residents, business operators and service providers caught up in the emergency. These were met with compassion and concern, but we found it unnecessarily difficult to obtain accurate and reliable information ourselves. The information channels from Sydney were obscured by fog. To ensure that this does not happen again, I request that action be taken to investigate concerns over the Mulwala event and to improve the State's processes for handling natural disaster assistance and communications. This should involve both State and local governments.

There are always complicating factors. Under-insurance or non-insurance of private property, the presence of asbestos, the threshold of 33 per cent destruction to a local government area to qualify for category C assistance are examples. However, we have an opportunity to learn from the handling of this extreme weather event and to get our processes in better shape. Assistance was made available to those whose homes were affected and whose belongings were destroyed by the tornado. I welcome government help with disaster relief under categories A and B. However, we in regional New South Wales need State and Federal Ministers to get together to review the natural disasters rule book. Old processes and threshold tests are proving to be slow, confusing and inequitable. We must introduce to the disaster relief rules a greater degree of flexibility for category C relief, particularly for natural disasters which cross borders or which impact on communities in narrow geographical bands. Category C is not up to the mark for today's unprecedented and fierce weather incidents. They can happen anywhere and as a State we must be prepared.

We can all be proud of the stunning response by so many people to the disaster. I express my thanks and gratitude to the State Emergency Service, the NSW Police Force, Fire and Rescue NSW, Corowa Shire Council staff who gave up their nights to get things done, the Mulwala Progress Association, the energy and utilities companies whose staff worked rapidly to restore electricity, water and sewerage services, and all the volunteers from service and sports clubs who got stuck into the emergency response and ongoing clean-up. Now it is time for the red tape clean-up.

SYLVANVALE FOUNDATION CHANGING NEEDS SERVICE

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla) [5.45 p.m.]: On 16 May I had the pleasure of attending the opening of Sylvanvale's Foundation Changing Needs Service in Hinkler Avenue, Caringbah, in the Cronulla electorate. I joined the Minister for Disability Services, the Hon. Andrew Constance (who is in the Chamber tonight), the member for Menai, Melanie Gibbons (who is in the chair tonight), Sutherland shire Councillor, Tom Croucher, representing the mayor, Councillor Kent Johns, and, most importantly, Sylvanvale staff, clients and their families. The Sylvanvale Foundation offers a range of support services to people with intellectual disabilities that provide opportunities for growth, development and independence. The new Caringbah Changing Needs Service is one such facility.

The new 20-bed supported accommodation facility houses people with high support needs, including physical and intellectual disability, dementia and early ageing symptoms. There are 10 beds available to people with complex medical needs and four villas for medical and physical support for those who are a little more independent. Nursing staff, therapy services and specialised educators are available to service users. This service is available to those whose needs can no longer be cared for in their existing residential care, which also helps free up accommodation for others.

The Caringbah facility contains a range of resources to foster clients' health and development, including a sensory garden and therapy rooms. One colourful room uses light, sound and texture to stimulate clients with sensory impairments and to assist with communication and cognitive development. Importantly, Sylvanvale's supported accommodation services also give residents the opportunity to meet with new people and to pursue interests and hobbies. Residents are also encouraged to build essential life skills—skills such as food preparation, cleaning, shopping, using computers and catching public transport. At the same time, it is important to recognise the diversity of needs and abilities among clients, and Sylvanvale has a variety of home services that cater for that diversity.

Financial support for some of the therapy rooms and facilities at Caringbah was made possible thanks to the efforts of Westfield Group and Sylvanvale board member Michael Lynch, who did a fundraising walk of the Kokoda Track in Papua New Guinea. I was pleased to hear Mr Lynch speak on the day and I commend him on his contribution to this fantastic achievement. The New South Wales Government committed funding of \$8 million for the project, which included the purchase of five properties through the Asset Strategy and Innovative Accommodation Program. This is part of a much broader expansion of supported accommodation across the State under the Government's \$2 billion growth program for disability services. Ageing, Disability and Home Care has a range of flexible support options for people with disability who are living independently or wanting to live independently.

