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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Tuesday 18 June 2013

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

The Speaker read the Prayer and acknowledgement of country.

APPROPRIATION BILL 2013

APPROPRIATION (PARLIAMENT) BILL 2013

STATE REVENUE AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (BUDGET MEASURES) BILL 2013

Bills introduced on motion by Mr Mike Baird, read a first time and printed.

Second Reading

Mr MIKE BAIRD (Manly—Treasurer, and Minister for Industrial Relations) [12.01 p.m.]: I move:

That these bills be now read a second time:

BUDGET SPEECH

This budget sets New South Wales apart from governments across the world: It slows expense growth, accelerates spending on infrastructure, and reduces net debt—an extraordinary trifecta in light of the challenges we face.

We have spent two years fixing the mess, but with this, our third budget, we turn securely towards the future.

The budget consolidates two years of tough decisions, two years of reform, two years of stringent expense control.

The themes of this budget are jobs, housing and infrastructure.

It will boost the confidence of small businesses across the State to invest, grow and hire.

It includes measures to boost housing supply where it is most needed.

And it includes details of some of the largest and most visionary infrastructure projects in the history of our State.

In order to boost jobs and growth, and to reinvest in public infrastructure, the Government has reversed the expense growth juggernaut that was allowed to run out of control under the former Government.

Despite revenues falling below expectations, we have lived within our means, we have invested in services and infrastructure, but we have also reduced net debt: That is the fiscal story of this budget.

Since I last stood here to deliver a Budget Speech, the Government has released its 20-year State Infrastructure Strategy, informed by the work of Infrastructure New South Wales.

The vision laid out by the Government will become a reality, but only because we are prepared to create capacity on the balance sheet by recycling assets.

Last month, over the howls of those opposite, the O'Farrell Government, through the long-term lease of Port Botany and Port Kembla, executed the largest transaction, in net terms, in the history of the State.

This will allow us to simultaneously fund the largest urban road project and the largest rail project in the country.

It turns the action that commuters across Sydney have been demanding into a reality.

The budget contains a vision to revitalise our global city and reinvent our second largest city.

It demonstrates how the gains achieved through tough decisions will be delivered to every region of New South Wales.

It builds on the employment growth that has been achieved since the 2011 election.

Despite the challenges, we on this side of the House see a future for New South Wales with the most new jobs in the country, with the fastest-growing economy in the country, and with the largest infrastructure program in the country.

The 2013-14 budget secures that future.

Economic outlook

The budget has been set in the context of a fragile global economic outlook. Growth in the world economy has been revised downwards since the half-yearly review and the Eurozone remains in recession.

China, one of the State's major trading partners, experienced a modest slowing in early 2013. This means our economy has had to manage the fallout from lower commodity prices and a relatively high value of the Australian dollar.

At a national level, the actions of the Federal Government have further inhibited economic confidence, investment and consumption. As a result, the Federal budget last month confirmed a further decline in GST revenues.

We do not have to look far to see the challenges we face. The data around us paints a sombre picture. The weak domestic economy has seen most States register zero or negative economic growth. To the north, Queensland is facing a \$5 billion budget deficit, while the best Federal Labor can manage, after years of promises to the contrary, is a budget \$20 billion in the red. These examples show we cannot be complacent.

However, the backdrop is even more remarkable given the positive economic signs emerging in New South Wales. The budget revises economic growth in 2012-13 up by one half of a percentage point, to 2.5 per cent. Employment growth has been revised up by three-quarters of a percentage point to 1.5 per cent. After lagging well behind the pack for a decade, New South Wales has moved back towards the lead. We have the highest jobs increase and, in the year to March, State demand grew faster than any State except Queensland.

This Government has invested in the key drivers of economic growth: jobs, housing and infrastructure. The success of this approach is most evident in the jobs growth experienced in New South Wales since the March 2011 election.

Over this period, New South Wales has registered the strongest employment increase of any State in the nation. We promised 100,000 new jobs in our first term, but total employment has increased by 128,900 in just two years.

Housing is also on the rebound. In the April quarter, private building approvals were 26.5 per cent higher than a year ago and 14.1 per cent above the decade average. We are boosting the supply of new housing in the State and thereby delivering much-needed growth to one of the key drivers of the State's economy.

Budget result

The revised budget result for 2012-13 is a deficit of \$374 million, compared with an estimate of \$824 million in last year's budget and \$776 million in the half-yearly review.

As foreshadowed in the budget last year, a new accounting standard for reporting superannuation asset earnings is taking effect this year. The impact of the revised standard is a \$1.6 billion negative adjustment to the operating result in 2013-14, and a further \$3.5 billion across the remaining three years of the forward estimates.

It should be noted that the underlying fiscal position of the State has not changed—we still have the same assets, the same revenues and the same expenses—and the cash position and the debt position are unaffected by this change.

On a traditional or like-for-like basis, the estimated budget result for 2013-14 is a smaller deficit of \$329 million, \$94 million less than was forecast in the half-yearly review. The budget is expected to reach a surplus position in 2014-15.

This is a significant result in the economic context I have described and a sure sign our policy settings are working to secure the future of New South Wales. Even after the changes to the way interest on superannuation assets is recorded, we are shrinking deficits and moving towards growing surpluses. And the budget outcome is even more remarkable given the revenue story. Compared with the estimates a year ago, excluding policy decisions, revenues across 2012-13 and 2013-14 are down by almost \$700 million.

Over the four years to 2015-16, since the half-yearly review, royalties, taxes and duties are down by almost \$2.5 billion, while the weaker GST pool reduces revenues by around \$850 million.

In these circumstances, the Government has managed to protect the budget by a simple expedient followed by families across New South Wales: controlling expenses and living within its means. Every year since 2011 the budget has delivered a significant turnaround in the face of falling revenue projections: \$5.2 billion in 2011-12, almost \$5 billion in 2012-13, and \$700 million this year.

This financial year, for the third year running, expenses are expected to come in lower than anticipated. This is something that did not occur once during the previous 16 years of the Labor Government.

Balance sheet

In a context of economic challenges, the Government's fiscal policy has also focused on management of the State's balance sheet. By recycling assets that are not part of core public service delivery, we have created a capacity to invest in new infrastructure, without pushing debt to levels that would trigger a rating downgrade. This strategy also brings in new partners, fresh expertise and additional capital for existing assets, at no expense to taxpayers.

The \$5 billion received less than three weeks ago from the long-term lease of Port Botany and Port Kembla was a landmark event in the fiscal strategy of the Government. It showed how, as Liberals and Nationals, we understand the way the private sector and financial markets operate.

The transaction showed what can be achieved when the right asset is marketed at the right time, with the right process. That process was marked by transparency and competitiveness, with the price achieved exceeding all comparable benchmarks.

As a result of our expense control and balance sheet management, even as we invest record amounts in this budget on infrastructure, net debt in the general government sector will actually decline. Net debt in June next year will be \$15.7 billion, about \$4.8 billion less than predicted in last year's budget. Indeed, net debt in 2017 will now be lower than last year's estimate for 2014.

New South Wales families can feel more secure knowing that, with debt levels surging in just about every country around the world, we here have reduced debt through our balance sheet strategy and expense control.

Newcastle

We continue this strategy in this budget. Today I can announce the Government intends to proceed to a long-term lease of the Port of Newcastle, the largest coal port in the world, subject to a scoping study. The success of Port Botany and Port Kembla dictates that we act now.

The big winner will be Newcastle itself. Should the transaction be successful, \$340 million of the proceeds will go towards the revitalisation of Newcastle.

This will be more than a revitalisation: it will be the reinvention of Newcastle as a modern city. The removal of the railway line between Wickham and Newcastle, as previously announced, will renew Hunter Street and return

the city's harbour to the embrace of its people. Today I can announce the heavy rail service will be replaced by light rail. Subject to the completion of a business case, this will form the beginning of a light rail service linking the Newcastle central business district with surrounding suburbs.

In the 30-year period of the opening up of the Australian economy to international competition, perhaps no other city has been asked to make more painful adjustments than Newcastle. Today, Newcastle's time has come.

Infrastructure

Over the four years to 2016-17, the infrastructure program will total \$59.7 billion. We are reducing spending in the electricity sector to assist in putting downward pressure on electricity prices, but we are increasing our spend in the general government sector, ploughing money into roads, public transport, hospitals and schools. State funding over the next four years averages \$9 billion, an increase of 39 per cent over the four years to 2012-13.

An enormous part of this effort is devoted to public transport: rail grants for infrastructure over the forward estimates are almost \$10 billion. The budget shows we are delivering the largest rail project currently underway in Australia. I can confirm the overall cost of the North West Rail Link is expected to be \$8.3 billion, with trains running in 2019.

The Government has embraced Infrastructure New South Wales key recommendation, the 33-kilometre WestConnex project. The recent ports transaction has secured the funding. The Government has committed \$1.8 billion across the forward estimates, including more than \$100 million in 2013-14 to the WestConnex project.

In Opposition, we said we would establish a \$5 billion infrastructure fund. At just over the halfway mark of our term, the balance in Restart NSW is \$4.7 billion. Restart is the means by which WestConnex will simultaneously fix two of the "missing links" in Sydney's road system; it will ease congestion, improve travel times and boost productivity.

A private sector plan to address another notorious missing link, between the F3 and the M2, has progressed to stage 3 under the Government's unsolicited proposals assessment process. The budget funds the stage 3 assessment and reserves in Restart NSW a contribution of up to \$400 million. If this proposal is able to proceed, it will deliver a continuous motorway between the Central Coast and Hunter and western and south-western Sydney.

Services

The savings and expense controls we have initiated have given us the capacity to prioritise and deliver enhanced services and infrastructure for the community. This budget continues to cement the three pillars on which its two predecessors have been built: improving services, delivering infrastructure, and protecting the vulnerable.

Health

In a \$17.9 billion Health budget for 2013-14, we are delivering:

- \$220 million for increased activity, including 69,000 extra emergency department attendances, and
- upgrades to health facilities across the State worth \$1.2 billion. These include capital works at Campbelltown, at Hornsby, at St George Hospital, at Royal North Shore and at the Northern Beaches.

Transport

The budget provides a major boost to transport:

- \$4.1 billion over four years for the North West Rail Link, with tunnel boring machines due to be in the ground next year
- \$900 million this year for new Waratah trains and \$142 million this year for light rail, and
- funding for roads infrastructure upgrades needed to support a growing Central Coast, including construction to upgrade Wyong Road and the Central Coast Highway at West Gosford.

Police, Law and Order

Sustainable finances mean safer communities:

- the allocation for the New South Wales Police Force in the budget is a record \$3.4 billion, and includes funding to increase police numbers by a further 489 officers by 2015, and
- there is over \$120 million for the construction of new courts and upgrades of existing court facilities

Education

Education spending in 2013-14 is budgeted at \$14 billion, an increase of more than half a billion dollars on 2012-13:

- we have an ambitious education reform agenda and have made tough decisions in order to release an additional \$1.76 billion over the next six years
- under the National Education Reform Agreement, the Commonwealth will provide an additional \$3.3 billion to support the reforms. We will always cooperate with the Federal Government to produce better outcomes for our students, and
- capital spending of \$530 million in the coming year will allow us to get on with delivering five new public schools on the lower North Shore, at Spring Farm, The Ponds, Strathfield and Crows Nest

Supporting the Vulnerable

Secure finances also allow us to support the vulnerable.

The Ageing, Disability and Home Care allocation of \$2.82 billion includes \$440 million to deliver the third year of Stronger Together 2, the Government's \$2 billion growth funding program for disability services.

Nothing in the budget brings me more pride than to confirm there is an allocation of \$585 million for the launch of the National Disability Insurance Scheme in the Hunter Valley.

We were the first to sign on to the National Disability Insurance Scheme; by reining back expenses, we have been able to secure the future for those whose futures have challenges few of us will ever have to face.

The Government is also improving services for vulnerable young people through Social Benefit Bonds, a pioneering new mechanism for engaging the private sector and private investment in delivering positive social outcomes. Social Benefit Bonds capture who we are as Liberals and Nationals. Of course we understand the Government must deliver key services such as health, education and public safety. But in many areas we believe our best role is as enablers—creating the conditions for the private sector or non-government organisations to do what they do best.

Regional New South Wales

The budget also delivers for rural and regional New South Wales:

- over four years, there is \$4.4 billion for the Pacific Highway and \$735 million for the Princes Highway
- of the \$1.2 billion health capital works upgrades, almost a third will be spent on health facilities in the regions—in Bega, in Kempsey, in Wollongong, in Port Macquarie, in Dubbo, in Lismore
- Restart NSW is funding \$120 million for the Resources for Regions program to deliver infrastructure for communities affected by mining activity, and
- the fund is also providing a \$135 million contribution over four years towards Bridges for the Bush, a program for replacing and upgrading 17 bridges in regional New South Wales.

Savings and revenue measures

This is a reforming Government. For the past two years, we have led the nation on reform and innovation, whether it is franchising ferry services, placing WorkCover and police death and disability insurance on a sustainable footing, delivering Social Benefit Bonds, restructuring Sydney's rail network, returning local decisions to local schools, or reforming the planning system.

We have reformed and we will continue to reform.

By creating a single corporate structure for the three State-owned electricity distributors, we have saved \$600 million in operating expenses and \$1.9 billion in capital spending—savings that can be passed on to families by placing downward pressure on power bills.

We have been more efficient as a Government. We said we would have fewer staff in head offices, and more on the front line; now it is happening. Latest figures show the first contraction in the overall footprint of the New South Wales public sector since reliable figures began in 2002, but at the same time we have hired 4,000 nurses, 500 school teachers and 370 police officers. Annual employee expense growth has fallen from 6 per cent to under 3 per cent.

But more needs to be done to free up government resources so they can be used to best effect.

Today I confirm an extension of the efficiency dividend that will yield savings of \$250 million in 2015-16 and \$500 million in 2016-17. Our efficiency dividend, labour expense cap and other measures will save New South Wales taxpayers almost \$19 billion in the six years to 2016-17. We have delivered savings in the past two years and we will continue to deliver them in future years.

But this budget is not just about government. While businesses struggle to regain confidence, we need to reform and improve the conditions in which New South Wales businesses operate. Every business I visit, every business chamber I meet across the State, testifies to the ongoing challenges in the small business sector. This Government has acted to support small businesses because we know small business is the lifeblood of our economy. This is in the DNA of the Liberals and Nationals.

We have appointed the State's first Small Business Commissioner, reduced workers compensation premiums and delivered payroll tax rebates through our Jobs Action Plan. But we know that there is more to do and more reform to undertake.

I turn finally to our latest policy initiatives to promote growth and jobs by supporting those who drive our economy.

Today I announce we are raising the payroll tax threshold from \$689,000 to \$750,000, while removing indexation. This measure means around 1,300 businesses that were previously liable for payroll tax will not pay a cent of payroll tax next year, while all businesses that continue to pay the tax will be more than \$3,000 better off. In the longer term, the removal of indexation will broaden the base of payroll tax and make it more efficient; over the next three years, it will provide businesses with the relief they are looking for.

But we believe we can do even more to boost employment in the State. Our Jobs Action Plan payroll tax rebate has been a key plank of the policies that have produced the strongest jobs growth in the nation. Today I announce we are extending the policy for an extra two years, until June 2015, and increasing the rebate from \$4,000 to \$5,000 for each new job. Business needs the support of government so that it, rather than government, can build the economy.

With the measures announced today, we want to help business to employ, employ and employ more. As Liberals and Nationals, we want New South Wales to be the best place for business in the nation.

But the housing sector, so critical to our economy, also requires assistance. In the Building the State package, announced in the budget last year, the Government recognised the need to boost housing supply.

I am pleased to announce an extension of this successful program. This year, the \$15,000 First Home Owner's Grant has been extended by two years. And in 2013-14, more than \$300 million will be used to provide priority infrastructure. This includes infrastructure to release new employment lands through the construction of Old Wallgrove Road, as well as 11 critical projects to accelerate the delivery of an additional 42,900 housing lots.

Over the past two budgets, the Government has funded infrastructure for nearly 120,000 new homes.

Conclusion

This budget marks a pivotal moment in the first term of the O'Farrell Government.

The tough decisions we have made now provide a foundation for future growth and prosperity.

The budget is a snapshot of who we are as a government.

It shows how we are different from our predecessors.

It shows what can be achieved when a government acts in the interests of the community, free of external control and internal disunity.

We are doing the hard yards, undertaking the critical reforms, facing up to the tough decisions.

We are taking control of our finances, not at some indeterminate point in the future, but now. Our achievements are already evident.

We are not leaving the challenges to the next government or the next generation.

We are advancing along the road of renewing our balance sheet, recycling mature assets so that we can invest in new ones.

We are reshaping our global city, reinventing our second city and rebuilding the regions.

The budget demonstrates conclusively that this Government's commitment to repairing the State's broken infrastructure is not about words—it is about actions.

The tough decisions we have made are beginning to bear fruit.

Now we will accelerate the delivery of improved services and infrastructure, while protecting the vulnerable.

This is our commitment to the people of New South Wales.

Two years ago, the challenges were enormous.

But today we can say the Government of New South Wales, and the people of New South Wales, have risen to meet them.

The people of New South Wales can look forward with enthusiasm and optimism.

This budget secures the future of New South Wales.

I commend the bills to the House.

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

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Mr Mike Baird tabled copies of the Budget Speech 2013-14, Budget Paper No. 1; Budget Statement 2013-14, Budget Paper No. 2; Budget Estimates 2013-14, Budget Paper No. 3; Infrastructure Statement 2013-14, Budget Paper No. 4; NSW 2021, Performance Report 2013-14; Budget Overview 2013-14; and Infrastructure Overview 2013-14.

Ordered to be printed on motion by Mr Mike Baird.

The SPEAKER: Order! I advise members that copies of the budget papers are available on the internet and for collection from the Table Office.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders: Order of Business

Motion by Mr Brad Hazzard agreed to:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended to:

- (1) Amend the resolution of 29 May 2013 to provide for the Speaker to leave the chair forthwith until 2.15 p.m.
- (2) Provide for the following routine of business after the commencement of government business:
 - (a) at 5.30 p.m. the giving of general business notices of motions (general notices);
 - (b) private members' statements;
 - (c) matter of public importance; and
 - (d) the House to adjourn without motion moved at the conclusion of the matter of public importance.

[The Speaker left the chair at 12.33 p.m. The House resumed at 2.15 p.m.]

ADMINISTRATION OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE STATE

THE SPEAKER: I report the receipt of the following message from His Excellency the Lieutenant-Governor:

T. F. BATHURST
Lieutenant-Governor

Office of the Governor
Sydney, 1 June 2013

The Honourable Thomas Frederick Bathurst, Lieutenant-Governor of the State of New South Wales, has the honour to inform the Legislative Assembly that, consequent on his return to the State and as a result of the Governor of New South Wales, Professor Marie Bashir, having assumed the administration of the Government of the Commonwealth, he has assumed the administration of the Government of the State.

ASSENT TO BILLS

Assent to the following bills was reported:

Casino Control Amendment (Supervisory Levy) Bill 2013
Child Protection Legislation Amendment (Children's Guardian) Bill 2013
Education Amendment (School Providers for Overseas Students) Bill 2013
Energy Services Corporations Amendment (Distributor Efficiency) Bill 2013
Gaming Machines Amendment (Multi-terminal Gaming Machines in Clubs) Bill 2013
Independent Commission Against Corruption and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2013
State Owned Corporations Legislation Amendment (Staff Directors) Bill 2013
Victims Rights and Support Bill 2013

ADMINISTRATION OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE STATE

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

MARIE BASHIR
Governor

Office of the Governor
Sydney, 16 June 2013

Professor Marie Bashir, Governor of New South Wales, has the honour to inform the Legislative Assembly that she has re-assumed the administration of the Government of the State.