Whether it is through a shared accommodation model like this one, intensive skills training for people transitioning to independent living, or practical drop-in support for those with less complex needs, a range of support is available to give people with disability choice and control, and the opportunity to achieve the level of independence they are willing and able to attain. It is the great work of non-government partners like Sylvanvale that is ensuring the various needs of individuals are being met through person-centred practice, particularly as we prepare for the rollout of DisabilityCare Australia. The New South Wales Government also provides Sylvanvale with recurrent funding of more than \$30 million annually to deliver a range of programs and services that provide support to people with disability, their families and carers. I have spoken previously in this House about Sylvanvale's services for children and young people with disability and in particular the work undertaken at the Mikarie Day Care Centre.

Flexible respite, day programs, social support, community participation, post-school options and transition to work programs are part of the suite of services that Sylvanvale delivers to the community. What was particularly moving at the Caringbah opening was the unveiling of the opening plaque not only by the Minister but also by resident Emma Chapman, and the great entertainment from the Sylvantones choir made up of infectious enthusiastic Sylvanvale clients. I commend Jill Deering, Chief Executive Officer, Sylvanvale Disability Services, Sylvanvale chairman Lorna Stone and the staff at the Caringbah supported accommodation facility on this outstanding new service. I thank the Minister for his support and enthusiasm for the project.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE (Bega—Minister for Ageing, and Minister for Disability Services) [5.50 p.m.]: I thank the member for Cronulla for his statement this afternoon. I am pleased that he was able to explain what has gone into a tremendous and much-needed facility for the Southerland Shire and particularly for the people of Cronulla. The member for Cronulla has worked tirelessly to elevate local issues as they relate to disability services in his community. It was a privilege to join with the member on this occasion to open the new Sylvanvale facility. Sylvanvale does a tremendous job under the leadership of Jill Deering and Lorna Stone. It continues to provide an excellent service. It is working around the clock preparing for DisabilityCare Australia. In advance of that the State Government will continue to support Sylvanvale and build capacity to ensure that people throughout the Sutherland Shire are given the support they need as we head towards DisabilityCare Australia.

PRINCE OF WALES HOSPITAL VOLUNTEER AWARDS

Mr BRUCE NOTLEY-SMITH (Coogee) [5.51 p.m.]: I inform the House of a ceremony that I attended recently where I presented awards and certificates honouring the work of the dedicated volunteers at the Prince of Wales Hospital in the Coogee electorate. It is important to acknowledge the efforts of our volunteers who make a tremendous difference in their local communities but whose efforts are not always known to the public. Australia recently celebrated National Volunteer Week, a week in which we sought to raise awareness of the efforts of six million Australians who donate their time and skills across the country every year to a variety of causes. It was a great opportunity to say a loud thank you to those volunteers.

When you consider that those six million people make up 36 per cent of our adult population it reminds us that we are very lucky in Australia to have such a passionate culture of charity and giving. The efforts of

volunteers in my electorate, particularly at the Prince of Wales Hospital, are reflective of this great tradition. For decades the Prince of Wales Volunteer Service has been an integral part of the hospital's wider reputation of service and community involvement, complementing its reputation as one of New South Wales and Australia's premier treatment facilities. Volunteers at Prince of Wales undertake a variety of functions, including visiting patients and working on wards such as the oncology, mental health, palliative care, vascular and respiratory wards. Volunteers also assist with administrative functions such as medical records and working in the hospital cafe, library and gift shop.

For patients who may not have families or whose families cannot always visit, a visit from a hospital volunteer can make all the difference in the world. Many patients who are at Prince of Wales Hospital for an extended stay get to know the volunteers well. Undoubtedly, the most valuable thing the volunteer service can offer is support and company to patients who may just need someone to talk to. I acknowledge in the House today the 26 award recipients. Certificates of appreciation were awarded to Jim Blackburn, Sherri Brightfield, Shirley Cole, Robert Doran, Leila Dupuv, Robyn Stevens and Jean Goudie. Service badges were awarded to people who had been with the volunteer service for extended periods of time. For five years of service I congratulate Narelle Black, Jan Campbell, Allan Cobran, Robert Duncan, Richard Gaffney, Dale Hafer, Judy Houlton, Jim Murasso, Camel Schembri, Merle Taylor and Christine Winter.

I congratulate Maria Norton on 10 years of service. I congratulate Jeanette Aldridge, Doreen Fisher and Shirley Kugler on 15 years of service. I congratulate Wayne Collins, Vasiliki Dimitropoulos and Evelyn Meyer on 20 years of service and I congratulate Veronica Langley on 25 years of service. Last, but certainly not least, I pay tribute to Sylvia Baynes for her massive 40 years of volunteer service at the hospital. Ms Baynes received special recognition at the ceremony for her administrative work in the hospital's offices and for organising the newspapers. Ms Baynes is known for her huge hugs for anyone she knows who arrives at the hospital.

I thank Audrey McCallum, emcee of the ceremony, and Ian Cox, Secretary of Prince of Wales Hospital Volunteer Service for organising the event. I also thank Dr Greg Stewart, Acting Chief Executive of South Eastern Sydney Local Health District, and Dr Jon Roberts, Director of Operations at Prince of Wales, who attended to recognise the special role the volunteers fulfil at the hospital. The long service of these volunteers is a testament to their devotion and willingness to make life easier for patients as well as for hospital staff. Their work also complements the work of the hospital's nurses and doctors in an often gloomy environment. This environment is inevitable in any hospital, however their contribution helps ease these underlying tensions. Whilst they ask for nothing in return, the reward undoubtedly comes in the knowledge that they are making a difference to people's lives and to the functioning of the hospital.

I was pleased that our Minister for Citizenship and Communities recently released a Statement of Principles for the Recognition of Volunteer Rights. This was a great step towards further acknowledging the value and contribution of volunteers in New South Wales. The fact that the number of volunteers in Australia doubled between 1995 and 2010 says a lot about the growing spirit of charity in our country. We should always strive to recognise the work of volunteers and I wholeheartedly congratulate and thank these volunteers for their work in my electorate and for Australia.

KELLYVILLE RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT (Baulkham Hills) [5.56 p.m.]: I bring the attention of the House to a matter that is currently the subject of much public debate across the northern part of my electorate of Baulkham Hills. As members familiar with the Hills will already know, there is a major and controversial potential development proposed for the intersection of Samantha Riley Drive and Old Windsor Road in Kellyville. In many ways to describe this development as controversial is a bit of an understatement. When it first came to the public's attention the proposal was for a 25-storey apartment block that I believed was completely out of character with the local area. Members should keep in mind that this part of Sydney remains somewhat semi-rural; it is the fringe of Sydney. The public response was understandably quite negative—to put it politely.

Thankfully such an over-the-top development is now off the table, although other less extreme but still inappropriate proposals are currently under consideration, including an 18-storey residential tower. I will make my position crystal clear for the benefit of my constituents. I am strongly opposed to any development on Samantha Riley Drive that is anywhere near as big as those that are currently being considered. It is completely inappropriate for a development of such a scale to go ahead in this part of The Hills. I am on the record as saying that in 2011, when the matter first arose, and my steadfast position has not changed. That being said, I am not anti-development; if anything the opposite is true. In particular I have been one of the Northwest

Business Park's staunchest advocates. I spent much of my pre-parliamentary life in the construction industry. We in The Hills have always understood that one of the conditions of the North West Rail Link would be higher residential densities around our new train stations, and rightly so.

This is simply a matter of responsible policy and something that I believe is widely accepted across The Hills. However, such an increase in residential densities needs to fit in seamlessly with the current character of The Hills shire. To do otherwise would be to sacrifice the unique features that make The Hills such an appealing and popular place to live and work. The developments currently being discussed in the media, in the community and across The Hills do not meet this test. Further, we must come to terms with the lessons of the late 1980s and early 1990s regarding the relationship between infrastructure and residential developments. We simply cannot afford to make those mistakes again. It is wrong to allow large residential developments to go ahead before the appropriate transport infrastructure and public amenity is in place.

Such developments should not be contemplated seriously until after the North West Rail Link is in place or at least near completion. To do otherwise would place too great a strain on local roads, transport and public parks. I encourage the efforts of the Mayor of The Hills shire, Councillor Dr Michelle Byrne, in regard to this issue. Residents of The Hills should rest assured that in Councillor Byrne they have a fierce and loyal public servant. Finally, I repeat that I am actually pro-development. However, I believe that such developments must be in the best interests of residents. I would welcome a revised development proposal below 15 storeys under certain conditions, but not until pressure on local public and motor transport is addressed.