AUSTRALIA V IRAQ FIFA WORLD CUP QUALIFYING MATCH

Ministerial Statement

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL (Ku-ring-gai—Premier, and Minister for Western Sydney) [2.19 p.m.]: This evening this sporting nation will turn its eyes to Sydney once again as the epicentre of an international sporting event. The Socceroos must beat Iraq to secure passage to Brazil for the biggest tournament on Earth—the Fédération Internationale de Football Association World Cup. The venue for the game, ANZ Stadium, is sold out, with 83,000 fans ready to shout their lungs out to support the Socceroos. Hotels are filling up, but

hopefully will not be totally full, and restaurants will be full. The importance of this event being held in this city is that it adds to economic activity and it adds to the jobs that we are seeking to deliver to the people of this State. Anticipation in this State is reaching fever pitch.

I am proud to say that this event is here because of the great work of Destination NSW in conjunction with the Football Federation of Australia. I pay tribute to Frank Lowy, who has been a great advocate for the sport of football in this State and nation. I pay tribute to David Gallop for his work as Administrator of the Football Federation of Australia. There were days when an event such as this would have been held in any other city except Sydney, but now we are the number one place for sporting events in this nation. Next month Sydney will host Manchester United, the world's biggest sporting club, when the team will play the A-League All Stars.

Ms Noreen Hay: Shame.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: What a shame that the member for Wollongong cannot support us for this event. I thought her name was Noreen, not Chelsea. Manchester United will play the A-League All Stars in front of another sold-out crowd at ANZ Stadium. I am told that a third of the people attending the event will come from outside this State or outside this country. The tourists that will come to this city will support jobs. Yesterday I was delighted to join with one of Sydney's favourite sons, Tim Cahill, the boy from Bexley who has made it big in football, in renaming the Cahill Expressway the Tim Cahill Expressway. Mark Schwarzer, a champion goalkeeper, is one of our home grown products. Lucas Neill, our great captain, is another Sydney identity who comes from the northern beaches.

Indeed, the team that will take the field tonight reads like a snapshot of a modern multicultural Australia: Lucas Neill to Tim Cahill, Mark Bresciano to Archie Thompson, Sasa Ognjenovski to Mile Jedinak. These great players will take the field in the green and gold to ensure that this country once again reaches the highest levels of sporting achievement. I am delighted that this event is being held in Sydney. I have been told that those who cannot attend will be able to watch it via the Fox broadcast. This is another attempt by the Government to ensure that major events are held in this city, not only to provide satisfaction to our residents but also to drive the economy, tourism and the jobs upon which families across this State depend.

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON (Blacktown—Leader of the Opposition) [2.23 p.m.]: I also wish the Socceroos all the best. Australia punches well above its weight in the World Cup competition. The great Socceroos of the 1970s such as Johnny Warren, Ray Baartz and Denis Yaager come to mind. We hope that the team playing tonight will follow in those great footsteps and take us to the World Cup in Brazil. It is hard not to get excited whenever someone plays in the green and gold, and tonight will be no exception. The almost 83,000 tickets to the event at ANZ Stadium are sold out and I am sure that most spectators will be wearing green and gold and cheering on our team. I watched the brilliant 4-0 win over Jordan last week. The match was 1-0 at half time, but there were three amazing goals during the second half. That gives me great hope that tonight our team will do us proud. I know that it has our best wishes, that it will be victorious and that it will go to Brazil, where it will once again do us proud.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Notices of Motions

Government Business Notices of Motions (for Bills) given.

QUESTION TIME

[Question time commenced at 2.26 p.m.]

STATE BUDGET AND INFRASTRUCTURE AND JOBS

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: I direct my question to the Premier. Given that the budget reveals massive revenue increases from taxes, fines and fares, why is the Government proposing further cuts to local jobs and services and slashing infrastructure spending by \$2.1 billion over the next three years?

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: If ever anyone wanted a demonstration of why those opposite should never be on the Treasury bench, it is that question. What drives stamp duty and payroll taxes? It is economic growth. Every government in this country, whether it be Labor or Liberal, is pursuing economic growth, and

that is what this Government is delivering. That is best demonstrated by the jobs figures of which the Treasurer made rare mention during his Budget Speech. For too long under members opposite we lagged behind the rest of the nation when it came to creating jobs. The Coalition promised during the election campaign to create 100,000 new jobs over this term and to provide payroll tax rebates to assist in that task—that is, to make it easier for people to take on workers, to grow their business and also to grow the State's economy. As I stand here today, this Government has created almost 130,000 jobs.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: Those jobs were not created by the Government but by businesses across this State. That is sensible economic growth. Even that hopeless Government in Canberra is pursuing that sort of growth, and it is doing so because economic growth drives government revenue. What do we do with government revenue? We provide the services that people across this city and this State need. It is a bit rich for members opposite to ask that question as the opening ball in this budget test match when the Health budget has been increased by, from memory, 5.2 per cent. That is well and truly more than the inflation rate. It is a bit rich for members opposite to ask that question—

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: —when this Government has delivered a budget that includes \$60 million for infrastructure projects that they spoke about all too often but never delivered. This Government is getting on with the job. It is doing what the people at Glengara Retirement Village know is necessary—that is, living within its means. With all due respect to them, it is upon their shoulders that this society, this city and this State—including the Central Coast—have been built. People who, throughout their lives, toiled hard, lived within their means and only spent what they had to build the society that is so full of opportunities today. That is what this Government is seeking to do: rein in excessive expenditure by those opposite. The amounts they spent far outstripped revenue received, and that was a recipe for increased debt and evidence of their failure to invest in infrastructure to ensure that those opportunities that people have had in this State for 225 years could be as richly available in the future as they were in the past.

This Government is living within its means ensuring that it does not spend more than it has. This Government has reduced the debt left by those opposite by \$8.9 billion over the forward estimates. We are living within our means and reducing debt, while delivering the services that people need—4,000 additional nurses, 500 additional teachers, 370 additional police. We recognise the services that people across this State deserve. That is what we are doing, and that is not only responsible but also necessary. That is what we are aiming for and that is what other governments around this nation are seeking to achieve. And, the Treasurer, the Mike Hussey of the team, the man who can always be relied upon to score runs for the State, has again delivered in his third budget.

The SPEAKER: Order! I call the member for Canterbury to order. The member for Canterbury will cease interjecting.

STATE BUDGET AND TRANSPORT

Mr RAY WILLIAMS: My question is addressed to the Premier. How does the State budget invest in infrastructure to improve travel times and reduce congestion?

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I again congratulate the Treasurer—perhaps we should call him Mr Finances, not Mr Cricket—for his responsible stewardship of the State's finances that responsibly secure the future for New South Wales. It ensures we retain the triple-A credit rating, it charts a path to surplus, it delivers more resources for the frontline for more nurses, more teachers and more police, and it gets on with the job of delivering the major infrastructure projects we committed to at the 2011 election.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: The member for Hawkesbury is particularly interested, as is the member for Londonderry and others, in the North West Rail Link, a project long spoken of by those opposite that was meant to be opened by 2010. Work is underway and tunnel boring machines will be in the ground next year. The big difference between this side of politics and that side of politics is that they talk about it and we deliver. They never put money in the budget; we have \$4.1 billion in the budget. We want to put tunnel boring machines in the

ground; they have them sitting on their front bench. But enough about the member for Canterbury. When asked on Sunday by the media to sum up in one word what this project means for the community of the north-west, the member for Hawkesbury said in one word—well, sort of—"exhilarating".

The SPEAKER: Order! Opposition members and the member for Kiama will come to order.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: An amount of \$800 million has been allocated to the South West Rail Link. Track is now being laid and stations are now being built, all because of the good work of the Minister for Transport. The fact is that the project is six months ahead of schedule. I pray to the Christian God but I hope that the god of weather keeps being kind to us. It is important never to forget that those opposite did not lay one centimetre of track for the South West Rail Link. This budget honours our commitment to provide \$1.8 billion for the WestConnex project. When combined with the North West Rail Link and the South West Rail Link, these projects will deliver real benefits for commuters and motorists in western Sydney. We are very proud to be delivering two of the biggest transport projects in the nation: WestConnex, a 33 kilometre motorway to connect the M5 and the M4, and the North West Rail Link.

For a change I am being a bit cynical when I say that some in the media are disappointed that there are no new transport projects being delivered in this budget. I will tell them why that is. We have a fundamentally different approach to that of those opposite, who virtually dreamt up a new rail line for every budget or every time there was a quiet moment in the media. How many were there? They promised 12 rail lines for western Sydney but not a single one was delivered. Thankfully, our strategy is slightly different. We announce what we are going to deliver. We are getting on with the job of delivering the projects to which we have committed. It is a strategy that also sees \$885 million in State and Commonwealth funds go towards the duplication of the northern line, which gets approximately 200,000 trucks off roads each year and delivers more reliable rail services for Central Coast and Hunter rail commuters by separating passenger and freight rail services. This will stop delays to passenger trains caused by freight trains—freight trains that we want to see on the rail system because every freight train takes trucks off our roads.

Further good news for people on the Central Coast and the Hunter is that the budget also makes provision for more than \$400 million for the F3 to M2 link, which is currently going through an unsolicited proposals process. The 12 kilometre light rail from Randwick to the city is also being funded in this budget, for which \$885 million has been allocated. I have not even mentioned the host of minor road upgrades funded through our \$135 million pinchpoint program, in addition to major investment in roads like Camden Valley Way and Richmond Road. From Rouse Hill to Randwick, Leppington to Lilyfield, Sydney will literally become a construction site. So we not only have "Jillian the Builder", we also have "Gladys the Builder", "Duncan the Builder" and "Adrian the Builder". We are getting on with delivering the infrastructure that this city and State have wanted for so long—infrastructure that is essential to economic growth and the opportunities to which I referred earlier. We are unashamedly getting on with delivering infrastructure to which we committed at the last election.

WESTCONNEX MOTORWAY

Mr MICHAEL DALEY: My question is directed to the Treasurer. Given the Treasurer's statement today that "this Government's commitment to repairing the State's broken infrastructure is not about words, it is about actions", why has the Treasurer only committed 1 per cent of the construction costs of WestConnex to that project?

Mr MIKE BAIRD: It is not exactly the West Indian attack across the Chamber, is it?

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Maroubra has had an opportunity to ask his question. I call the member for Maroubra to order.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I think that everyone in this House is absolutely delighted that we are securing the future for New South Wales. The budget secures the future for New South Wales across every measure, whether it is in infrastructure, as the Premier has just referred to, or in services. Everywhere one looks it is good news for the people of New South Wales. And those opposite want to talk about WestConnex. I should say in relation to WestConnex that what is in this budget is very different from what was proposed by those opposite. If one wants to build infrastructure, one has to find the money to do so and in this case the Government has the money sitting in a bank account ready to go.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I am not quite sure where the member for Maroubra wants to go with his question but I will start to answer it by referring to some really interesting and fantastic tweets that have come in. One states, "Good on you, Mike." I love that one.

[Interruption]

No my wife is in the gallery.

Mr John Robertson: Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 129, relevance. Twitter does not relate to the question and tweet, tweet budgerigar Baird—

The SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order, as the Leader of the Opposition well knows. The Treasurer is being relevant to the question he was asked. The Leader of the Opposition will resume his seat. The member for Bankstown will come to order.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: He must be Nostradamus because the next tweet said, "Tell Robbo he is doing a bad job." Another tweet says, "Make sure you say good day to the 'Package'." Good day, Package. But the tweet from Warren Hogan, Chief Economist, ANZ bank, is probably the most relevant to this debate: "The New South Wales Budget shows strong fiscal discipline is paying off." He also said, "It is a good chance that the negative outlook on the triple-A credit rating could be removed." That is what the market is saying.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: The shadow Treasurer's question asked how the O'Farrell Government is getting on with the job of infrastructure and how it will reduce the debt burden of the former Government. This graph shows Labor's debt burden and, importantly, it also shows the O'Farrell Government's debt burden coming down. The O'Farrell Government continues to accelerate infrastructure investment. How could that happen? How can we slow expenditure growth—something those opposite never did when in government—accelerate infrastructure investment and reduce debt at the same time? No doubt those opposite will spend the next year trying to work it out. The good news for the people of this State is that the O'Farrell Government is getting on with the job of doing just that.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Importantly, the Government has allocated \$1.8 billion over the forward estimates to get the WestConnex project underway—which is what the people of New South Wales would expect.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Unfortunately the Federal Labor Government does not care about western Sydney. In between changing leaders the Federal Labor Government has decided—

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Who knows when we will be seeing Kevin again on television?

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Whilst the Federal Labor Government is getting on with the job of doing whatever it is doing in Canberra, it has ignored the people of western Sydney. Indeed, it has imposed such ridiculous conditions on the WestConnex project that it has made it unaffordable. But the good news is, despite the shenanigans currently going on in Canberra, the O'Farrell Government is delivering for the people of western Sydney. This Government will continue to prioritise the infrastructure investment for which the people in this State have waited too long. Year after year, month after month and day after day those opposite squandered the money that they had. The approach of those opposite to the CBD metro is a perfect example. Now we have a new game in town: release the money, build the infrastructure the community expects and our economy will continue to grow.

STATE BUDGET AND REGIONAL NEW SOUTH WALES

Mr PAUL TOOLE: I address my question to the Deputy Premier. How does the State budget deliver for regional communities?

Mr ANDREW STONER: Today the Treasurer delivered a budget which is testament to a value that is a foreign concept to Labor—fiscal discipline.

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

Mr ANDREW STONER: Today regional communities will reap yet more dividends from our commitment to recycle the State's capital assets—transactions that have been opposed by those opposite every step of the way. Last Friday, in the once safe Labor seat of Bathurst, I was pleased to preview the announcement that we will deliver an additional \$983 million from Restart NSW for infrastructure projects in regional New South Wales. The news that we will commit up to \$43 million for the Bells Line of Road improvement program was loudly welcomed right across the Central West and is a great credit to the strong representation of The Nationals members for the electorates of Bathurst, Dubbo and Orange. For 16 long years this strategic corridor was ignored by those opposite but in this Government's third State budget we will deliver the most significant new funds to that route in a generation.

The O'Farrell Government is keeping its promise to accelerate infrastructure investments right across regional New South Wales—for example, whether it be \$4.4 billion over four years for the duplication of the Pacific Highway, \$178 million for the Princes Highway or \$165 million for the Bridges for the Bush program, those on this side of the House are investing in projects to unlock the productive power of regional New South Wales. This will be part of a record regional Roads budget of \$3.9 billion for 2013-14. We have also reserved \$40 million in new funding in 2013-14 to secure water supplies and drought-proof regional communities. We also have a record regional Health infrastructure investment, including upgrading regional hospitals from Bega to Wagga Wagga, Parkes, Forbes, Dubbo, Tamworth, Port Macquarie, Lismore and Kempsey. Well done, Jillian the Builder! But there is more.

The Government's Resources for the Regions program is designed to assist mining-affected communities across regional New South Wales. Even the shadow Minister for Regional Infrastructure in the other place recently admitted his regret that Labor did not have a similar program. It took the O'Farrell Government to deliver for those communities. The good news today is that the recent success of the long-term lease of Port Botany and Port Kembla has enabled the New South Wales Government to boost funding for mining-affected regions by up to \$120 million this year.

Ms Noreen Hay: You are the one who said you were not going to lease it.

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

Mr ANDREW STONER: Why are you whinging about this?

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

Mr ANDREW STONER: That is a massive \$110 million increase for resources for the regions in this year's State budget. The \$120 million will assist mining-affected communities, including the area of the Mid Western Regional Council, Cobar, Lithgow, Muswellbrook, Narrabri, Singleton, Newcastle and Wollongong. Those eight areas were identified as most urgently eligible for assistance in an independently audited assessment. The \$120 million in funding will be provided over two rounds. The first round will be worth around \$40 million, with successful projects announced in September.

The Government will then open applications for the second round, which will be worth around \$80 million, and will provide an additional opportunity in 2013-14 for those eight areas to apply for more regional infrastructure funding to help with the impacts of mining in their local areas. There will be at least one more round of this program during the next budget cycle, and the Government will reassess all relevant data to identify which communities will be eligible to apply at that point. The NSW Minerals Councils warmly welcomed the strategic importance of Resources for the Regions. Indeed, Chief Executive Officer Steve Galilee said today:

The two tranches of funding of \$40 million and \$80 million and a firm timeline on funding announcements provide a degree of certainty for local communities as they apply for investment.

The message from all this is clear: finally regional New South Wales has a government that is prepared to take the tough but necessary decisions to recycle our existing assets and invest in new, productive infrastructure projects for the benefit of regional New South Wales and the State economy as a whole.

STATE BUDGET AND HEALTH

Dr ANDREW McDONALD: I direct my question to the Minister for Health. Will the Minister give a guarantee that patients will not be put at risk by her decision to spend \$616 million less on Health services than the Australian Medical Association estimates is necessary to keep pace with demand?

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: This question from the shadow Minister for Health gives me an opportunity to talk about the \$884 million extra in the record recurrent Health budget for New South Wales this year of up to \$17.9 billion. This is the highest budget that has ever been provided for New South Wales.

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

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: It will provide funding of more than 100,000 additional patient services in addition to the services provided to the millions of patients currently receiving treatment in our hospitals across the State. I will give more details about this in due course but I can assure the House that the president of the Australian Medical Association has welcomed the increase. Indeed, he has welcomed the inclusion of some of the initiatives of the Australian Medical Association and other clinicians, including the doctor brother of the member for Macquarie Fields to whom I spoke on a recent visit to Port Macquarie, particularly the innovation in clinical services. Much is to be celebrated in this budget. The 5.2 per cent funding increase, or \$884 million, is the highest increase seen in this State for a long time—it is higher than the increase in any other State's health budget. This will take our recurrent budget to \$17.9 billion. I am very pleased that the O'Farrell Government has delivered in providing patient care.

Dr Andrew McDonald: Point of order: My point of order is relevance.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Macquarie Fields will resume his seat. The Minister was being entirely relevant to the question she was asked.

STATE BUDGET AND JOBS GROWTH

Mr GLENN BROOKES: My question is addressed to the Treasurer, and Minister for Industrial Relations. How does the State budget drive jobs growth in New South Wales?

Mr MIKE BAIRD: As a member who had a small business, the member for East Hills understands the importance of jobs to our economy. We understand the importance of jobs to our economy. Unashamedly in this budget we are happy to continue the jobs growth we have seen in this State under the O'Farrell Government. In just over two years we have seen the creation of more than 120,000 jobs in this State. It is worth pointing out where New South Wales stood in relation to jobs growth in the last 10 years of the Labor Government. Can anyone remember where New South Wales stood?

Government members: Last.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Was it coming first?

Government members: No.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Was it coming second?

Government members: No.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Third?

Government members: No.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Fourth?

Government members: No.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: How about dead last? That is what members opposite delivered to the State. I am sure they have seen the graph so I will not hold up a prop. For the benefit of members opposite, where does New South Wales now sit? It has the highest jobs growth in the nation. So I do not know how members opposite will be able to attack the budget. I do not know why they are upset about supporting jobs, investment and small business, but that is exactly what we have done. We have done a range of things in this budget, but we are proud to continue to invest in the drivers of the economy. One of those critical drivers is businesses. We are delighted to announce the raising of the payroll tax threshold from \$689,000 to \$750,000 next year. That means that 1,300 businesses will not pay 1¢ of payroll tax next year. It also means that every business across the State that is paying payroll tax will be \$3,000 better off.