ARMENIAN, ASSYRIAN AND GREEK GENOCIDES

Mr ANDREW ROHAN (Smithfield) [6.01 p.m.]: I support an important motion that was passed unanimously by this House that recognised the Assyrian, Armenian and Greek genocide by the Ottoman Empire between 1914 and 1923. I thank the Premier of New South Wales for moving this motion. I thank him on behalf of my constituents; I thank him on behalf of every victim of the Assyrian, Armenian and Greek genocide and their descendants; and I thank him on behalf of every activist for genocide recognition around the world who has demanded that history record the truth and that justice be done.

In my inaugural address to this House, I recalled that my journey into this place started in the summer of 1918 when my father was just a teenager and my mother a young child. They and their families were among 90,000 Assyrian Christian refugees fleeing their ancestral homeland to escape persecution. My parents and the other refugees were fleeing from the Ottoman Empire to escape what would later be known as the "Armenian, Assyrian and Pontic Greek Genocide". By the grace of God my parents survived, for the reason they were protected, and protected by none other than an Australian soldier. Lieutenant General Sir Stanley George Savage, KBE, CB, DSO, MC, ED, at that time a 28-year-old captain, was selected to join "Dunsterforce", an elite task force assigned to resupplying the Assyrians fighting in Persia. Unable to complete the task due to the fall of Urmia, he persuaded his British commander that he should stay back with the remaining refugees.

For six weeks, Captain Savage used all the means at his disposal to protect the refugees against the perpetual onslaught of the Ottoman Forces. Reasoning that the Turkish commander would concentrate on killing him before harming the refugees, he strategically placed his command at the rear of the refugee procession and deliberately drew enemy fire. By offering his command as a target, even though he was outnumbered one hundred to one, Captain Savage managed to slow the enemy advance long enough for most of the refugees to flee. This act of courage and self-sacrifice was far beyond what was expected of a junior officer in the field. Captain Savage was subsequently decorated with the Distinguished Service Order for his efforts. Australian journalist, historian and official war correspondent, Charles Bean, wrote:

The stand made by Savage and his eight companions that evening and during half of the next day against hundreds of the enemy thirsting like wolves to get at the defenceless throng was as fine as any episode known to the present writer in the history of this war.

My parents survived the genocide because of the heroic actions of Sir Stanley George Savage; and as the member for Smithfield I pay tribute to him again today in this House. During World War I more than 750,000 Assyrians together with 1.5 million Armenians and 500,000 Greeks were murdered by the Ottoman Empire Forces in an attempt to cleanse the land of all the Christian minorities from Turkey. This was the first genocide of the twentieth century. As a councillor I was proud to have supported an Assyrian and ANZAC Memorial Plaque to acknowledge the role Sir Stanley Savage played in protecting the 90,000 Assyrian refugees as well as the Assyrian Levies, which fought side by side with Australian servicemen in World War I and World War II.

I was also proud to support an Assyrian Genocide Monument honouring the 750,000 Assyrian men, women and children murdered during the genocide of 1918-1923 by the Ottoman Empire. As a member of Parliament, I am proud to have spoken about the genocide on a number of occasions in this Chamber. Ms Gulseren Celik, the Consul General of the Republic of Turkey, recently wrote to all members of Parliament to condemn a motion recognising the Assyrian, Armenian and Greek genocide in the Legislative Council by Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile. Ms Celik does not have to take my word for this account of the genocide. It comes from the official records of the Australian War Memorial.

I ask: Why was Stanley George Savige, an Australian soldier, given a Distinguished Service Order for protecting refugees from the Ottoman Forces? Why did the refugees need any protection from the Ottoman Forces? Why were the Ottoman Forces targeting un-armed, helpless refugees in the first place? I needed no better reason than that to support the motion, which recognised the Assyrian, Armenian and Pontic Greek genocide. Earlier today in this Parliament the Parliamentary Friends of Assyria held a reception to mark this historic occasion. I thank the Premier for moving the motion in the House in the presence of a wide sector of representatives of the Assyrian, Armenian and Greek communities together with a number of my parliamentary colleagues and representatives of a number of other communities.

OUTER METROPOLITAN BUS SERVICE CONTRACTS

Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) [6.06 p.m.]: I acknowledge the recently elected member for Northern Tablelands who is in the Chamber. I hope he had a good first week in this place. Well done. I speak on an issue that is having a considerable impact on three regional bus companies from the Hunter and Central Coast. I understand that as many as six other private bus regions may also be affected. In short, those nine operators are being offered just a three-year future under the category of outer metropolitan. Meanwhile metropolitan bus operators have secured a 5 plus 1, plus 1, plus 1 year term and regional bus operators have recently secured a seven-year term. Beyond three years is complete uncertainty for the nine operators. This makes investment in infrastructure, employment and bus stock at best a dangerous gamble, and at worst a foolish waste.

I will read on to *Hansard* some words that were offered at a gathering in Parliament House 48 hours ago by Mr Aaron Lewis of Rover Motor Coaches. His words might be deemed by the ill-informed to be an attack on the Government, but they are not. In fact Aaron offers advice for both sides of politics. No, his words are not a political statement, they are a plea. They are a plea from a businessman who has a family operation with more than 88 years history. They are a plea that offer more common sense than many things said in this Chamber. Aaron said:

It used to be a truism in our industry that "our past assures our future". That all changed in 2006 when the new contract system commenced and despite performing well for the last 7 years we have never been under more pressure to prove we offer value for money—that we are efficient. We are soon to negotiate for a very short renewal term of just 3 years.

When the recommendations of the Unsworth Review were handed down it was significant that it noted that "country and regional centres were not microcosms of Sydney and should not be treated as such". I quote this as it was lifted directly from my own submission.

The current Minister for Transport, the Hon Gladys Berejiklian, was also clear on this point at the recent Manly bus conference.

We hear a lot today about value for money and cost to Government. We have no problem with that and will willingly state our case as highly efficient service providers operating under strict and complex regulations. It has always been that way; from the 1920s when local Shire councils were the regulators, through 90 years of various changes to the Passenger Transport Act, right up to today, when the level of service demanded by the public has never been greater and the administrative requirements have never been higher.

Now we are being asked to show more efficiency.

The owner operators here tonight represent a particularly stubborn and resilient type of businessman. How else can you describe the survivors of a 38 year period of patronage decline? In my company's case from 1967 when a major new road opened and public transport commenced a losing battle with the car and 2005 when the Government policy introduced Pensioner Excursion Tickets which saw a tremendous resurgence in the use of existing services.

The Government of the day was smart in the late 1960s. They cancelled the local train service, invited us to provide a regulated bus service, and then forced us to continue a contracted run to the Newcastle BHP for all shifts even for two and a half years after the night shift had effectively closed down. We carried those losses 100% and now WE are told to show more efficiency.

One of the ways we have remained in business for so long, 88 years in our case, is by being innovative and implementing solutions with a long term view. While regulators have talked, we have gone ahead and taken the inevitable and morally correct action. We led the way on introducing double deck buses before WWII, we led the way on introducing trailer buses after the war, we led the way on low floor buses in the late 1990s and we lead the way in seat belt equipped buses today. Efficiency can be measured in more than dollars.

Put simply if we weren't efficient we wouldn't still be here. We have survived the long decline of public transport and are now a vibrant part of the growth and renewal of transport as an essential service.

In country regions like Cessnock we never had the population growth that drives the need for public transport, we are nothing like Sydney. In fact, we are essentially school bus operators. The basic ingredients for heavy demand on public transport simply don't exist in regional areas and the Government recognised this over 40 years ago when they cut our rail line. Buses are vastly cheaper to provide than trains and that factor alone points to proof of our efficiency.

Just how much saving does the Government realistically think it can achieve in a regional operation such as mine? We represent just .1% of bus patronage in this state's various contracted regions. Given the small scale of our operation the potential savings are obviously less than the cost of the process.

Why are experienced operators who have historic links to country towns being put through this expensive process with little possible gain to be had? Who here would take on a business on such a short term of just 3 years?

Nevertheless I am happy that the decision is to negotiate with me as the incumbent and offer this cost efficiency up front. Let the owners negotiate directly in good faith.

The proposed negotiation process cost to me in lawyers, consultants and accountants is more than my annual net profit. How do I recoup that in a 3 year contract?

Why are we not being offered a renewable contract? That's not efficient. I imagine the cost to government to run the process this way is at least double our costs.

And apparently the intent is to do it all over again in just 3 years' time.

An Outer Metropolitan operation is vastly different to a Metro operation. We can't change our geographic location, or our population density. We are country regions thrown into a Metropolitan based contract system that simply cannot apply to us in any meaningful way.

To pre-empt the negotiation by the expectation that we can further cut costs ignores these facts.