So there is a clear understanding on this side of the House that if we want to grow the economy we need to support small, medium and large businesses, and that is exactly what we have done today. We have driven jobs growth, and we want to continue to drive that jobs growth. Since coming to government we have announced what we have achieved. I am disappointed. Has anyone watched members opposite in action in preparing for the budget? It has been a special performance. They came out like panthers. If the member for Sydney is looking for it, in the week before the budget is delivered members opposite suddenly say, "We had better ask a question." A few days ago the Leader of the Opposition criticised the Government for building infrastructure. We make no apologies for investing in infrastructure. The Leader of the Opposition also said that he wanted to see jobs in the budget.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: We are delighted to support jobs in this State. I am looking for the tweet: "The Leader of the Opposition supports the budget, loves it, good job." I am sure that it is coming. Not only have we increased the payroll tax threshold; we have increased the Jobs Action Plan so that businesses across New South Wales—

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: There is a simple message for businesses across the State: Go out and employ, employ and employ, because the Government will support you. Businesses understand that economic growth in this State, as the Premier clearly articulated earlier in question time, is the way to get the State moving, and we are moving. The only thing that is not moving is members opposite. I note that not only are we supporting jobs through investment in businesses, raising the payroll tax threshold and the Jobs Action Plan; but also we will get the economy moving by investing in infrastructure—as the Premier said, whether it be through the North West Rail Link or the WestConnex project. What I loved pre-budget was the spectacular performance of the member for Maroubra relating to one infrastructure announcement he did not like. Members need to understand this. We made a simple announcement that Duncan Gay will deliver flashing lights to every school in the State. The former finance Minister pooh-poohed the idea. So we say to him and to every school across the State: We will deliver those flashing lights. We will support jobs. [*Extension of time granted.*]

Members opposite fail to understand what has been achieved in this budget. We need to give them a quick summary before they leave the Chamber. I know they will read the budget from cover to cover. By reining in expenditure growth, investing in infrastructure and reducing our debt, we have delivered a trifecta of which the people of New South Wales can be proud. At the same time we are investing in the economic drivers. We are driving infrastructure, we are supporting businesses to grow jobs and we are investing in housing. That is what a responsible government does, and every person across the State will say to the O'Farrell Government, "Thank you for being responsible. Thank you for delivering our services." Everyone in the gallery will do the same; my daughter will probably say the same thing because she is in the gallery today. The O'Farrell Government is proud to be taking actions that secure the future for New South Wales.

MINISTER FOR FINANCE AND SERVICES, AND MINISTER FOR THE ILLAWARRA

Ms LINDA BURNEY: My question is directed to the Premier. In the past three weeks has the Premier or his office had any discussions with lobbyist and Liberal Party State executive member Michael Photios about the scandal surrounding Greg Pearce or his future as a Minister in the Government? Truth please.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: We know members opposite are desperate when, first, they waste a question on this matter. I say "waste a question" because I was asked this publicly at the press conference on Friday. The answer then was and the answer today is no.

NEWCASTLE AND HUNTER REVITALISATION PLAN

Mr TIM OWEN: My question is addressed to the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Infrastructure NSW. What is the Government planning to do to revitalise Newcastle and the Hunter region?

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: What are we not planning to do for Newcastle? First, before I answer that question—

The SPEAKER: Order! I call the member for Canterbury to order for the second time.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: I acknowledge the member for Newcastle, along with other members in the Hunter—in particular the member for Charlestown, the member for Swansea, the member for Port Stephens, the Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Hospitality and Racing, and Minister for the Arts, the Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage, and Minister Gallacher as Minister for the Hunter. They are all sending a clear message to this Government.

Mr Clayton Barr: Sell it all.

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

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: They want Newcastle and the Hunter to be given what they were not given by the Labor Party. Years and years of representation by Labor meant absolutely nothing; it gave them nothing. In a short time, compliments of the Treasurer and the Premier—

Mr Clayton Barr: Why doesn't the Minister for Transport talk about the trains?

The SPEAKER: Order! I call the member for Cessnock to order for the second time.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: —and the current representatives in the Hunter, we have ensured that there is a real focus on Newcastle and the Hunter. The member for Newcastle, one of our finest members, never stops up and down the main street of Newcastle. He has dragged me from one end of Newcastle to the other, and he has ensured, along with his colleagues, that the Government clearly understands that what it needs to do is to revitalise Newcastle. We need to ensure that the Hunter is the centre of the Government's attention.

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

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: We also need to ensure that in that process we reconnect the heart of Newcastle with its beautiful harbour. I have walked through the heart of Newcastle many times and when one is on Wharf Road—

Mr Nathan Rees: Lost.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: The member for Toongabbie and the member for Blacktown are making critical comments but they seem to be the most short-sighted. I am not sure which one is the Mr Magoo of the State Parliament—perhaps they both are Mr Magoo. They simply do not know what Newcastle needs and they never delivered.

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

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: The Coalition Government has made a commitment. It is honouring a bond of faith with the people of the Hunter to ensure that jobs, homes and essential infrastructure are provided in Newcastle and in the Hunter. We have learned lessons from Labor not doing anything and we have learned lessons from what we have done since we came to government on how to deliver for the people of Newcastle and the Hunter region. Some of those lessons have come from the long-term leases of Port Botany and Port Kembla, which are assisting to deliver major infrastructure projects, such as Sydney's WestConnex, Bridges for the Bush and a range of other infrastructure projects across the Illawarra. Today the Government is confirming that the "how" for Newcastle's revitalisation—the revitalisation of its heart—will come from the proposed lease of the Port of Newcastle, which will direct millions of dollars towards the Newcastle city centre rejuvenation and other projects that we have listed in the Hunter region.

The Liberal-Nationals Government is guaranteeing the delivery of its vision and its belief in the people of the Hunter by committing an additional \$340 million towards the revitalisation of the Newcastle city centre and planning for a possible future expansion of light rail. We have announced today that \$10 million has been specifically allocated for a feasibility study into light rail to service the Newcastle central business district and the greater Hunter region. This is in addition to the \$120 million commitment made by the Government in December last year when, along with local members, I released the Newcastle Urban Renewal Strategy 2012 for public comment. If this task had been left to Labor, would it ever have delivered? The very clear answer is no. If we look at the words of the member for Blacktown—who perhaps, as I said, is the Mr Magoo of the State Parliament because he did not have a vision for Newcastle and the Hunter—we find that back in 2010 he said:

The NSW Government is working to revitalise the Newcastle CBD for the benefit of the people of Newcastle and the entire Hunter Region.

After that what did he do? He did absolutely nothing, zilch, zero— [*Extension of time granted.*]

I will continue only because the member for Newcastle has shown such an interest. Perhaps I should reflect for a moment on the history of those opposite as I am sure that they would be interested. They were very good at producing media releases. That was the way they organised their infrastructure delivery on policy. They announced the CBD metro in Rozelle through a press release, then dumped the Premier, the member for Toongabbie, and then dumped the metro. Labor's history, including the history of the member for Blacktown, is one of promises, but nothing delivered. This Government is delivering. It is supporting, with money and with commitment, the rejuvenation and revitalisation of our second biggest city.

The challenge for the Labor Party and for the Leader of the Opposition—the Mr Magoo of the State Labor Party—is whether they will support the Government's plan for Newcastle and the Hunter. Will it give the citizens what has been promised—that is, the rejuvenation of Newcastle—through the funding that this Government is prepared to commit through the leasing of the port? Today and over the next few weeks the question that the people of the broader Hunter will ask members of the Labor Party is whether they will support the revitalisation of Newcastle. The revitalisation of Newcastle is already well on its way.

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

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: Since the announcement last year the advice we have had is that more than \$300 million worth of investment has been committed to getting on with the rebirth of Newcastle.

Mr John Robertson: None started.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: The member for Blacktown is critical of that when he delivered nothing.

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

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: Today even the Urban Taskforce, the Urban Development Institute of Australia [UDIA] and the Property Council are saying, "We want to get on with the revitalisation of Newcastle." They are all saying positive things about it. Members opposite should tell the people of Newcastle that they are not prepared to do the job but they should let this Government get on with the job.

MINISTER FOR FINANCE AND SERVICES, AND MINISTER FOR THE ILLAWARRA

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: My question is directed to the Premier. Given that the Minister for Finance and Services, the Hon. Greg Pearce, told the Premier's department head, Mr Chris Eccles, that his taxpayer-funded trip to Canberra was for a private visit, what explanation has he given the Premier regarding why he tried to pass off the trip to a journalist as a business visit?

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I have been in this place for 18 years but I have never seen Opposition members on budget day run out of puff after three questions.

Ms Carmel Tebbutt: Answer the question.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I will happily answer the question. However, I think Sam Dastyari should sit in the gallery for a while to see what little work is done by those opposite on a day that this Government committed \$62 billion of taxpayers' dollars to running this State. Opposition members asked three questions, all

of which were based on a wrong premise. They cannot get to questions four and five without engaging in the usual smear. What a pathetic reflection on the Leader of the Opposition. What an even more damning indictment on the shadow Treasurer, Mr Middle Manager, whose job it is in opposition, as I well know—

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order: We have asked a question that the Premier refuses to answer.

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

Mr Michael Daley: Relevance under Standing Order 129.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Premier is being relevant to the question he was asked. The member for Maroubra will resume his seat. There is no point of order.

Mr Michael Daley: The Premier was asked what explanation Mr Pearce gave to him.

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

Mr Michael Daley: He can answer the question or he can keep hiding.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Maroubra said that to me some months ago. I call the member for Maroubra to order for the second time.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I can well understand why the member is outraged. I say again that in the 18 years I have been in this place I have never seen such a pathetic performance by a Leader of the Opposition or a shadow Treasurer. As a member of the Liberal Party I admit that over that time we have had a couple of pathetic leaders but I have to say that a couple of people have risen in my estimation. The answer is that the Minister for Finance and Services gave me the same explanation that he gave to the Director General of the Department of Premier and Cabinet.

STATE BUDGET AND HEALTH

Mr KEVIN CONOLLY: My question is addressed to the Minister for Health, and Minister for Medical Research. How is the Government delivering for patients in today's State budget?

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: I was pleased to be joined by the member for Riverstone, the member for Smithfield and the Treasurer to view the redevelopment at Blacktown hospital. That hospital received \$82.4 million in this year's budget towards a total project cost of \$324 million. As I said previously, there is a record recurrent Health budget in New South Wales this year, with \$884 million in growth funding—that is 5.2 per cent growth—to a record \$17.9 billion. Additionally, \$1.2 billion of that is our next tranche of the \$4.7 billion for capital works—in total, more than \$19 billion for health in New South Wales. The total amount of \$884 million includes \$220 million for increased activity, including 69,000 extra emergency department attendances, 34,000 overnight stays and 3,000 extra elective surgeries, as well as funds to address long waits in patient clinics.

It also includes \$30 million for integrated care partnerships to deliver better caring communities, and there is an incentive for local health districts to seek to get some of those funds on a matched basis; \$15 million for ambulance reform, including recommendations relating to aeromedical retrieval, which I know my colleagues on this side will be looking forward to hearing about; \$30 million for additional intensive care services not only for babies and children but also for adults; and \$10 million to implement our plan to increase access to palliative care. I assure everyone that we will pick up the cost of continuing palliative care services until the conclusion of the Commonwealth Government's national health partnership at the end of this financial year. I am very pleased that the President of the Australian Medical Association, Dr Brian Owler, has welcomed the \$100 million we are putting in to keep going not only those palliative care services but also other subacute services that were threatened by the end of the National Public Health Partnership.

We have put in \$9.2 million for 80 more clinical nurse/midwife specialists and educators, including \$3 million for 30 more palliative care nurses. I am very proud of the fact that overall we have employed 4,000 extra nurses since I became Minister, which is 2,300 full-time equivalent nurses, and includes 1,620 nurses in the 2011-12 financial year. As well, there are 1,000 more doctors and allied health and support staff. There has been an increase in each of those categories over the past year. We have spent \$7.3 million to support operating costs of new linear accelerators in cancer centres at a variety of locations. There is \$51 million to support medical research and we have increased mental health funding. I know that my colleague the Minister for Mental Health

will be talking about that. There is also more funding for drug and alcohol services and for preventative health and, importantly, funds to support innovation in clinical services as well as enhancing patient safety and quality. I again appreciate the comments of Dr Brian Owler in welcoming this clinical services innovation money because the proposal arose out of an Australian Medical Association conference held in this Parliament.

On top of the \$884 million growth in the Health budget, NSW Health will receive \$186 million back this year in efficiency savings and that will be converted into front-line services. There are very good examples in local health districts and across the State where savings have been converted into front-line services. In summary, New South Wales has grown the Health budget in tough economic circumstances. Our growth of 5.2 per cent compares favourably with Health budget growth in other jurisdictions, such as 4.9 per cent in Victoria, 4.5 per cent in Queensland, 0.9 per cent in Tasmania and minus 1 per cent in South Australia. We have done better than any other jurisdiction. Thank you, Mr Treasurer. So that members understand the size of the task we are talking about, next financial year we will treat an estimated 1.23 million acute overnight patients—an increase of 2.8 per cent—and an estimated 2.68 million emergency department attendances, which is an increase of 2.6 per cent. Next financial year we will spend an estimated \$11 billion of Commonwealth-State money under activity-based funding. *[Time expired.]*

Question time concluded at 3.12 p.m.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE

Report

The Clerk announced the receipt, pursuant to section 63C of the Public Finance and Audit Act 1983, of the report entitled, "Report on the examination of the Auditor-General's performance audits April 2011-September 2011", Report 9/55, dated May 2013, received out of session and authorised to be printed on 31 May 2013.

AUDITOR-GENERAL'S REPORT

The Clerk announced the receipt, pursuant to section 63C of the Public Finance and Audit Act 1983, of the Performance Audit Report of the Auditor-General entitled, "Building energy use in NSW public hospitals: NSW Ministry of Health, NSW Treasury, NSW Office of Environment and Heritage", dated June 2013, received out of session and authorised to be printed on 4 June 2013.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE

Government Response to Report

The Clerk announced receipt of the Government's response to report 6/55, entitled, "The economics of energy generation", received out of session and authorised to be printed on 17 June 2013.

LEGISLATION REVIEW COMMITTEE

Report

Mr Stephen Bromhead, as Chair, tabled the report entitled, "Legislation Review Digest No. 39/55", dated 18 June 2013, together with minutes of the committee meeting dated 28 May 2013.

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

PETITIONS

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

Albion Park Aeromedical Services

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

Feral Animal Eradication Program

Petition opposing amendments to the Game and Feral Animal Control Act 2002 to extend the feral animal eradication program into New South Wales national parks, nature reserves and State conservation areas, received from **Mr Alex Greenwich**.

Discussion on petitions set down as orders of the day for a future day.

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

Nurse to Patient Ratios

Petitions requesting the Government to mandate equal nurse-to-patient ratios in all hospitals in New South Wales, received from **Mr Donald Page**.

Sydney Electorate Public High School

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

Walsh Bay Precinct Public Transport

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

Inner-city Social Housing

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

Pet Shops

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

Container Deposit Levy

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

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

The Hon. Jillian Skinner—Yaralla Estate community horses—lodged 1 May 2013 (Mr John Sidoti)

The Hon. Jillian Skinner—St George Public Hospital—lodged 1 May 2013 (Ms Cherie Burton)

The Hon. Duncan Gay—Tourist Drive 8—lodged 1 May 2013 (Mr Andrew Stoner)

The Hon. Brad Hazzard—Callan Park—lodged 7 May 2013 (Mr Jamie Parker)

The Hon. Chris Hartcher—Coal seam gas mining—lodged 2 May 2013 (Mr Jamie Parker)

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders: Order of Business

Mr BRAD HAZZARD (Wakehurst—Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Infrastructure NSW) [3.16 p.m.]: I move:

That, on Thursday 20 June 2013, standing and sessional orders be suspended to permit:

- (1) Following the speech of the Leader of the Opposition on the Appropriation Bill and cognate bills, the passage through all remaining stages, with the question "That these bills be now read a second time" being put forthwith, without consideration in detail on the bills.

- (2) A member, immediately following the passage of the Appropriation Bill and cognate bills, to move the motion "That this House take note of the Budget Estimates and related papers for 2013-14".
- (3) After the member has moved "That this House take note of the Budget Estimates and related papers for 2013-14":
 - (a) the debate is to be adjourned without motion moved;
 - (b) the resumption of the debate is to be set down as an order of the day for a later time; and
 - (c) the mover may speak to the motion at a later time prior to their right of reply.

Members will be aware that the Treasurer, Mike Baird, has introduced today the Appropriation Bill 2013 and cognate bills. On Thursday morning the Leader of the Opposition will have an opportunity to respond to those bills. Immediately thereafter it will be necessary for the bills to move to the Legislative Council. Debate will then take place on a motion that the House take note of the budget estimates and related papers 2013-14. I acknowledge the presence in the gallery of the Treasurer's wife, Kerry, and his daughter, Cate. I thank them, as we thank all families of members of Parliament when they are heavily involved in representing the community. I am sure there has been some pressure and stress for them. I thank them and other members of the family.

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

Motion agreed to.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Inaugural Speeches

Mr BRAD HAZZARD (Wakehurst—Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Infrastructure NSW) [3.18 p.m.], by leave: I move:

That the business of the House be interrupted at the conclusion of the giving of general business notices of motions (general notices) on Wednesday 19 June 2013 to permit the presentation of an inaugural speech by the member for Northern Tablelands.

Members will be aware of the recent by-election for the electorate of Northern Tablelands and the election of the new member. This motion is necessary to enable the member to make his inaugural speech. We will deal with notices of motions at 10.00 a.m. and immediately they are concluded—one never knows how many notices of motions there will be—we will then have the benefit of hearing the inaugural speech of the member for Northern Tablelands.

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

Motion agreed to.

CONSIDERATION OF MOTIONS TO BE ACCORDED PRIORITY

Newcastle and Hunter Revitalisation Plan

Mr TIM OWEN (Newcastle) [3.20 p.m.]: Earlier I gave notice of the following motion to be accorded priority:

That this House supports the Government's plans to revitalise Newcastle and the broader Hunter region.

This motion should be accorded priority because the centrepiece of the 2013-14 New South Wales budget is the Government's strategy to drive the economic growth and renewal of Newcastle. After decades of weak and inept leadership, the time has come to unlock Newcastle's enormous potential and provide its hardworking people with the global city they deserve. Despite the financial challenges facing the State, this budget shows that the New South Wales Government is delivering on its promises to improve services for the people of New South Wales and invest in critical infrastructure across the State, including Newcastle and the Hunter region. Through the proposed lease of the Newcastle port, Newcastle and the Hunter region will receive an additional \$340 million for the revitalisation of the Newcastle city centre, including construction of the new Wickham transport interchange, light rail and the opening of eight new connections to the harbour.

The Newcastle Urban Renewal Strategy [NURS] is the key to this potential and represents the most significant investment in Newcastle in half a century. Announced in December last year, the Newcastle Urban Renewal Strategy heralds an exciting new chapter for Newcastle, which promises a vibrant future for the city and the rest of the region. I am very passionate about it. Today I am pleased to share that this Government's vision for Newcastle now includes light rail as part of the strategy to reinvent Newcastle as a modern harbour city. I note that in addition to the Newcastle Urban Renewal Strategy this budget factors in light rail as an option between Wickham station and Newcastle station. The last two-kilometre stretch of every rail line will now be replaced by a light rail system. Some \$10 million has been allocated to explore the potential for this link to be the basis for light rail that links the central business district with the surrounding suburbs, beaches and the broader Hunter region. This is the third light rail project introduced under the O'Farrell Government and will be a critical part of the revitalisation of Newcastle as a modern city.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will either resume their seats or leave the Chamber. Members who wish to have private conversations should do so outside the Chamber.

Mr TIM OWEN: This Government has announced the 99-year lease of Newcastle port, which will certainly unlock resources that can be used to accelerate and extend the vision to revitalise Newcastle. By undertaking a long-term lease of Newcastle port, additional infrastructure needs in the Hunter and across New South Wales can be addressed and fast-tracked. That is why this motion should be accorded priority.

State Budget

Mr MICHAEL DALEY (Maroubra) [3.22 p.m.]: My motion should be accorded priority so that the people of New South Wales learn today what they will learn on the ground when they walk into hospitals and ask for front-line services across the State in the coming financial year.

Mr Thomas George: You have to read your motion.

Mr MICHAEL DALEY: No, I am not moving it. This Treasurer is addicted to tax. He performs around the State, telling people that revenues are soft. Total revenues will increase in this budget by 5 per cent. At a time when the consumer price index is running at between 2.5 per cent and 2.8 per cent, his revenues will increase by 5 per cent. Taxes will increase by 7.7 per cent this year. This is the highest-taxing government in the history of New South Wales. All taxes are up—fines for drivers, gambling taxes and stamp duty.

The SPEAKER: Order! I remind members that they should not interject during this process.

Mr MICHAEL DALEY: The Treasurer blames everybody else across the nation and the globe for his woes. But he is enjoying more GST revenue than ever before. This year he will enjoy a 4.5 per cent increase in GST courtesy of his good friends in the Commonwealth Government. He is addicted to taxes, addicted to debt and addicted to cuts. Despite all that, the Treasurer has told the long-suffering people of New South Wales that he is going to cut services across the board. Regardless of whether they provide front-line services, every single government department will have to cop the yearly \$2-million efficiency dividend. Some \$10 billion will be ripped from every department over the next six years. This year the labour expense cut is \$500 million across all government departments, which will be \$3.2 billion over six years. These cuts from Edward Scissorhands total \$19 billion, which will be ripped from service delivery over six years.

Cuts such as this cannot be made across the board without affecting front-line services. Staffing in secondary schools has fallen by 665 full-time equivalent positions, and another 315 jobs will be lost this year. Primary schools will lose 135 jobs next year. That is more than 1,000 jobs lost from schools. TAFE lost 190 teachers last year and will lose 330 this year. This Treasurer has the gall to take away services and put up fees. The early childhood sector is not spared, but the biggest cuts are made in the area of health. Despite the Minister for Health, the Treasurer and the Premier standing up in this place and saying that they have increased funds for Health, it has been smashed more than any other department.

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

The House divided.

Ayes, 67

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

Noes, 23

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

Question resolved in the affirmative.

NEWCASTLE AND HUNTER REVITALISATION PLAN**Motion Accorded Priority**

Mr TIM OWEN (Newcastle) [3.33 p.m.]: I move:

That this House supports the Government's plans to revitalise Newcastle and the broader Hunter region.

It gives me great pleasure to move this motion.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! Members who wish to have private conversations should do so outside the Chamber.

Mr TIM OWEN: For many decades Newcastle—which is the centrepiece of the Hunter—was ignored by previous governments. This magnificent harbour city is one of the key regional cities in Australia, if not the key regional city, and for the first time a government has allocated a huge amount of money for its revitalisation. Today the Treasurer announced the long-term lease of the Port of Newcastle, which will generate a significant amount of money. Of that, \$340 million will be added to the \$120 million that the Government has already allocated to the Newcastle Urban Renewal Strategy, which will deliver the Wickham interchange, a light rail system and eight new connections to the city. That \$460 million does not include the Government's

commitments to Landcom's partnership with the GPT Group for the revitalisation of the east end of Newcastle, the \$94 million allocated to the new legal precinct, and the \$25 million allocated to move the law and business faculties of the University of Newcastle to the city. The more than \$900 million that this Government has committed to revitalising the centre of Newcastle will finally lead to change in our city.

I know that we will hear from the usual suspects opposite about the lease of the Port of Newcastle. I will explain why it is such a good deal for the people of New South Wales and for the port. The significant superannuation fund investment in the port of Botany and the port of Port Kembla has unlocked huge amounts of money for the provision of infrastructure. Superannuation funds always want to increase the viability of their investments, to grow them and to make them as efficient as possible. Of course, the beneficiaries are the people of Australia. This is a win-win for everyone. We will be unlocking huge amounts of infrastructure funding, which is what happened with the \$5-billion sale of the ports of Port Kembla and Port Botany. The superannuation funds have invested in those ports to make them extremely efficient and they will do the same with the Port of Newcastle. They have the money, the time and the will to expand those long-term investments. As I said, the beneficiaries will be the people of Australia who contribute to superannuation. This is a win-win for everyone in this country.

I know that members opposite will say that this is a terrible move. However, there is no downside because the Government is unlocking a huge amount of infrastructure funding. I congratulate the Treasurer on this fantastic outcome for the city of Newcastle, which will contribute, as it always has, to the Hunter region. We will benefit from having one of the most vibrant cities in this State and this country. I repeat: \$340 million from that sale will be added to the \$120 million already allocated to the area by this Government. Nearly \$500 million will be spent to construct an interchange at Wickham, to truncate the heavy rail line, and to provide a world-class light rail system—the third light rail system initiated by the O'Farrell Government—which will ensure connectivity not only from Wickham to Newcastle but also to the beaches and in the long term to the suburbs. It is the best transport outcome for the city and it will add immeasurably to its revitalisation. I congratulate the Premier, the Treasurer and the Cabinet on their great foresight and on making an outstanding decision for New South Wales.

Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) [3.38 p.m.]: I am excited to be speaking to this motion because it is the same motion I wanted to move, but for completely different reasons and with a sense of irony. The money involved in this proposal is extremely important. The Port of Newcastle currently generates \$70 million in profit each year, but 10 years ago it generated \$35 million and 10 years before that it generated about \$17 million. There is a pattern: the profit doubles every 10 years. The Government is about to enter into a 99-year lease, and I wonder what the profit will be over those 99 years?

Government members can calculate it on a piece of paper, as calculators are beyond some of them, but it means that in the next 99 years the port has the potential to return to this State \$350 billion if it maintains the trajectory of profit doubling every 10 years. If it doubles every 20 years what would be the return? It would return \$34 billion to this State's revenue. We need to build things not just today but also tomorrow and each subsequent year. We will also have to maintain schools, hospitals, ambulances and fire stations. Money from future profits would be incredibly important, but it would never satisfy the current Government, which is so determined to build projects in Sydney that it will sell everything in regional New South Wales. It will put that money on a truck, send it down the F3 and build something in Sydney.

Coalition members who are sitting opposite and who are meant to represent the Hunter are happy to have all of this money going south. The Hunter needs more than that from its representatives: it needs a future; it needs something other than coal. However, while ever the focus is on privatising the coal port it will be nothing but a coal port for the next 100 years, and the Hunter will get nothing except coal. What happens when the bubble bursts? Will the Premier or any of his Sydney acolytes be interested in travelling up the F3 to pick up the pieces? No, they will not. Yet those on the other side of the Chamber are delivering this proposal as a windfall for the people of Newcastle. The member for Newcastle believes that \$340 million is an enormous amount of money. I will refer to just two projects in the electorate of Cessnock that were delivered by the former Labor Government in the past 10 years: the Wheatleys Drive interchange at Beresfield and the Hunter Expressway.

An amount of \$1.5 billion was received from the Federal Government for the Hunter Expressway and \$200 million was received from the State Government. That is \$400 million on two projects that have genuinely untapped the potential of the broader Hunter, not just the city-centric focus on Newcastle. The former Labor Government did not privatise the port or sell everything it owned; it used some of the royalties. The \$340 million is not even one-fifth of the royalties that come out of the Hunter in one year. If the Government

wants to revitalise Newcastle and if it is worth spending the money we should take it out of the money that the Hunter already delivers for this great State. The Hunter is punching above its weight in terms of delivering income, but it is not coming back up the freeway. The 2012 plan for the revitalisation of Newcastle is a plagiarised version of the 2006 plan.

Mr John Sidoti: You didn't deliver on it.

Mr CLAYTON BARR: I acknowledge the interjections, because two lines were changed. One said with the train line in place and the other said with no train line. The headings are the same, the photographs are the same, and even the rail crossings are the same. We talked about changing from three to 11, the Government talks about three to 11 so the access to the port is the same. What has not changed is that the city centre of Newcastle has been revitalising itself over the past decade. One only has to drive into the central business district to observe that. I know that the member for Newcastle is a newcomer, but for the past 10 years one could look up in the sky and see residential units being built. When I asked the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure how many residential units had been built there in the past 10 years he said he did not know. Is that not his job? If he is talking about this plan going forward it is his job to know what has happened in the past. The revitalisation of Newcastle does not mean the revitalisation of the broader Hunter. [*Time expired.*]

Mr ANDREW CORNWELL (Charlestown) [3.43 p.m.]: This is the most important budget for the Hunter since we built the F3. The centrepiece of the budget is the Hunter. It is the first time in living memory that the Hunter has actually been at the heart and soul of the budget. This Government is delivering an additional \$340 million for projects in the Hunter, including the Newcastle Urban Renewal Strategy on top of the \$350 million that we delivered in 2011 with the creation of the Hunter Infrastructure and Investment Fund; a total of \$690 million. The budget provides \$222 million to finish off the Hunter Expressway, \$24.7 million in the great electorate of Maitland for further work on the New England Highway, a commitment of \$20 million of \$40 million for the Nelson Bay Road, \$12.1 million of \$20 million for roads in wine country in the electorate of the member for Cessnock, and a further \$6.8 million for Maitland Hospital.

I learned this morning that unfortunately the Federal Government knocked back the Lake Macquarie City Council application for \$15 million for funding from the Regional Development Australia Fund, round four, because for some reason the Prime Minister decided that western Sydney was part of regional Australia. If that is not the greatest piece of political opportunism I do not know what is. We are delivering for projects right across the Hunter but, importantly, we are delivering for our regional capital, which is the right thing to do. People to whom I have spoken since the release of the budget are delighted that this Government is delivering light rail for Newcastle.

It is a twenty-first century transport solution for a city that has had to put up with nineteenth century public transport. I think the member for Cessnock based his claim in relation to the port on a false premise that governments are good at running businesses. Governments are not good at running businesses. I refer to the track record of the Newcastle Port. In 2003 and 2006 Port Waratah Coal conducted a study on whether we should get containers, but it never happened under government. We need private enterprise to invest in the port to do it. I will refer to why the Government should not own things such as ports—because they become political. In the Newcastle *Herald* of March 2011 the former member for Newcastle, Ms McKay, said:

the leak followed a conversation with Treasurer Eric Roozendaal on Wednesday morning in which she expressed concern about the delay in announcing the project's successful proponent.

Mr Roozendaal sought last night to distance himself from the briefing document ...

She is effectively saying that the Treasurer at the time was leaking information to undermine her efforts. That is what happens when one is both the regulator and the administrator. It should not happen. I commend the motion to the House. [*Time expired.*]

Ms SONIA HORNERY (Wallsend) [3.46 p.m.]: What will the State Coalition Government's broken promise on the sale of Newcastle Port mean to the Hunter community? It is \$70 million per year revenue from the port that will dribble down the F3 to build Sydney-centric projects. The Coalition's broken promise means fewer Hunter jobs at a privatised port. Hunter money will flow offshore. Money will be wasted on ripping up a piece of vital transport infrastructure. The fire sale means more buses on Newcastle's already gridlocked roads. Meanwhile the Coalition Government shamelessly flogs off the port, and spends millions of dollars ripping up the rail line, but it cannot spend two bob on infrastructure projects that—

Mr John Sidoti: Sixteen years.

Ms SONIA HORNER: Would you please be quiet?

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order!

Ms SONIA HORNER: They are rude people. The Government cannot spend two bob on infrastructure projects that 11 Hunter councils unanimously agreed was the priority project for the Hunter, that is, the Glendale interchange. I am glad that the member for Charlestown mentioned the Glendale interchange, because he ignored the fact that in this budget two bob has not been spent on the Glendale interchange, the priority project for the Hunter. This Coalition Government said this budget is a win for Hunter drivers, yet it has not funded the missing link in the Newcastle inner-city bypass; stage four remains wanting. People who want to get from Jesmond to Rankin Park with an additional access to the John Hunter Hospital have been ignored because we would rather spend our money on our priority of ripping up the rail line. The Coalition Government has ignored Hunter eye care patients and shown disdain for TAFE students and teachers by gutting services, staff and courses. The Coalition Government smites nurses by refusing to improve nurse to patient ratios. The Coalition Government reneged on its commitment to fund its one-third share of the Newcastle—

Mr Garry Edwards: Point of order: My point of order is relevance. This motion has nothing to do with nurses; it is totally irrelevant. The motion is about the Port of Newcastle and the budget.

Ms SONIA HORNER: The motion refers to the broader Hunter region.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! The member for Wallsend is correct, the motion does include the broader Hunter region. There is no point of order.

Ms SONIA HORNER: The Coalition made a big show of funding the John Hunter Children's Intensive Care Unit, but there is no funding for that as yet. The safety, security and welfare of the citizens of Wallsend have been neglected by the O'Farrell Government in refusing to build a police station— [*Time expired.*]

Mr TIM OWEN (Newcastle) [3.49 p.m.], in reply: I thank the member for Charlestown, the member Cessnock and the member for Wallsend for their contributions to the debate. I hope those opposite realise the enormity of this Government's commitment to Newcastle and the Hunter region in this revitalisation process. For too long Newcastle and the Hunter region have been ignored. I can add little more in this context other than to say that actions speak louder than words. For many decades we heard about what Labor said it would do in Newcastle and the Hunter region—indeed, the member for Cessnock commented on how similar this renewal strategy is to Labor's plan in 2006. But the difference between the O'Farrell Government and former, Labor governments is that this Government does what it says it will do. My compatriots representing the electorates of Swansea, Charlestown, Port Stephens, Upper Hunter, Maitland and I have worked collectively to impress upon the Government that an outcome needed to be delivered for Newcastle as the capital of the Hunter.

This strategy will change the city of Newcastle and the Hunter region for generations to come. As the first Liberal member for Newcastle I was not, and am not, prepared to sit on my hands and watch growth and development opportunities for Newcastle pass by. The member for Cessnock suggested that in years to come we could sit back and calculate how much money the port would make. Something must be done now, and this Government realises that. I urge all members to commend the commitment of the O'Farrell Government to the rebirth of the city of Newcastle. The proposed lease of the Newcastle port and the \$340 million contribution to the Newcastle Urban Renewal Strategy speaks volumes about the Government's commitment to drive economic growth, renewal and change for this State's second-largest city and one of the most fantastic regional harbour cities in Australia. I commend the motion to the House.

Question—That the motion be agreed to—put.

The House divided.

Ayes, 66

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

Noes, 21

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

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Motion agreed to.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders: Divisions and Quorums**

Motion by Mr Brad Hazzard agreed to:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended to provide that from 5.00 p.m. until the rising of the House, no divisions or quorums be called.

HEAVY VEHICLE (ADOPTION OF NATIONAL LAW) BILL 2013

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

Second reading set down as an order of the day for a later hour.

ABORIGINAL LAND RIGHTS AMENDMENT BILL 2013**Second Reading**

Debate resumed from 29 May 2013.

Ms LINDA BURNEY (Canterbury) [4.05 p.m.]: I say at the outset that the Opposition is supporting the Aboriginal Land Rights Amendment Bill 2013. I understand that amendments will be considered at some

point as well. One interesting aspect of land rights legislation in New South Wales that I remember distinctly is that when it came into the Parliament in 1983 a large group of Aboriginal people were outside the Parliament protesting against the legislation. The irony is that I was one of the protesters on the street, and I find myself today speaking to these amendments. The Opposition understands that these amendments are part of a regular review of legislation. The member for Liverpool, who was the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs in the last Labor Government, began this process and has a lot more understanding of it than I have. He will speak to the bill shortly.

In terms of history, I record in *Hansard* that land rights in New South Wales did not begin in 1983 when the legislation went through this House. Indeed, in 1977 about 200 Aboriginal people gathered at the Black Theatre in Redfern to discuss land rights. In those days activism was much more on the streets, and much more inspired by Vincent Lingiari and the 1972 tent embassy in Canberra. The gathering coincided with the October long weekend: the Koori Aboriginal rugby league carnival was held at the same time to ensure that there were a lot of people in town. I record in *Hansard* that out of those 200 people a committee was elected: Kevin Cook, Joyce Claque—some of these people are no longer with us—Kevin Gilbert, Alan Woods, Alice Briggs, Camela Potter, Trudy Longbottom, Betty Tighe, Ray Kelly, Jack Campbell and Ted Thomas. Kevin Cook was elected the convener and chairperson.

Kevin Cook, whom the Aboriginal community held in great esteem, was in many ways the father of land rights in New South Wales through his involvement with Tranby Aboriginal College. A number of Aboriginal land claims were lodged between 1977 and 1981, including the Terry Hie Hie claim relating to the old mission in Moree, as well as claims from Toomelah, La Perouse and Wallaga Lake. Land rights were an issue long before the implementation of the 1983 legislation. In 1977 New South Wales Aboriginal land councils took the resolution from the October land rights conference to the then Premier Neville Wran and the following year the Australian Labor Party State Conference successfully adopted a new policy in line with the October conference resolution. It is important to remind members of the precursor to the 1983 land rights legislation.

The Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983 is subject to a five-yearly statutory review. The registrar of land rights in New South Wales and the New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council led by chairperson Stephen Ryan are supportive of these amendments. As many of these amendments are non-controversial it is not necessary for me to go through all of them. However, this bill will amend the National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974 to provide that land of cultural significance to Aboriginal persons vested in more than one Aboriginal land council under the Act is vested in those councils as tenants in common rather than as joint tenants. A working group was established to examine these amendments.

The objects of the bill are to clarify functions of land councils, to alter the requirements relating to the advertising of staff vacancies, to clarify the provisions relating to the disqualification of a person to hold the office of a member of a local Aboriginal land council [LALC], to change the basis on which community development levies payable in relation to certain transactions of local Aboriginal land councils are calculated, which is important, and to make other miscellaneous amendments aimed at improving the administration of the principal Act and of Aboriginal land councils.

These amendments will enhance the administrative efficiency of Aboriginal land councils and are designed to facilitate the good governance of Aboriginal land councils and reduce unnecessary costs borne by land councils. Some proposals relate to administrative efficiency, including a number of amendments to clarify the delegation of functions, which will assist in the expeditious management of land council affairs, including asset management, in a way that is more aligned with a corporate separation of powers. The Act currently requires land councils to cease funding a local Aboriginal land council even if, for example, the local Aboriginal land council provides financial statements as little as one day after the due date set out in the Act, which clearly is a heavy-handed way of dealing with that issue.