I ask that the Minister acknowledges our unique differences and recognise our professional commitment to the task of service provision as we have done for nearly 90 years. Thank you.

It is right that I use Aaron's words at length. He lives and breathes the industry, just as his father did and as his father's father did. I, for one, hope that sanity will prevail and that these great local companies will have many decades of successful operation ahead of them. The journey can start right now if the contract offered were a three plus three-year term.

PALLIATIVE CARE SPECIALIST POSITIONS

Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie) [6.12 p.m.]: I bring to the attention of the House a situation that is causing concern to reputable advocacy groups such as Cancer Council NSW and Palliative Care NSW as an impending crisis. It is a predicament that is of concern not only to constituents in my electorate but also to people across New South Wales. The concern is for the imminent loss of 55 community-based specialist positions in palliative care across the State as the result of the pending conclusion of the four-year National Partnership Agreement on Hospital and Health Workforce Reform agreed to in 2008.

Ironically, it was just last week in this very building at the Cancer Council's twentieth Biggest Morning Tea that one of my constituents, Howard Dick, a member of the regional advisory committee for the Cancer Council in the Hunter and Central Coast, expressed to me his concerns about this matter. The National Palliative Care Strategy introduced in 2010 was endorsed by the Commonwealth and State governments to integrate palliative care with health services and seed funding was received from 2009 until 2013 under a Council of Australian Governments agreement. In New South Wales that agreement facilitated the creation of the 55 community-based positions I referred to earlier.

The people employed under this multidisciplinary program include medical specialists, registrars, nurses, counsellors, administrative staff, education officers and in at least one case, an education officer dedicated to working with the Aboriginal community on the Central Coast. The program has funded six full-time equivalent positions on the Central Coast and eight in the Hunter region, providing vital services that have been available to support constituents of mine and their families through the difficult end-of-life stage. The partnership between the Commonwealth and States specified that from 30 June this year the States would assume responsibility for funding these positions.

The New South Wales Government has not yet committed to continuing this funding and, as a consequence, the future of these positions and the people employed in them remains up in the air, just five

weeks out from that deadline. This situation has severe implications for the people currently employed in those positions and for our community. I am informed that some of these health professionals have already left their positions due to the uncertainty—highly qualified people we can ill afford to lose from this critical and under-resourced area of health care. It is widely acknowledged that there is a shortage of palliative care specialists in the health professions. Receiving compassionate, quality care at end of life is something we, as a caring society, accord a high priority, but there are simply not enough qualified carers to meet the demand.

I am informed that one of the key aspects of the positions funded under the Council of Australian Governments agreement is an emphasis on providing support for people who want to be cared for at home. This has the dual benefit of allowing people who express this wish to spend the final weeks and months of their life in a place where they feel emotionally secure while easing the burden of care on hospitals and hospices, where resources are stretched. Another consequence of the pending cutbacks will be the loss of resources to train junior health professionals and general practitioners to deliver home-based palliative care in collaboration with specialists.

As Shayne Connell, Regional Manager of the Hunter-Central Coast division of the Cancer Council, expressed to me, this initiative was moving palliative care in this State towards best practice but a failure to maintain the funding of these positions threatens to wipe out four years of progress. The Government has signalled that it will direct additional funding of \$35 million to palliative care but to date this money has not been committed and advocacy groups advise me that it will not, in any case, secure the 55 positions under threat. I understand one of the great frustrations of these advocacy groups is what they have described to me as the wall of silence they feel they have met in response to representations they have made to the Minister and the Department of Health in a bid to have this situation resolved. They tell me that written responses have been non-committal and that palliative care professionals have been advised by their managers not to discuss the issue.

When queried on the State Government's intentions last month by the *Newcastle Herald*, a spokesperson from the Minister's department reportedly said the Government was "examining options" in relation to the maintenance of the Council of Australian Governments-funded services. I acknowledge the reply by the Minister for Health to my question in question time today about these concerns. The Minister spoke in suitably supportive terms of palliative care services and I have no doubt that she would like to ensure that all of these positions are continued. However, we are running desperately short of time to do this and I therefore request the Government to state its intentions in this regard and end the uncertainty that has left the affected healthcare professionals and the patients, families and carers who draw on these services in limbo.

Private members' statements concluded.

**The House adjourned, pursuant to standing and sessional orders, at 6.18 p.m. until
Tuesday 18 June 2013 at 12 noon.**