Currently under the Act members are able to delegate the functions of a land council to any person, which can be a risky and difficult issue. One of the amendments that will deal with that risk will remove the current prohibition against the board delegating to the chief executive officer any aspect of the use, management or control of land. As I am sure the member for Liverpool will address the other amendments I will not go into them in detail. The Opposition has no argument with the content of this bill, though the Government might be considering introducing other land tenure legislation that will make the operation of land councils extremely difficult. If the Government introduces legislation of that nature the Opposition will examine it carefully.

The New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council, the premier body in New South Wales that represents Aboriginal people, is a democratically elected organisation. There are about 115 land councils across New South Wales so I suspect that communities in all our electorates have land councils. Land councils, which are the voice of Aboriginal people on a range of land-related issues, are responsible also for cultural heritage in many areas. Mr Geoffrey Scott, the current chief executive officer of the State land council, has a strong bureaucratic background and good business acumen. That land council is careful when investing money and observing investment requirements. The New South Wales Opposition supports the legislation but I understand that amendments will be moved later.

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE (Wagga Wagga) [4.15 p.m.]: I acknowledge all Aboriginal people, past and present, and am pleased to join members in supporting the Aboriginal Land Rights Amendment Bill 2013, which will make amendments to improve the administration, efficiency and governance of the Aboriginal Land Rights Act. The bill will do a number of things but importantly it will give land councils greater autonomy. It will give them the power to make decisions about the future of Aboriginal people and, in particular, the assets that they manage. New South Wales has a number of land councils, each of them unique, each of them diverse and each of them representing a broad cross-section of our communities. They have one goal, which is to improve the future of Aboriginal people and to manage investments. They have a huge responsibility and this bill is designed to assist them. I understand that land councils also operate businesses.

Going directly to the electorate of Wagga Wagga, our land council has large landholdings. In fact I wanted to speak in debate on this bill as our local land council was the first council to achieve success when applying under the Land Rights Act to acquire bricks and mortar. Traditionally under the Act only land could be applied for. In 2008 our land council was successful. Whilst its application was challenged by the then Government and ended up in the High Court, the property was ultimately passed to the Aboriginal Land Council, which resulted in a great deal of debate. However, I point out that I had no objection whatsoever. I think it is a good thing that communities can now regain available properties and make land claims. I also support the notion that those moneys or land assets should be reinvested into the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal people, whether through education or housing, as that is very important.

The building that was acquired in Gurwood Street which was previously owned by the Roads and Traffic Authority had been vacant for some years. When Kerry Pascoe, the local mayor at the time, and I met the manager, Lorraine Lyons, we discussed the possibilities. Tragically, the building burned down but as it was full of asbestos the site needed to be cleaned up and that of itself generated more debate. The building site has since lain empty because the local land council, I understand through Lorraine and others, was unable to make the necessary decisions to further the prospects of that piece of property. I believe this bill will assist them to do that. The local Aboriginal land councils also operate businesses such as preschools, housing and all the things the aged community depends on, and health facilities. Whilst enormous progress has been made, there is room for more. The bill attempts to give more decision-making power to Aboriginal people, who are best placed to make decisions about the future of their properties and their investments because they are for the Aboriginal community.

I am pleased to be able to support this bill and to put on record the fact that there is enormous goodwill for helping those communities to develop better aged care. We want to see more housing for Aboriginal families in the Wagga Wagga region. We want to see the houses owned by Aboriginal families. Land councils will hopefully now be able to quicken the process to ensure that they achieve that outcome. We do not want to see a property that was acquired and about which there was an enormous amount of community debate ultimately not benefit the community. I commend the Minister and all those who have worked to ensure this bill reaches the Parliament. Consultation has taken place and the stakeholders need to be recognised. I also recognise there is more to be done. A number of people have played an outstanding role in this process. I refer to Sean Gordon, the Chief Executive Officer of Darkinjung Local Aboriginal Land Council, and Stacey Meredith, who is associated with the Griffith Local Aboriginal Land Council. Many other well-intentioned people from around the State also have been involved.

Local communities are led by some outstanding people who give up their time, whether in paid employment or in a voluntary capacity, to further the future of Aboriginal children and adults. There are elders who are doing outstanding work as well as young people who are in employment or at university and who are looked up to as role models for what they are achieving. A couple of weeks ago I went to a ceremony that was organised by an Aboriginal consultative group in Wagga Wagga led by Aunty Isabel Reid. Members of this House will know Aunty Isabel well. She asked me to come along to receive a document called Mawang Gaway, which the group has put together to set out a structure so that everyone understands the protocols of Aboriginal

people, particularly how to manage a welcome to country and who can give the welcome. There is information about Aboriginal language, the ceremonies that might be held when dignitaries visit, how the death of a community member is viewed, Torres Strait Islanders, National Aboriginal and Islander Day Observance Committee [NAIDOC] Week, and community-run organisations such as the Wagga Wagga Land Council, which has played a role in this. They have all helped to fund this document. I commend the group because the document puts the protocols in place.

I have to admit not many of us are aware of just how a welcome should be given and what we should say. We need to be guided and so do the younger people in the Aboriginal community so that they can learn and carry on the traditions. I congratulate Aunty Isabel and all those involved in putting together this wonderful document. I understand the artwork was donated by Dave and Georgina O'Neil. Importantly, I understand this emblem will be worn by our football team that will compete in Dubbo in a few weeks time. I am particularly pleased about that. I support the bill. It is time it was brought to the House and I look forward to seeing further amendments from the Minister which will help further the cause of Aboriginal people in New South Wales.

Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool) [4.24 p.m.]: I support the Aboriginal Land Rights Amendment Bill 2013. I commence by acknowledging the traditional owners of the land on which we meet, the Gadigal people of the Eora nation. I pay my respects to their elders past and present. I also pay my respects to the elders of the other first nations of this land. The object of this bill is to make a range of amendments to the Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983. As has already been indicated, the Opposition supports the bill. The principal Act is an incredibly important piece of legislation. It was described as little short of revolutionary by Justice Kirby in the High Court in a case that the member for Wagga Wagga mentioned a moment ago involving a land claim at Wagga Wagga. At the time it was introduced it undoubtedly was little short of revolutionary. In my view as a white fella lawyer it delivers far more substantial land rights than anything encompassed in Mabo.

The bill came out of the Keane committee and was introduced to this House by the then Aboriginal Affairs Minister, Frank Walker, and was seen as a significant achievement of the Wran Government. Interestingly, it was opposed vehemently by the then Coalition Opposition, which opposed it at subsequent elections. I am glad to see that its position now seems to have changed although I note with interest the Minister's comments in his second reading speech as to other changes that might be coming further down the track. We will have to reserve our position on what the Government is doing now until we see those proposals although I know if they have anything to do with a ministerial corporation, which idea has been kicking around for some time, there will be vehement opposition from this side of the House.

The bill aims to increase the Act's effectiveness. The objects clause of the bill sets out some of the proposed amendments. One is to clarify which functions of a local Aboriginal land council may be exercised by the board of the council and to alter the provisions relating to the delegation of functions by the council's chief executive officer. Another proposed amendment is to change the requirements in relation to the advertising of staff vacancies for land councils and the qualifications of persons to fill those vacancies. The amendments also clarify the provisions relating to the disqualification of a person to hold the office of member of a local Aboriginal land council or the New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council and the filling of vacancies in those offices. There is also a change to the basis on which community development levies are calculated. There are other amendments as well.

The amendments relating to section 68 rectify some situations that arise with casual vacancies. As I understand the intent of the bill, there are a number of provisions to try to overcome some issues that arose out of the case of Patricia Laurie, who was a New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council councillor. In particular, the bill tries to resolve the issue of at what point in time the disqualification takes effect and what the implications of that may be. There are also provisions in clauses 20, 21, 34 and 35 that deal with the status of people who are employed by a local Aboriginal land council and the New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council and their election to those bodies. As I understand it the intent of the bill is to try to create almost a cross-fertilisation, which is a sensible thing to do.

There is also an amendment to allow the registrar to call a meeting of a local Aboriginal land council to elect a board if there is no existing board and no appointed administrator. I think that is meant to cover a lacuna that, from memory, developed in Moree Local Aboriginal Land Council. I note that the Minister's staff are nodding in agreement so I probably have that right. The changes to section 110 of the principal Act deal with a long-term bugbear of the New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council and are I think entirely sensible. Changes to section 149 remove "travelling and other allowances" from the list of expenditure that may be paid out of the New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council's account to local board members. That involves another long-term

irritant for the New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council. Changes to section 79A are a sensible alteration to current advertising regulations for vacancies. At the moment they are just too onerous and difficult to apply to every vacancy.

The changes to section 133 relate to a New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council councillor's office being vacated if an area changes. Those changes are desirable. The practical impact of that I think was raised in the possible options for Quambone Local Aboriginal Land Council, which at one stage was going to be divided up, but that would have created a vacancy on the New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council, which was entirely crazy. This is a sensible amendment to deal with that situation. The changes to section 153 are interesting and desirable. Currently section 153 (3) requires that a Local Aboriginal Land Council's accounts must be certified by an auditor appointed by the New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council. That will be altered to an auditor appointed by the local Aboriginal land council from a list kept by the New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council.

The overall central specification of the auditors is kept but it allows the local Aboriginal land councils to make the decision. That issue has been raised by a range of local Aboriginal land councils over time. The deletion of section 163 is helpful. The existing provisions require the New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council to stop providing funding to allow situations where, in some cases, that is simply too extreme. I will not deal in detail with the other amendments except to say that the Opposition supports them. I note the process that gave rise to these amendments. Despite some of the Minister's comments, the process is largely the same as that adopted by the previous Government, commencing with the land dealings policy amendments in 2009. That is certainly what some of the participants in the current process tell me. Involving the New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council in the preparation of such legislation is obviously necessary.

That is not just because it knows more about the Act than anybody else; if we are pursuing important policies and partnerships with Aboriginal people it must mean involving the New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council and local Aboriginal land councils in the process. I note the involvement of Mr Gordon from the Darkinjung Local Aboriginal Land Council, whom I would occasionally come across in the Macquarie Street mall at Liverpool when he was visiting Jack Johnson at Gandangara Local Aboriginal Land Council. I also note the involvement of Lila D'Souza from the New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council. A knowledge of C. Y. O'Connor can be very useful. My only regret is that most of these amendments were agreed to by the end of 2010 and it has taken too long to get to this point. The Opposition is happy to support the bill.

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla) [4.30 p.m.]: I support the Aboriginal Land Rights Amendment Bill 2013. Before I make a substantive contribution I acknowledge the Gadigal people of the Eora nation, the traditional custodians of the land on which we meet, and pay my respects to elders past and present, elders of other first nations of New South Wales, including the Gweagal clan of the Dharawal people, who are the traditional custodians of land in the Cronulla electorate. These amendments come against a background of the Government's commitment to improving the future of our Indigenous brothers and sisters which is highlighted by the recent release of the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs of the OCHRE plan—opportunity, choice, healing, responsibility, empowerment.

The New South Wales Government's plan for Aboriginal Affairs is symbolic of the Aboriginal community's deep connection with country. More specifically, the amendments before the House today will improve the administrative efficiency and governance of the Aboriginal Land Rights Act. A range of minor amendments to legislation will help the 120 local Aboriginal land councils that are constituted across New South Wales to better serve their communities. The principal legislation, which is the Aboriginal Lands Rights Act 1983, was designed to provide land rights for Aboriginal people in New South Wales, to provide for representative Aboriginal land councils in New South Wales and to vest lands in those councils. A diverse range of Aboriginal land councils in New South Wales is part of a unique network, whether they are in the inner city or in suburbia.

Since 1983 a vast network of Aboriginal land councils has developed to include important landowners and businesses that make up the many and varied communities of New South Wales. Over the past 10 to 15 years there has been enormous development with Aboriginal land councils, especially in locations where the property and development boom has been most significant. Aboriginal land councils can operate large to medium-size businesses, some with multimillion-dollar budgets and projects, and others are small community organisations located across New South Wales. They pop up everywhere. In my electorate of Cronulla the La Perouse Aboriginal Land Council has ex officio representation on the newly constituted Hungry Point Reserve

Trust, which has been assigned the task of managing and enhancing the old Cronulla fisheries site. The diversity of the network of Aboriginal land councils requires practical legislation to support Aboriginal land councils so that they can thrive as businesses to achieve their best potential and to be social and cultural hubs for their communities. The amendments in the bill will mean that Aboriginal land councils can get on with their business with greater ease and efficiency.

The bill will amend the Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983, first, to clarify which functions of the Aboriginal land council can be exercised by the board of that council and to order the provisions relating to the delegation of functions by the chief executive officer of a local Aboriginal land council; secondly, to order the requirements in relation to the advertising of staff vacancies for Aboriginal land councils and the qualifications of persons to fill those vacancies; thirdly, to clarify the provisions relating to the disqualification of a person to hold the office of a member of a local Aboriginal land council or the New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council and the filling of vacancies in those offices; fourthly, to change the basis on which community development levies payable in relation to some transactions of local Aboriginal land councils are calculated; and, finally, to make other miscellaneous amendments to improve the administration of the Aboriginal Land Rights Act and Aboriginal land councils. There will also be some minor amendments to the Aboriginal Land Rights Regulation 2002 and the National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974.

With reference to the property of local Aboriginal land councils, one example of an amendment that will enhance the ability of local Aboriginal land councils to get on with their business with greater ease and efficiency is the repeal of section 38 of the principal Act. The amendment will remove the restriction on local Aboriginal land councils from purchasing or taking on lease property, other than land, unless "in connection with the use, development and improvement of land". As the Act currently stands, it places an unnecessary shackle on the efficient operation of many Aboriginal land councils engaged in a wide range of complex commercial operations and reduces their capacity to realise economic and commercial opportunities.

Another amendment will be to section 153 of the principal Act to allow local Aboriginal land councils to choose their auditors from a list kept by the New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council. As independent corporations, local Aboriginal land councils should have the independence and the autonomy to appoint appropriately qualified auditors that it feels best suits their needs rather than have them directly appointed by the New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council. The amendment is one that has been requested by many Aboriginal land councils. Many of the amendments in the bill will cut unnecessary red tape and restriction on land councils to reduce waste and cost in some areas. One example is the amendment that will remove the requirement of local Aboriginal land councils to notify the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and the Ministers administering the Crown Lands Act 1989 of any proposed land dealings. Those Ministers do not have any power in relation to the dealing of land under the Aboriginal Land Rights Act. That duty is with the New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council. The amendment will remove an unnecessary and time-wasting administrative task and save local Aboriginal land councils time and money.

The bill is the first stage of amendments that stem from a five-yearly statutory review of the Aboriginal Land Rights Act. There will be further work undertaken on areas of policy such as housing, land claims, regulatory roles and the structure of land councils, which is underway at the moment. That may involve future reforms and changes to help further assist the prosperity of Aboriginal land councils. In the meantime, these apparently minor amendments are the Government's first step to facilitate the day-to-day machinery of the land rights network to pave the way for a smoother and more sustainable future. Key players have invested time and expertise in developing this bill, including the New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council, the registrar of the Aboriginal Land Rights Act, the staff of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs, and the Department of Primary Industries. The amendments are not earth-shattering, but it is an important array of minor amendments that are the first step in an ongoing process of facilitating the efficient operation and good governance of Aboriginal land councils. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr TONY ISSA (Granville) [4.39 p.m.]: I support the Aboriginal Land Rights Amendment Bill 2013. As the Minister pointed out, it is 30 years since the Aboriginal Land Rights Act became law in New South Wales. It is therefore reasonable that it be examined and that changes be made to reflect the current situation. I take this opportunity to congratulate the Minister on initiating a review of the Act in December 2011. This demonstrates a commitment to the Aboriginal people of the State by ensuring that the law is still valid and is working in their best interests. The initial stages of the review demonstrated that there was a need to improve the efficiency and outcomes of the Act. I stress that this legislation is not simply change for the sake of change. It represents this Government's commitment to improve the rights of the Aboriginal community and to ensure that land rights remain strong for the next 30 years.

I will explain why Aboriginal land rights were enshrined in legislation in 1983. In 1977 a non-statutory New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council was established to lobby for land rights. At that time it called for full-scale recognition of land rights and for the abolition of the Aboriginal Lands Trust. The claims of the group led the government of the day to establish a select committee of the Legislative Assembly in November 1978 to examine the issue. Its terms of reference required it to look into and make recommendations about the causes of the socioeconomic disadvantages experienced by Aboriginal people, particularly with regard to housing, education, welfare and cultural issues; the effectiveness of Commonwealth/State arrangements with regard to Aboriginal Affairs; and land rights for Aboriginal people in New South Wales.

The cross-party committee made wide-ranging findings on land rights and the protection of sacred sites. The findings later formed the basis for the establishment of a land rights system and the Aboriginal Heritage Commission in New South Wales. It further found that it was the responsibility of Aboriginal people to identify and take action to protect sites that are claimed to be sacred. As a result, it was recommended that the Aboriginal Heritage Commission be established to protect and maintain sites, and eventually to take over the role of the National Parks and Wildlife Service in relation to these sites. The first New South Wales Department of Aboriginal Affairs was established in 1981 and was given responsibility for drafting land rights legislation. In 1982 a green paper was released proposing the establishment of a three-tiered system of elected Aboriginal land councils with the responsibility for making decisions at a regional and a local level.

The Aboriginal Land Rights Act replaced the Aborigines Act 1969 and dismantled the Aboriginal Lands Trust and its government advisory role. The Aboriginal Land Rights Bill was introduced in March 1983. Then Minister Frank Walker told Parliament that the proposed legislation "takes the first step in this State towards redressing the injustice and neglect of real Aboriginal needs since Captain Phillip stepped upon the shores of Port Jackson in 1788". He went on to say that "Land rights means the recognition of prior ownership of this State of New South Wales by Aborigines." It was the first time that any Australian government had made a clear-cut statement about Aboriginal prior ownership and rejected the previous approach that denied Aborigines land ownership.

Local Aboriginal land councils were established under the Act. Effectively, they became the elected representatives of the Aboriginal people. The councils work for their members and the wider Aboriginal community in matters relating to housing, legal aid and employment. There is a network of 121 local Aboriginal land councils in New South Wales divided into nine regions. Each council has a board that is responsible for the affairs of the land council in accordance with the Aboriginal Land Rights Act and the council's community land and business plan, facilitating the communication between members and the New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council, and reviewing the performance of the land council in carrying out its functions and achieving its objectives.

Over the past 30 years substantial assets have been acquired to the extent that the Aboriginal Land Council is able to operate independently of government. Land payments to the council ceased in December 1998, with the capital accumulated over the first 15 years of its existence amounting to \$281 million. That has continued to grow under the management of successive councils, which have been self-funded since 1998. More than 20,000 land claims have been lodged since assent to the Act, with more than 5,000 refused and one-third of all claims granted. However, more than half the claims are still awaiting determination by the Minister responsible for lands. Amendments to the legislation made in 1990 allowed the local Aboriginal land councils to dispose of their land under certain circumstances. However, the time taken to determine outstanding land claims has been of ongoing concern to the New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council and the local Aboriginal land councils. Since it came to office in 2011, the O'Farrell Government has been looking at ways to reduce red tape and to make local decision-making more fluid.

While this legislation will not necessarily speed up the time it takes to process claims, it will ensure that land councils are able to function more efficiently. The amendments before the House today do just that: They aim to make it easier for Aboriginal land councils to serve their communities better. This legislation will allow the land councils to be more independent and more proactive in dealing with day-to-day demands. Under the amendments, boards and chief executive officers will have the power to delegate certain functions to allow them to run effectively and to meet their legislative requirements. These amendments were the result of the input of an expert working group chaired by the registrar of the Land Rights Act and established by the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, the Hon. Victor Dominello. The working group included the New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council and two members of the local Aboriginal land councils. The Director General of the Department of Primary Industries was also a member, which represents this Government's commitment to resolve the inefficiencies of the land claims process.

The amendments before the House represent a thorough consultation process involving all stakeholders. Under the existing law, the Aboriginal Land Council can cease funding if the local council is as little as a day late in submitting its statements. These amendments give the local councils greater flexibility in their reporting. A further amendment allows local councils to appoint an auditor of their choosing and one over whom they will have greater control. The broad range of amendments in this legislation will benefit the entire Aboriginal community and will facilitate the speed with which land claims are addressed. I congratulate the Minister on his work on this legislation and I commend it to the House.

Mr CHRIS HOLSTEIN (Gosford) [4.47 p.m.]: I support the Aboriginal Land Rights Amendment Bill 2013, which was introduced by the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, the Hon. Victor Dominello. The Minister will be visiting the Central Coast this weekend for the 5 Lands Walk. It is not a race or an extreme bushwalk; it is a journey through and with the communities of the Central Coast to experience the cultural diversity that we enjoy in our region and of which the Indigenous community is a vital element. The local Indigenous community has worked closely with the many groups involved in the 5 Lands Walk. The walk will commence at MacMasters Beach with a smoking ceremony, a traditional welcome and presentation of the ceremonial message stick, which will be carried on the walk. The walk was initiated by local Aborigines when I was a local councillor. Darkinjung land stretches from the Derribim to Awaba and from Mount Yengo to the sea, and is an important part of our country.

From MacMasters Beach Surf Life Saving Club the walk traverses what are called five different lands. They include the areas of MacMasters Beach, Copacabana, Avoca Beach, North Avoca and ultimately Terrigal. The Central Coast is an area of vast cultural diversity and, apart from our Indigenous community, comprises members of the Chinese community, Latinos from six different Spanish-speaking countries including Spain and Uruguay, the Irish community—on the weekend the Irish Consul General will visit Avoca Beach—and the African and the Filipino communities will also be represented. They will join our Indigenous community to celebrate the 5 Lands Walk next weekend. I encourage all members to share in this wonderful experience. They will be welcomed to Darkinjung land and to whale dreaming country. I thoroughly recommend the 5 Lands Walk, which has been held for eight years.

This bill represents the initial outcome of the statutory five-year review commenced in December 2011. The aim of the review was to ascertain whether the policy objectives of the Act remained valid and appropriate. Work continues on how the Act can deliver better outcomes for Aboriginal people in areas such as the regulation of land councils, land claims and housing. The results of that work will be reported to Parliament later this year. The purpose of the Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983 is to provide land rights for Aboriginal persons in New South Wales, to provide for representative Aboriginal land councils in New South Wales and to vest land in those councils. With that in mind, this bill seeks to enhance the administrative efficiency and effectiveness of the Act. This is the first instalment of a bigger project to realise more fully the potential of the Act.

This Government is working collaboratively with, and utilising the experience of, the New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council, the Registrar of the Aboriginal Land Rights Act and Aboriginal Affairs New South Wales in a reform process that will deliver a more effective legislative framework for Aboriginal land rights in New South Wales. An expert working group, which included the New South Wales council, the Director General of the Department of Primary Industries and two members of the local Aboriginal land councils was chaired by the Registrar of the Aboriginal Land Rights Act. Having community members directly involved in the formulation of legislative proposals was a first, and ensured that those most affected were represented in the process.

The amendments in this bill effectively cut red tape and promote good business administration. They will make it easier for Aboriginal land councils to serve and develop their communities. As well as enhancing the administrative effectiveness and efficiency of land councils, the amendments will facilitate good governance, reduce unnecessary costs to land councils and also correct minor inaccuracies in the current legislation. Some practical examples would be to allow local Aboriginal land council boards to delegate their functions to chief executive officers and for chief executive officers to delegate functions to other staff in a way that is more aligned with a corporate separation of powers. Some of the land councils operate medium- to large-size businesses with multimillion dollar budgets and projects.

Repealing section 38 of the Act will remove the restriction on local Aboriginal land councils from purchasing or taking on lease property, other than land, unless in connection with the use, development and improvement of land. This improves their capacity to realise economic and commercial opportunities. Another

amendment will allow local land councils to choose their auditors rather than have them appointed directly by the New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council. The legislation also removes the requirement for both the New South Wales and the local Aboriginal land councils to notify the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and the Minister administering the Crown Lands Act 1989 of their land dealings.

I commend Sean Gordon, Chief Executive Officer of the Darkinjung Local Aboriginal Land Council, for turning around its financial position. He is an impressive young man who has worked proactively not only with the State Government but also with councils on the Central Coast. I commend Sean for his work in bringing about an outcome that is better not only for his people on the Central Coast but also for our Indigenous communities across the State. He demonstrates great attention to detail and a dedication to his council. I commend the bill to the House as the first step in improving our dealings with Aboriginal communities.

Mr ANDREW GEE (Orange) [4.55 p.m.]: I support the Aboriginal Land Rights Amendment Bill 2013. The purpose of the bill is to amend the Aboriginal Land Rights Act to improve the governance and administrative efficiency of the operation of the Act. The original 1983 Act provides a mechanism for compensating Aboriginal people in New South Wales for loss of their land. The land councils can claim Crown land which, if granted, is transferred as freehold title. There are 120 Aboriginal land councils in New South Wales that are represented by their peak body, the New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council, which has an overarching administrative and regulatory role. The legislation has a number of key points. Its key philosophy is improving administrative efficiency, and the bill makes a range of changes to the operational and administrative functions of land councils that will augment the administrative efficiency of the whole land rights network of operations. Importantly, it introduces a range of changes that will help to improve the governance of land councils. The bill also removes and resolves a number of minor inconsistencies and inaccuracies that were not addressed—perhaps inadvertently—in previous legislation.

I acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which we meet, the Gadigal people of the Eora nation. I also acknowledge the Wiradjuri people, who are the traditional custodians of land in the Central West, and certainly the land in my electorate. The legislation contains a number of key amendments, including the repeal of section 163, which requires the New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council to cease funding land councils for insignificant breaches, such as a report being lodged one day late. That will be a welcome reform. The bill also contains provisions to allow land council boards to delegate functions to chief executive officers, and for those chief executive officers to delegate functions to other staff members. This will facilitate and assist the expeditious management of land councils' affairs and is also an important step with respect to corporate governance.

The bill also amends section 153 to allow local Aboriginal land councils to choose their auditors from a list kept by the New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council rather than have them appointed directly by the land council. As earlier speakers have said, this legislation is an important step that is welcomed by Aboriginal land councils in New South Wales. Earlier I mentioned that the Wiradjuri people are the traditional custodians of the land in the Orange electorate. I pay tribute to a couple of Wiradjuri female elders who have done great work in the Wellington area. Aunty Joyce Williams and Aunty Vi Lousick have worked tirelessly for the Wellington community. As the local member for Orange, I often meet them when performing my duties. Recently I attended a meeting to discuss issues concerning the Aboriginal community at Wellington. The group, of which Aunty Vi is a member, spoke about what life had been like in Wellington years ago—but not that long ago. Indeed, the stories told by Aunty Joyce and Aunty Vi about the discrimination against Aboriginal people in the Central West would shock many in this place.

In 2013 it is easy to forget that such discrimination happened not so long ago—for example, Aboriginal children and white children were born in different parts of Wellington Hospital. As shocking as that sounds, it happened. Aunty Joyce and Aunty Vi have obviously suffered a lot a lot of discrimination but one of the things I admire most about them is that, remarkably, they are not bitter about their experiences. Instead, they work for the wellbeing of their communities and improving life for the next generation in the Wellington area. I deeply respect them for that and for all of the wonderful work they do for their communities. Aunty Joyce was born in 1926 at the Nanima mission outside Wellington. She will not mind my saying that she is obviously well over 80, and continues her good work to this day.

Ms Linda Burney: Eighty-seven years.

Mr ANDREW GEE: I acknowledge the interjection of the member for Bankstown.

Ms Linda Burney: Canterbury.

Mr ANDREW GEE: I am sorry, Canterbury.

Ms Linda Burney: Getting closer.

Mr ANDREW GEE: They might be Coalition seats soon—we are working on it. The Rekindling program was launched recently at Wellington by the Bangarra Dance Theatre. The object of the program is to rekindle the stories of the Wiradjuri culture. The launch involved children from Wellington and surrounding districts, including places as far away as Trangie. A selection process was undertaken at the Wellington Police Citizens Youth Club and then a performance was held at Wellington High School. Finally, there was a performance at the Wellington Soldiers Club to which the whole community was invited. I take this opportunity to thank Sidney Saltner, Youth Program Director, and Patrick Thaiday and Chantal Webb of the Bangarra Dance Theatre. I note also that Minister Souris approved funding of \$20,000 to launch the program. Everyone who attended the performance was moved. As Sidney Saltner said, the performance was the essence of what rekindling is all about. I am confident that in the future we will see some Bangarra stars from the Wellington area.

It was decided to launch the program in Wellington to assist in the development of a Wellington dance theatre. It is hoped that an ongoing dance theatre will be developed and that all in Wellington will take great pride in it. The Bangarra Dance Theatre is scheduled to return to Wellington next year to undertake another week-long workshop. Hopefully, by that time Sidney Saltner will see that the Wellington dance theatre is a going concern, supported by the entire local community. I thank also chief executive Catherine Baldwin of the Bangarra Dance Theatre for her support. I commend this important legislation to the House.

Dr GEOFF LEE (Parramatta) [5.05 p.m.]: I commence my contribution to debate on the Aboriginal Land Rights Amendment Bill 2013 by acknowledging the traditional custodians of the land on which we meet: the Gadigal people of the Eora nation. The amendments in the bill will markedly improve the administrative efficiency and governance of the Aboriginal Land Rights Act. They make a range of minor adjustments to the Act that will assist the 120 local Aboriginal land councils across New South Wales to serve their communities better. I commend the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and his dedicated staff for their tireless work in support of local Aboriginal land councils. I draw the attention of the House to Parramatta's Indigenous heritage—namely, that of the Burramatugal people—as recorded on the website of Parramatta City Council. It states:

The Dharug were made up of many clans, including the Burramatugal who lived in the area now known as Parramatta. The name 'Parramatta' is thought to be derived from the Aboriginal word for 'place where the eels lie down' to breed. Like their neighbours, the Toongagal in Toongabbie and the Bidigal in Rose Hill, the Burramatugal fashioned tools and spears for hunting native animals and collected wild berries and flora as a valuable source of vitamins.

The Burramatugal had a close relationship with the river, from which they caught fish, eels, and other food. Their stable bark canoes often carried a small fire in the middle, built on a mound of soil to allow them to cook their catch fresh. "Firebrand farming" was also practised in the region.

The arrival of Governor Arthur Phillip in 1788 changed the Parramatta region. Rose Hill—now known as Parramatta—was the first farming settlement for the colony. It was a difficult time as the people of the colony were facing starvation. I have spoken previously about the planning for that heritage precinct. I again highlight the importance of that precinct and the celebration of not only Aboriginal but also early colonial and European habitation. In September last year the Premier announced that the Parramatta Heritage Precinct master plan will include the Parramatta Gaol, Parramatta Stadium, the old King's School, the Parramatta Female Factory, Parramatta Girls Home, the old Roman Catholic orphanage and other buildings on the Cumberland Hospital site adjacent to the world-renowned heritage site of Parramatta Park on which old Government House still stands.

I note that recently an Aboriginal land council laid claim to Parramatta Gaol and it is my understanding from advice from the department that that claim will be successful. I will be interested to see what the land council does with the jail. It would be wonderful if it were opened to the public so that we can all celebrate its long history—it is one of the oldest jails in Australia. Parramatta Gaol was built between 1837 and 1843. It was used as a jail site from 1798 until last year. One great thing about the jail is its proximity. If the State Government can make an arrangement with the land council, one fantastic outcome would be to open up the area and use the site for tourism to share experiences of the past and the story of Parramatta, and celebrate its history and heritage. The Parramatta heritage plan is of particular importance because it covers more than 90 acres. It is particularly important for adaptive reuse and refurbishment of the existing early European and colonial assets. One wonderful aspect of the site is that it has more assets, more buildings, than The Rocks. It has been said that it has the greatest collection of European and colonial assets in Australia.

We need a vision of how we can best use and refurbish the assets, and how we can open up the assets to the public to tell the story about the start of the colony, the wonderful contribution that Parramatta made to the

colony when it started and how it progressed through the ages to become things such as the jail, the Parramatta girls' home, the female factory or the orphanage—there are many wonderful stories to be told. There are many sad stories, and there are emotional ties with the area. There is a challenge in terms of how to balance the preservation of history, the commemoration of terrible things that happened on the site and telling the story of European settlement with a celebration of 40,000 years of the Dharug Aboriginals who shared the site prior to European settlement. Indeed, their elders and descendants continue to be in that area.

The Parramatta master plan faced many hurdles in terms of how to deliver a solution that included about \$150 million worth of restoration and refurbishment. It is all about adaptive reuse. We need to look at it from the perspective that if we do not use them we will lose them. That is a huge challenge for the Government. It is a big plan; it is a long plan. It is not something that will be done overnight. The funding needs to be a long-term staged approach, perhaps over 10 years or 15 years. The plan certainly has the potential to reposition Parramatta, which is known for its historic and heritage aspects, to drive tourism. We like tourism because not only does it tell a story, it also drives the economy so there is greater spending in the area. Tourists spend their dollars in local shops, restaurants and on tours, and that money goes into the economy to generate jobs. As we know, Parramatta is an employment hub. The old jail site should be developed into a world-class heritage facility that repositions Parramatta, which is known for its heritage tourism.

A vibrant cultural and social hub can be developed along the river. The buildings alongside the right can be adaptively reused and opened as cafes, restaurants, meeting places and museums. When we reach the consultation phase we should not limit our exposure to what is needed. Of course, economically it will be necessary to develop the site to offset some of the refurbishment costs. In conclusion, I pay tribute to the Burramattagal people, who lived in the area prior to European settlement. I pay tribute to those who have dedicated their lives to preserving the heritage, not only Aboriginals but early colonial people such as June Bullivant, the founder of the Granville Historic Society, Bonney Djuric, who attended Parramatta Girls Home and has continued the legacy of preserving that history; and Gay Hendrickson, who is passionate about the female factory and what we can do to open up the female factory.

There are other groups, including the Friends of May's Hill Cemetery, which I had the privilege of visiting on the weekend. People are also preserving Hamilton Cottage, with which I am familiar. Finally, I pay tribute to Uncle Greg. I have seen him many times in Parramatta. Indeed, only last week we had a good chat about the future of the area. He impressed me when I started at university. Speaking of the university, I acknowledge Melissa Williams, the Director of the Office of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment and Engagement at the University of Western Sydney.

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth) [5.15 p.m.]: I support the Aboriginal Lands Rights Amendment Bill 2013. I acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which we meet, the Gadigal people of the Eora nation. Indeed, I take this opportunity to pay my respects to their elders past and present. I also pay my respects to the elders of the other first nations of New South Wales and the Gamilaraay people in the Tamworth electorate with whom we have frequent contact. Only yesterday we attended a special ceremony at which the Minister for Mental Health announced significant funding for RichmondPRA to deliver front-line services to help people on their mental health journey. Aunty Gloria was there and delivered the welcome to country. She does a magnificent job. Uncle Neville usually attends such ceremonies and he does a fantastic welcome to country. What I like so much about the welcome to country by Uncle Neville and Aunty Gloria is that they also provide an explanation.

Ms Linda Burney: She is my kids' grandmother's sister.

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON: I acknowledge the interjection of the member for Canterbury, who is a relative of Aunty Gloria. It is nice that the member recognises that. Aunty Gloria is a lovely lady. Only yesterday she told us the story of the welcome to country and the history behind it. It is interesting to hear where they come from and what they have done. Not only do they welcome elders past and present, but Aunty Gloria and Uncle Neville welcome and pay tribute to the young people in our region because they are the people who will take us forward. In late 2011 my colleague the member for Ryde began the five-yearly statutory review of the Aboriginal Land Rights Act, principally to determine whether the policy objectives of the Act remain valid and whether the terms of the Act remain appropriate for securing those objectives.

To assist in this important work, a working group was established, which included the New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council and two members of local Aboriginal land councils, as well as representatives of New South Wales government agencies, such as Aboriginal Affairs, and the Director General of the

Department of Primary Industries. This group was chaired by the Registrar of the Aboriginal Land Rights Act. The amendments in this bill are largely the fruits of the tireless work of this working group. I take this opportunity to thank them for their diligence and dedication. The amendments will have a significant effect on the day-to-day business of local Aboriginal land councils and the New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council. These proposed amendments help to nurture good business administration and remove impediments for Aboriginal land councils to serve and develop their communities.

In essence, the amendments contained in this bill enhance the Act to make it more efficient and effective. In addition, the proposed amendments will clarify certain parts of the Act to make the oversight and regulation of the land council network by the New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council less expensive and burdensome and, in so doing, ease the costs currently endured by the land council network, thereby preserving the value of the New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council Statutory Investment Fund to ensure that it can be maintained for the benefit of future generations of Aboriginal people in this State. It is not only for future generations of Aboriginals in this State but also for past generations.

Recently I met with the Red Chief Local Aboriginal Land Council in Gunnedah. At that meeting were chairman Mitchum Neave, the previous chairman, Greg Griffiths, Aboriginal elders Uncle Dick Talbot and Uncle Lloyd Mathews as well as the Chief Executive Officer of the Red Chief Land Council, Tony Comber. We talked about many things, but there was one thing that I am very keen to follow through on. Many young people who signed up for the war did not give correct information, sometimes in relation to their age, so that they were able to fight. Some people denounced their nationality. I have been told by the Red Chief Aboriginal Land Council that some Aboriginal people denounced their heritage so that they could fight: they were not identified as being Aboriginal. We should go through the history of those who signed up to fight for our nation and identify those who were Aboriginal, and then go to the cenotaphs or war memorials, particularly those in areas such as Curlewis, Tamworth, Boggabri, Moree and surrounds, to amend the plaques to identify where appropriate those people as Aboriginal and restore their national heritage and pride.

While I was at the Red Chief Aboriginal Land Council in Gunnedah I was very happy to hand over a cheque for \$57,500 for a publication to be compiled on Gunnedah senior Aboriginal elders. This grant will allow the Red Chief Aboriginal Local Land Council to record a traditional and contemporary history of stories by the senior elders of Gunnedah and produce a book. It is a wonderful project that will allow the Red Chief Aboriginal Land Council to conserve and support Aboriginal heritage in Gunnedah. The grant was provided by the Minister for Heritage and the program provides grants to help bring State and local heritage buildings and places back to life, fund emergency repairs and care for Aboriginal places. The first round provided \$3 million for heritage and conservation funding in 2013-14, with another \$3 million available in 2014-15. Under this program the Aboriginal heritage projects funding provides grants to Aboriginal organisations, businesses and community groups of up to \$100,000 for projects that conserve, promote and support Aboriginal heritage in New South Wales.

It is projects like these that allow the history and stories of the Gunnedah region to be conserved, and I cannot wait to see the final product. We have not only the Red Chief Local Aboriginal Land Council but also the Tamworth Aboriginal Land Council. They are two organisations that I have very strong connections with and continue to support at every opportunity. This is a wonderful amendment and I commend Minister Dominello, who has been to Tamworth on a number of occasions and is doing great work right across the region. He is an active Minister who gets around and meets people. He has a real hands-on role to play and a common-sense approach, which is the mantra of this Coalition Government. I commend the Aboriginal Land Rights Amendment Bill 2013 to the House.

Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS (Clarence) [5.23 p.m.]: It is my pleasure to speak to the Aboriginal Land Rights Amendment Bill 2013. In doing so, it is appropriate that I acknowledge the traditional custodians of the lands on which we meet, the Gadigal people of the Eora nation, and in addition I acknowledge the traditional owners of the land upon which the electorate of Clarence sits: the Gumbaynggirr people, the Bundjalung nation and the Yaegl people. A very high proportion of Aboriginal people live in the Clarence electorate and the amendments in this bill will be of great interest to them. The Richmond Valley has the highest percentage of Aboriginal people of all of the local government areas in the north of New South Wales. Most of the Goori population in the Richmond Valley are in the Coraki or Casino localities.

There are far more young people than aged Goori people in the Richmond Valley and, interestingly, there are more male youths than females. Even in comparison to other Aboriginal populations, the Goori population in the Richmond Valley is young. Goori culture in the Richmond Valley is also quite unique. Goori

people are far more likely than other Aboriginal populations to follow a traditional religion or to speak a traditional language. There are a number of Goori people in Pentecostal, Uniting or Baptist groups. Statistics show that Goori people are disadvantaged on all major indicators of income, education, employment and housing. That is why I think this bill is very important to the Aboriginal community within my electorate.

The amendments will markedly improve the administrative efficiency and governance of the Aboriginal Land Rights Act. The amendments in the bill provide a range of minor adjustments to the legislation that will assist some 120 local Aboriginal land councils that are constituted across New South Wales to better serve their communities. The purpose of the Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983 was to provide land rights for Aboriginal persons in New South Wales, to provide for representative Aboriginal land councils in New South Wales and to vest land in those councils. That is why I believe that this bill will greatly assist those land councils because it will make it easier to administer the lands which are vested in their control.

From the inner city and suburbia out to the bush, right across the north-west corner of the State, there is diversity in the unique network of representative Aboriginal land councils. Since 1983 this vast network of Aboriginal land councils has formed to be important landowners and businesses that make up the many and varied communities of New South Wales. The development of Aboriginal land councils has been enormous over the past 10 to 15 years, especially in places where the property and development boom has been most pronounced. Aboriginal land councils can operate large- to medium-sized businesses, some with multi-million dollar budgets and projects, whilst others are small community organisations located across New South Wales. The diversity of the network requires practical regulation to support Aboriginal land councils so that they may thrive and achieve their best as businesses, and be the social and cultural hubs for their communities—and that is exactly what they are. Most of the Indigenous people within my electorate look towards their local Aboriginal land council for assistance, not just on the odd occasion but very frequently.

The amendments are not just minor tweaking. They will mean that local Aboriginal land councils can get on with their business with greater ease and efficiency. The amendment to repeal section 38 of the Act will remove the restriction on local Aboriginal land councils from purchasing or taking on lease property, other than land, unless in connection with the use, development and improvement of the land. As it stands, the Act unnecessarily shackles the efficient operation of many local Aboriginal land councils engaged in a wide range of complex commercial operations and reduces the capacity of those councils to realise economic and commercial opportunities. The bill will provide greater choice of auditors. For example, a simple amendment to section 153 will allow local Aboriginal land councils to choose their auditors from a list kept by the New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council.

As independent corporations local Aboriginal land councils should have the independence and autonomy to appoint appropriately qualified auditors who they feel best suit their needs rather than have them appointed directly by the New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council. This particular amendment has been requested by many local Aboriginal land councils and I am happy to let the network know their request has been granted. Most importantly, many of the amendments cut unnecessary red tape and restrictions on land councils so that things can be done more quickly, and in some cases reduce waste and cost. The section regarding notification of land dealings is a good example. The amendment will remove the requirement on local Aboriginal land councils to notify the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and the Minister administering the Crown Lands Act 1989 of any proposed land dealings. Those Ministers do not have any power in relation to dealing of land under the Land Rights Act. The duty rests with the New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council. The amendment will remove this unnecessary and time-wasting administrative task and save local Aboriginal land councils both time and money.

The bill represents the first stage of amendments stemming from the five-yearly statutory review of the Aboriginal Land Rights Act. Further work on the policy areas of housing, land claims, regulatory roles and the structure of land councils is underway that may involve future reforms and changes to assist local Aboriginal land councils to prosper. It is expected that such reforms will assist local Aboriginal land councils and the Aboriginal people of this State even further. In the meantime these minor amendments are this Government's first step to oil the day-to-day machinery of the land rights network to pave the way for a smoother and more sustainable future. It is with great pleasure that I commend the bill to the House.

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

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Notices of Motions

General Business Notices of Motions (General Notices) given.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ALBURY-WODONGA PALLIATIVE CARE CAMPAIGN

Mr GREG APLIN (Albury) [5.37 p.m.]: "The act of dying is one of the acts of life", so said Roman Emperor Marcus Aurelius, a warrior-philosopher and mate of Russell Crowe's Maximus in *Gladiator*. It is one thing to ponder your own epitaph but quite another to share the script for your final act. A recent border campaign on this issue takes its name from a title used by Palliative Care Australia: "Some things are too important to be left unsaid. Let's chat about dying." It is a long title but each word is important. This was not an occasion for a snappy three-word tag line or pun that was all fizz but no nourishment. Do we in Australia make plans for death and dying and then discuss these with our family? In order to gain insight into our behaviour, Palliative Care Australia commissioned an independent online survey of 1,000 Australians who had recently lost a loved one. Of those surveyed, says Palliative Care Australia,

... most felt unprepared for the death of a loved one, and around one in 10 admitted they didn't know where their loved one wanted to be cared for at the end of their lives.

The Albury-Wodonga Cancer Foundation was also wrestling with this issue in the lead-up to Palliative Care Week this year. The idea was to kick-start family discussions through a community-based advertising campaign where local residents talked openly about planning for death and dying. Five separate advertisements were created, each with a single presenter. Eric Turner, chairperson of Albury-Wodonga Cancer Foundation, introduces the series and encourages us all to have a discussion with our families about how they will confront death and dying.

Jenny Black, President of Bravehearts on the Murray, talks about a friend who passed away at just 32 years of age. Wodonga's Young Citizen of the Year Josie Lindner looks at how young people can think of themselves as invincible and why we should take the opportunity to express our love to our family. Entertainer Steve Bowen encourages his young family to be aware of the sadness but also to celebrate the person's life and love. I also took part. In my 30 seconds I drew upon my experience talking with my mother. At 96 years of age, she had enjoyed a great life in Australia and Africa, and she made it clear what she wanted to happen when she died.

While we are all fearful of raising such an emotional subject with our families and friends, I think we all concede it is better to have a discussion early when illness is not the foremost reality and we do not have to add to the pain and stress of those difficult days. As Eric Turner said, it is important that a family talks about end of life but it is even more important that the family listens to what is being said by the one who is ill. Steve Bowen, a popular and highly respected entertainer and DJ on the border, put it well when he asked the question: "Is a discussion about death carried out for the person who will pass away or is it for those left behind?" As Steve himself noted, it is a combination of both, and this helps us move forward in the knowledge that we are on the right path.

Digital Impact Productions came into the picture with Ross McGrath and Tony Grace producing a series of advertisements, which were then aired as community service announcements by Prime7 television in Albury. The television station provided 60 spots, each 30seconds in duration, on each of its three television stations. The advertisements ran over a five-day period in Palliative Care Week—from 19 May to 25 May. The advertisements have now taken on a life of their own and will be used as a training aid for palliative care workers and volunteers. Many of us have had conversations with members of the public who have seen the advertisements. I am pleased to say that the five advertisements have now been placed on YouTube so everyone can have a look.

Perhaps there is never an ideal time to talk about death and dying but occasionally the discussion, conveniently, comes to us. The Council on the Ageing New South Wales is holding a parliamentary forum on Thursday 27 June. That forum will explore what it takes for a person to experience what might be called a good death. The forum will be opened by the Minister for Ageing, and Minister for Disability Services. Speakers will include academics, medical practitioners, a science journalist, and a bioethicist. I encourage all members to attend the forum next week.

For those with a stronger or professional interest in palliative care issues, the twelfth Australian Palliative Care Conference: "Palliative Care—everyone's business", will be held in Canberra from 3 to 6 September. This conference will bring together more than 700 delegates from Australia and overseas. I thank

all those who worked on this important Albury-Wodonga campaign, from Eric Turner and the Albury-Wodonga Cancer Foundation, to Belinda Wolk at Mercy Health Albury, Prime7 television, producers Ross McGrath and Tony Grace from Digital Impact Productions, and the four other presenters who gave voice to their thoughts in the advertisements. To see the advertisements, members should go to www.youtube.com and search under the phrase: "Let's talk about dying. Albury Wodonga Cancer Foundation."

Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.41 p.m.]: I commend the member for Albury for bringing this important matter to the attention of the House and for his involvement with and support for palliative care in Albury-Wodonga. I also commend him for partaking in the television advertisements with his colleague Eric Turner from the Albury-Wodonga Cancer Association—an important issue that we all have to face. I am sure all members take a deep interest in palliative care. From what the member for Albury has said, it is important to discuss this matter with our loved ones so that they understand what we require when we pass away. Once again I applaud the member for Albury for his ongoing efforts and support for palliative care in his electorate.

LITTLE KIDS, BIG DREAMS PROJECT

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) [5.42 p.m.]: Recently I had the pleasure of attending the launch of the Little Kids, Big Dreams project—a program that is part of the Communities for Children initiative and is funded by the Federal Government's Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs. The program was launched at Villawood East Public School. The aim of the Communities for Children initiative is to help build strong families by supporting children from a young age to reach their potential. The program provides an opportunity for local Bankstown primary school students—primarily in year 3—to improve their understanding of the positive benefits of workplace participation and career development.

The Smith Family is a facilitating partner of this program in Bankstown and has established a committee of community members who have become responsible for the Little Kids, Big Dreams project. This project is unique to Bankstown and was created after a need was identified in the community to help children explore their future study and career options from an early age. Ms Melinda De Wildt, a community liaison officer from Villawood East Public School, and Senior Constable Danny Mikati from Bankstown police came up with the concept that children need to believe in themselves and aspire to greatness, and they set out to establish this program. Ms De Wildt and Mr Mikati were the driving force behind the Little Kids, Big Dreams project, and deserve commendation for their commitment and vision. The Little Kids, Big Dreams project will be receiving \$50,000 for the next two years from the Federal Government and it is one of the 20 projects across Bankstown that will benefit from funding of \$1.47 million per year for the program.

The program involves engaging young students with role models from various employment fields. It is intended to help them to develop medium- and long-term goals and to raise their aspirations and expectations. The Little Kids, Big Dreams project is about supporting, recognising and raising awareness of the employment aspirations of students to set them on the right path to achieve their goals. To achieve the project's outcomes, schools are given the opportunity to provide their students with various workshops, including guest speakers to speak about their roles, their daily activities, their inspirations and how they reached their current positions. The guest speakers facilitate an activity in which students perform a task that is required in their particular role. After the session the students analyse the task that was completed. It is important for young students because it strengthens their analytical and reflective skills whilst making them consider the importance of choosing a career. The project was launched at Villawood East Public School and will soon be rolled out to all year 3 students across Bankstown during 2013.

The students involved in the project are the workforce and future leaders of Australia and it is vital that they are nurtured to help them achieve to the best of their ability. This is a vital and significant project to have in the Bankstown community. I congratulate Creating Links Co-Op Limited and the Bankstown Community Resource Group who are partnered in the delivery of this project. Creating Links is coordinating visits and the project and the Bankstown Community Resource Group has developed a resource pack for schools following the visits. This ensures that schools are able to expand on the lessons taught and continue to encourage the students to achieve their aspirations. I acknowledge Tavish Corby, Executive Manager of Creating Links, who attended the launch, as well as Ms Kathryn Deacon, Villawood East Public School principal and Ms Melinda De Wildt, Community Liaison Officer who were also in attendance. This is truly an innovative program. If our children can be inspired from a young age and are encouraged to dream big, we will see a generation of intelligent and motivated individuals who appreciate and understand the practical means by which to achieve their aspirations.

TAMWORTH ELECTORATE FUNDING

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth) [5.46 p.m.]: Tonight I welcome further investment in the Tamworth electorate with major projects delivered as part of the 2013-2014 State budget that was handed down today. A record of \$188 million has been allocated across a variety of projects, services and programs. This is the sort of investment that the community was looking for because our region plays a major role in the State's economy and we need to focus on creating jobs, driving the housing sector and building new infrastructure. Health came out on top with \$78.7 million, roads and bridges \$33.7 million, and education \$7.7 million. These were the big winners, with new projects announced and, importantly, the continued funding support of projects that are already underway.

The new key funding announcements for the Tamworth electorate include the relocation of the Parry Special School, upgrade of the Oxley Highway, a new Barraba fire station, two new supported group homes and upgrades for Gunnedah and Tamworth courthouses. Continued funding for projects underway include the Tamworth hospital redevelopment, Manilla Road upgrade, a second railway overpass in Gunnedah, the G. S. Kidd Special School in Gunnedah, the Barraba pipeline, Chaffey Dam upgrade, the Woods reef mine rehabilitation, the Aboriginal Learning Centre at Tamworth TAFE, Split Rock and Lake Keepit upgrades, and additional facilities for the Tamworth TAFE Indigenous Learning Centre.

Support has also been given to a range of projects and front-line services. That is great news for the region and I look forward to continuing to push hard for further funding. I am determined that the region will receive its fair share of the Resources for Regions program fund and the Restart NSW fund. I will obviously support Gunnedah Shire Council's bid to attract funding from the \$120-million Restart NSW program to add to its successful bid for funding from the \$135-million Bridges for the Bush for the second railway overpass—more than \$2 million has been set aside to continue that very important work.

This year's budget also includes an allocation of \$250,000 for the investigation and development of options to improve traffic flow on the Oxley Highway at the intersection of Dampier Street in Tamworth. I can hear the people of Tamworth cheering from here because they have been pushing for that funding for a long time. I have my fingers crossed that we will maintain the intersection's safe record until it is upgraded. It is an extremely busy intersection and the road surface needs to be upgraded. I look forward to working with Roads and Maritime Services and I thank Tamworth Regional Council for its efforts. I particularly thank the Director of Services, Peter Resch, who has been fantastic to work with and who found a way to make the project happen. Education is paramount and funding for the relocation of Parry School for Special Purposes is included in today's State budget. The school caters for students with significant behavioural and/or emotional difficulties in years 7 to 10.

The school provides students with the opportunity to learn in a structured environment focused on the social, behavioural and academic skills necessary for them to make a successful transition back to their home school. I can hear the principal, the teachers, the students and the school community cheering because the school, which now occupies a house on Denison Street, Tamworth, will be relocated at Tamworth High School. The new and more suitable site will increase the school's capacity by providing places for up to 28 students and will include special program spaces and outdoor recreation and breakout areas. This is proof that the Government cares about regional New South Wales and that it is supporting regional areas. I thank the Treasurer and all the Ministers involved for their support for investment in the Tamworth electorate. I will continue to work hard for my constituents and this \$188 million is only the start. I particularly thank the Minister for Health for her continued support. I also thank the Premier, the Treasurer and the Deputy Premier.

RURAL FIRE SERVICE VOLUNTEERS

Mr GARRY EDWARDS (Swansea) [5.51 p.m.]: I draw the attention of the House to the Volunteer Appreciation Day ceremony that I attended on 19 May along with the member for Lake Macquarie and the member for Wyong. The ceremony acknowledged volunteers from the Lakes Team Rural Fire Service—which involves brigades from Lake Macquarie and Wyong—for their vital lifesaving service to the wider community and recognised the commitment and dedication of individual award recipients. The New South Wales Rural Fire Service has more than 70,000 volunteers throughout the State, which makes it one of our largest volunteer organisations. Whether it be front-line firefighting, communications, catering, community engagement, training, aviation support or brigade management, each individual role a Rural Fire Service volunteer undertakes is an integral component of the overall mechanism that daily preserves life and property in the wider community. Volunteers put their lives on the line to protect our communities throughout the year, and without their ongoing commitment the cost to the community in lost assets, or even worse, lives, would be incalculable.

National Volunteer Week, which ran from Monday 13 May, was a chance for all of us to say thank you to the volunteers who protect, serve and give time at the expense of their families to communities across the country. Rural Fire Service volunteers are never "off call". As all members are aware, emergencies can strike at any time, whether it be a raging bushfire in the middle of summer or a motor vehicle accident at 2.00 a.m. Sadly, their willingness to sacrifice too often goes unnoticed by the wider community. They are often the first on the scene of an emergency and must act with the speed and bravery that those situations demand. These front-line responses can often be horrific and all members of the public are fortunate that the brave men and women of the Rural Fire Service are always on call.

Rural Fire Service volunteers demonstrate their ability to work as members of a professional team, whether it be fundraising on a Santa run at Christmas, visiting kids at schools to increase fire safety awareness, undertaking ongoing training to continually upgrade their skills, or responding to an emergency. This dedication is what Aussie mateship is all about—long live the Aussie spirit. When we think about volunteer firefighters and the work they do, naturally the first thing that comes to mind is bushfires. However, they also do work behind the scenes attending monthly meetings, training and maintaining their equipment and stations. These things enable volunteers to prepare for any situation that may arise.

Joel De'Zuna and Tony Styan from the Lake Munmorah brigade both received a national medal. Between them, Joel and Tony have dedicated more than 35 years to the Rural Fire Service. Malcolm Ireland, who is the group captain at the Gwandalan brigade, has given 21 years of service and was also recognised with a national medal. Finally, I draw the attention of the House to the dedication of Kevin Munday. Kevin is in his seventeenth year as a member of the Rural Fire Service, having joined the Lake Munmorah brigade in 1996 and later moving to the Wandalan brigade. Kevin is now a volunteer with Wyong Operational Support Brigade. In addition to these activities, Kevin and his wife, Pat, have given and continue to give their time as volunteers to the local community transport organisation. I congratulate all the award recipients and say "thanks a million" to all the Lakes Team Rural Fire Service volunteers who on any day can and do face extraordinary challenges in their ongoing campaign to protect and preserve property and life.

Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.56 p.m.]: I commend the member for Swansea and the member for Lake Macquarie for their support for the Rural Fire Service. I am sure that members on both sides of the House strongly support the service. I am fortunate in my role as the Parliamentary Secretary for Police and Emergency Services to attend many of the medal ceremonies, which are a small way for the community to show its appreciation. A volunteer at an awards ceremony I recently attended at Lithgow was acknowledged for clocking up 70 years as a member of the Rural Fire Service. Volunteers put their lives on the line and I am sure that all members—particularly the member for Swansea—encourage their local volunteers and that they appreciate the way in which they put their lives on the line to protect our local communities. God bless the Rural Fire Service.

NAVITAS ENGLISH COLLEGE

Ms LINDA BURNEY (Canterbury) [5.57 p.m.]: I recently had the pleasure of attending a graduation ceremony at Navitas English College in Campsie, which is federally funded and which caters for newly arrived migrants and refugees. Other similar colleges operate throughout Sydney and all come under an umbrella better known as the Navitas English Adult Migrant Education Program Consortium. The Campsie college delivers not only English language tuition but also training and settlement services to migrants and refugees. It gives clients access to employment training and, for those unable to attend classes, access to the Home Tutor Scheme provided by consortium partner, Mission Australia. The college opened its doors in July 2011 and has been doing great work. I cannot emphasise enough the importance of these services to the Canterbury community. As the member for Canterbury I have always been proud of our cultural diversity and as such the Campsie Navitas English College is an essential addition to my constituency.

Starting a new life in a new country and speaking a different language can be a real struggle, but like the many migrants and refugees that have come before them, with help from services like those provided at this college, many will go on to build a great life for themselves and their children in this country. In its first term 456 clients were enrolled at the Campsie college. Over half of the clients were from China and smaller numbers were from Vietnam, Bangladesh, Indonesia and South Korea. I met many people at the graduation, saw how proud they were and witnessed their support for one another. People were very enthusiastic about the achievements of their fellow classmates when one of them received a certificate. Many people attracted my attention but one lady in particular, Najma Un Nisa, with whom I was photographed, was very enthusiastic to meet me. The following is a summary of her interview at Navitas:

Najma is a grandmother in her early sixties. She comes from Pakistan and speaks Urdu. She first came to Australia in 1998 to visit her son, who was studying for his Master's degree. Her second visit was to help look after her son's baby the following year.

In 2010, she was sponsored to migrate here and currently lives with her extended family. She and her husband share the house with their two sons, their wives and five grandchildren. She is very happy living there. She began in a level 1 class and has now moved on to level 2 study. She likes Australia very much, especially the fact that people are treated equally under the law here. She left Pakistan because of a growing feeling of insecurity and tension and because there were few employment opportunities for her children. In the future, she hopes to find work as a volunteer so she can give something back to the community.

A large part of the success of this college lies with the close links that it has developed with community and settlement agencies in the Canterbury area. It is great to see that staff members at the college have been getting involved in local forums such as Campsie Local Connections to Work and the Department of Human Services Employment Service Provider forums. Staff members have also been taking part in local events and celebrations. In a very short time this college has become an integral part of our community. The college endeavours to teach English and communication skills for living in Australia, about the Australian way of life, about the Australian workplace, how to access important services and about further study.

The college is located in Evaline Street in the heart of Campsie and, importantly, is easily accessible by public transport. Courses on offer at the college include a settlement course with advice on how to access day-to-day services, money, housing, using technology, and preliminary written and spoken English classes, following on to certificate I to certificate III qualifications. One can even access those courses by distance learning or utilise its home tutoring scheme—whatever suits one's individual needs. The Adult Migrant Education Program also has a counselling service where students can discuss their individual needs and options, and childcare is provided to those who need it which is critical for many of the women who otherwise would be isolated and unable to access English courses. To enrol in an adult migrant education program at Navitas English College one must be 18 years or older, a migrant or refugee who has recently arrived in Australia, and have been granted a permanent visa. I congratulate the Campsie college and its staff on their great work and wish them the best of luck for the future. I will continue to support the college in any way that I can.

STATE EMERGENCY SERVICE MID NORTH COAST REGION AWARDS

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) [6.02 p.m.]: On Saturday 1 June 2013 I had the pleasure of attending the New South Wales State Emergency Service mid North Coast regional awards presentation. Also present were officer Tony Day, Greater Taree City Councillor Robyn Jenkins, Mid North Coast Region Controller Stephen Hart, Greater Taree Local Controller Garry Fajks, Great Lakes Local Controller Larry Thompson and Taree city unit members. The New South Wales State Emergency Service volunteers of the mid North Coast region have a long and proud history of assisting their community with invaluable emergency response during floods, storms and other emergencies.

During the recent events in January, February and March this year, the mid North Coast region volunteers responded to more than 1,875 requests for assistance, demonstrating their ability and expertise to support their community during times of floods and storms. Twenty-three members, representing a combined total of 365 years of service, received awards which recognised not only their years of active service but also their diligence and dedication to the safety of the community. The recipients of a long service award for 10 years, a State Emergency Service long service medal and a State Emergency Service lapel pin were Brian Linsley of Karuah Valley, Bruce Wildie and Glen Johnston of Pacific Palms, Helen Hansen and Lyndal Adams of Wingham, Narelle Walker of the mid North Coast, Pamela Linsley of Karuah, Peter Watson of Taree city and Robert Wightman of Harrington.

Recipients of a long service award for 15 years and a State Emergency Service lapel pin were Colin Thompson of Pacific Palms, Doug Noble of Harrington, John Usback of Wingham and Robert Doherty of Harrington who also received a national medal. Larry Thompson of Pacific Palms received a long service award for 20 years, a long service clasp and a State Emergency Service lapel pin. Recipients of a long service award for 20 years, a long service clasp and a State Emergency Service lapel pin, although not present, were Nathan Burchall and Ceil Miller from Nabadah. Roma Piper from Karuah received a long service award for 40 years, a long service clasp and a State Emergency lapel pin. Joanne Fischer from Taree city received a national medal for 15 years and Stuart Hay of Karuah received a national medal for 35 years and a clasp. Brian Rodriguez of Pacific Palms received a long service award for 10 years, a State Emergency Service medal and a State Emergency Service lapel pin.

I congratulate all those recipients and commend them for their work. When we are at home with our feet up enjoying ourselves they are out in the elements protecting our communities and property. When we had major flooding in the Manning Valley earlier this year volunteers were out on the river, which was carrying a lot of debris, trying to save properties and boats. Without our volunteers we would not have the safe environment in which we live.

Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed—Parliamentary Secretary) [6.06 p.m.]: I endorse the comments of the member for Myall Lakes. Members on both sides of the Chamber support the actions of our volunteers in the State Emergency Service, to whom I often refer as our orange angels, who come to us in our hour of need. Recently the mid North Coast, the South Coast and many areas of New South Wales were affected by natural disasters. We all applaud the efforts of our local State Emergency Service volunteers who risk life and limb to save members of the wider community. I am amazed by the length of service of some of our volunteers—from 10 to 60 years—who are dedicated men and women from all parts of New South Wales. I commend the member for Myall Lakes for raising this issue and I applaud State Emergency Service volunteers for their great work.

AUSTRALIAN NATIVE LANDSCAPES BULK WASTE COMPOST

Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie) [6.07 p.m.]: I again draw the attention of the House to problems associated with the bulk waste compost site operated by Australian Native Landscapes at Cooranbong. This has been an issue of concern to residents of this area for more than 10 years and my electorate office has files that are inches thick all filled with correspondence relating to this matter. Australian Native Landscapes is a leading national supplier of horticultural products and a large-scale producer of organic composts. Its site at Cooranbong is in a rural residential area serviced by local roads. In 1986 a similar but much smaller business started operating on the site under the name of Organic Potting Mixes—a husband and wife operation for which local development consent was granted. For this type of rural industry local approval is appropriate for operations producing fewer than 5,000 tonnes of material a year.

Australian Native Landscapes acquired the business in 2000 and has expanded considerably since then. Last year its managing director, Patrick Soars, advised Lake Macquarie City Council that it had produced 38,000 tonnes of material the previous financial year. Constituents who live in this area believe the site has far outgrown its original development consent and is now operating in breach of those conditions, to the detriment of its neighbours. Their complaints relate to odour, noise, dust and air pollution emanating from the site, as well as an increased use of local roads by heavy vehicles, including semitrailers and B-doubles. Of these grievances the one that causes most distress is the offensive odour that regularly permeates the homes and properties of those who live nearby. I have attended the site and experienced this smell for myself—I can verify that it is most unpleasant.

Mr Geoff Provest: It smells just like that.

Mr GREG PIPER: I acknowledge the interjection of the member for Tweed. One constituent described it as "the smell of human waste being turned into fertiliser". She said when she first smelt the odour on moving into her current home she thought that an animal had died and was decomposing in the roof. The odour and associated problems are more than an inconvenience. I have received letters from constituents attesting that their physical and mental health have been affected by ongoing exposure to the smell and fumes coming from the site—at least one has provided a doctor's certificate verifying her claims.

Frequent heavy truck movements along what are essentially rural roads are also a grave concern. One resident wrote of seeing a truck bring down a powerline then simply drive on, leaving him to report the incident and guard the area to make sure no-one came in contact with the line. Another resident has replaced two windscreens on his car that were cracked by debris sent flying by the 15 or more trucks a day that lumber along the road outside his house from 7.00 a.m. each day. There are precedents to the problems my constituents describe. A quick search of *Hansard* has revealed at least three other instances where members have put questions to Ministers about odour and noise pollution problems from Australian Native Landscapes sites.

In Victoria, the Yarra Ranges Council waged a long-running battle over many years with Australian Native Landscapes over odour emanating from a green waste compost facility at Coldstream. It eventually won an order from the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal to have the facility's planning permit cancelled. The licensing conditions for the Cooranbong site expressly state that odour and dust from the site must be prevented or minimised. Judging from the litany of complaints I have received since becoming the local member in 2007, this clearly is not happening. Senior managers at Lake Macquarie City Council have expressed the view in correspondence that the Cooranbong Australian Native Landscapes operation may no longer comply with the original planning consent. This view is also conveyed in a legal opinion obtained by residents last year from the University of Newcastle Legal Centre. But I would be disappointed if this matter were to deteriorate into an argument about legal technicalities.

I have long believed it does not have to be a matter of us or them. There is an opportunity here for Australian Native Landscapes to demonstrate good corporate citizenship and come to the negotiating table to

find solutions to these very real problems—namely, solutions that might allow the company to coexist with residents in this rural setting. For example, it could permanently cover its compost piles and restrict truck movements to hours that will least disrupt its neighbours. When I addressed a question without notice on this matter to the Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage in September last year, she admitted that the operations of Australian Native Landscapes had been a matter of concern to her for some time. Indeed, she assured me that the Environment Protection Authority would:

... continue to work with the community to resolve this issue once and for all.

This has not occurred. I acknowledge that monitoring has been undertaken and some enforcement orders made. However, the authorities involved need to go beyond recording and reporting, and take real steps to facilitate a solution for this community. I am happy to be part of that process.

PARRAMATTA ROTARY CLUBS POLICE OFFICER OF THE YEAR AWARD

Dr GEOFF LEE (Parramatta) [6.12 p.m.]: Tonight I inform the House of the good work of the Rotary Club of Parramatta City and the Rotary Club of Parramatta Daybreak in organising an event to honour the deeds, work ethics and courage of our local police. Along with the Lord Mayor of Parramatta, Councillor John Chedid, Deputy Commissioner of Police Nick Kaldas and Parramatta Local Area Commander Robert Redfern, I had the honour of attending the 2013 Parramatta City Rotary Police Officer of the Year award. The Rotary clubs worked with the Parramatta Local Area Command and Inspector Peterson to identify 10 finalists and the winner of the 2013 award. The finalists included Constable Usman Assad, who had the highest arrest rate whilst in the proactive unit and is one of a handful of Afghan officers in the NSW Police Force. His knowledge of the Farsi language has been invaluable in a number of criminal investigations.

Senior Constable Bradley Neppl was commended in 2008 for his rescue of a male person from the Parramatta River who was attempting to commit suicide. He is a mentor to junior police and highly regarded by his peers. Detective Senior Constable David Lawler was recognised for his conduct, professionalism and leadership during the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation conference held in 2007. He was also involved in Operation Grimwig, which led to the arrest of nearly 30 persons for robbery offences. Detective Senior Constable Timothy Turnbull was recognised for his assistance during an attempted suicide and received a unit citation from the Commissioner for Police for outstanding bravery and dedication to duty as part of a response to civil disorder in 2005.

Senior Constable Anthony Loxley was awarded a local area commander's commendation in 2007 when he put his personal safety at risk to rescue an elderly person from the tracks at Granville railway station. He is also highly regarded for his efforts to reduce crime in the Parramatta central business district and Church Street Mall. Detective Sergeant Brett Evans received two commander commendations in recognition of his professional conduct. He is a recipient of the police medal, third clasp, for 30 years diligent and ethical service. In 2008 he assisted in the planning and coordination of an Afghan camp to deepen the relationship between police and Afghani teenagers in Parramatta. Detective Sergeant Paul Fenwick received a regional commander's commendation for exceptional police work on drug-related investigations in 2004 and 2005, and a local area commander citation for outstanding dedication to addressing street-level, drug-related crimes in 2005 and 2006. He was also recognised for his work in the coordination of Strike Force Ostend, which murder investigation led to the arrest and charging of eight persons.

Detective Senior Constable Andrew Gibson received a letter of appreciation from the Commissioner of Police in relation to his deployment to New Zealand to assist with policing duties following the devastating Christchurch earthquake. He is a mentor to junior detectives. Senior Constable Garth Neal is a crime prevention officer. He received a letter of appreciation for the recovery of a victim's stolen property and the subsequent conviction of the offender. He is well respected by his peers and recognised for his work, diligence and willingness to help others. Last but not least, Senior Constable Rebekah Budden was the winner of the 2013 Parramatta City Rotary Police Officer of the Year award. She has one of the highest arrest rates amongst general duties police and in recognition of her brief preparation skills and diligence she was recently selected to become a police prosecutor. I am sure that she will be a fantastic police prosecutor and will make this State proud.

It takes great commitment from a team of people to put events such as this together every year. I thank the Rotary Club of Parramatta City and the Rotary Club of Parramatta Daybreak for the opportunity to participate in this event. In particular, I acknowledge the work done by John Surian, who is committed to

organising Rotary events and whose motto is "service above self." It is wonderful to be able to recognise our police officers who do so much in the community. As I said on the night, police rush in when everyone else rushes out. They deserve to be acknowledged and appreciated for the fantastic work they do in our local communities, as do the Rotary clubs of Parramatta.

Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed—Parliamentary Secretary) [6.17 p.m.]: I too have had the pleasure of attending a number of local police awards, particularly awards in the Macarthur area. I am always amazed at the high level of bravery exhibited by the men and women of the NSW Police Force, as well as the support they receive from Rotarians across this State. Importantly, at the awards ceremonies I have attended many friends and families of the finalists have been present. I applaud the member for Parramatta for his ongoing commitment not only to the hardworking men and women of the NSW Police Force but also to the Rotary clubs of Parramatta.

WESTS CAMPBELLTOWN SPORTS COUNCIL ANNUAL AWARDS

Mr BRYAN DOYLE (Campbelltown) [6.18 p.m.]: On Friday 14 June 2013 I attended the fifteenth annual awards night of the Wests Campbelltown Sports Council at the mighty Wests Campbelltown, the home of sport, deep in the opal of the Macarthur. More than 450 people were in attendance that evening—parents, boys and girls, and coaches. Special guests included Graham Annesley, Minister for Sport and Recreation and member for Miranda, and famous national rugby league referee; Russell Matheson, MP, Federal member for Macarthur; Chris Patterson, MP, State member for Camden; the Federal members for Fowler and for Werriwa; and Councillor Paul Lake and Councillor Darcy Lound from Campbelltown City Council. I was lucky enough to be hosted by Martin Bullock, a director and sports secretary. The Wests Campbelltown Club provides considerable financial and in-kind support to more than 30 separate sporting bodies, and provides significant support to events such as the Wests League Cup for local schools and the Campbelltown City junior rugby league Poppa Evans junior gala day.

The board of Wests Campbelltown derives great satisfaction from watching the ongoing success, both on and off the field, of our sporting organisations across the mighty Macarthur region. In the past 12 months the sports council membership has grown, with the welcome inclusion of the Campbelltown District Women's Hockey Association and the South Campbelltown Junior AFL Club. The bi-monthly sports council networking meetings continue to be highly successful forums for exchanging information, best practices re governance, marketing and sponsorship. Our emcee for the night was our lovely local former Olympic swimmer, Sarah Ryan, who interviewed some of our Wests Tigers stars, including Chris Lawrence and Braith Anasta. The highlight of the night was her interview with our Minister for Sport and Recreation. Sarah asked him the hard questions that we never hear in question time in the House.

There were cheers from the crowd, and in particular from the Macarthur baseball league team led by Matt Cavill, when the Minister confirmed that Sydney had won the Major League Baseball season opener for 2014 between the Arizona Diamond Backs and the LA Dodgers. Winners for the night included the Club Team of the Year, the under 18s division one Gunners soccer team, a band of brothers since the under 8's. The Senior Club Sportsperson of the Year was taken out by Nicole King, part of the winning Raby Hockey Club. The Junior Sportsperson of the Year under 12 was Liam Marshall from the Magpies cricket team. He scored 161 runs, with an average of 53, and 19 wickets, with an average of 5.11 runs. He is one to watch in the future.

The Youth Club Sportsperson of the Year, 12 to 16 years, was taken out by Cormac Clissold of the Southern Districts Tennis Association, who is already nationally ranked. The Spirit of the Sport Club Person of the Year award was taken out by Kim-Maree Teale of the Group 6 referees. Yes, we even recognise our referees in our sporting awards. Kim-Maree was also the Wollondilly Australia Day Award winner for 2013 as a sportsperson. Our Elite Sports Team of the Year was the mighty Macarthur Baseball League Macarthur Colts Under 12 Representative Team, undefeated in 12 rounds, and led and coached by my good mate Matt Cavill. The Elite Sportsperson of the Year was Damien Mortimer from the Campbelltown Camden Cricket District Club. He is a member of the New South Wales Under 19 team and the Australian Under 19 team due to tour New Zealand, Darwin and India. He is a top-order batsman; he has been identified as one of an elite number of cricketers in Australia and is definitely one to watch in the future.

It is interesting to see some of the sports covered by this association: the Ambarvale Little Athletics Association, the Camden District Cricket Association, the Campbelltown and Camden (Ghosts) Cricket Club, softball, netball, junior baseball, touch football, women's hockey, rugby league, referees, baseball, soccer, triathlon, swimming, AFL, hockey and cricket. All these mighty sports are played in the Macarthur and are

supported by the wonderful board of Wests League Club at Campbelltown. It is part of what happens at Campbelltown, that opal of the Macarthur, the best part of the country. I commend Wests for its support of our local sport, and I commend the club to the House.

QUEANBEYAN HIGH SCHOOL SHOW TEAM

Mr JOHN BARILARO (Monaro) [6.23 p.m.]: Sometimes in life it can be easy to overlook the simpler aspects of living in regional communities, including towns such as Queanbeyan. Tonight I draw the attention of members to the outstanding efforts and achievements of a group of students from my electorate, the Queanbeyan High School Show Team. These students spend countless hours of their own time to prepare for and compete in both the Royal Canberra Show and the Royal Easter Show in Sydney. Five months were spent feeding, grooming and halter training two heavy export weight steers. The first competition was the Cattle Paraders, where Penny Slater achieved third place in the 17 years final. Her hours of practice impressed the judges.

Then the two steers, James Bond, who weighed 586 kilograms, and Ginger, who weighed 594 kilograms, were paraded for the judges. Bond took out third place and Ginger took fourth place. The steers were later auctioned for \$1,183 and \$2,049 respectively—a fantastic outcome for steers raised and cared for in a school environment. On the Friday of the main show a group of 50 Queanbeyan High School students competed in the Australian Capital Territory region merino sheep junior judging, as well as learning about bees, sheep, cattle, alpacas and many other farm animals. A number of the students also qualified for the finals of the junior judging. The students also worked as volunteers in the farmyard nursery, when thousands of people got to watch as baby chickens hatched from eggs that had been incubated at the school.

Later at the Royal Easter Show the team competed again, this time with their best-ever team of Frizzle bantam chickens. The project began all the way back in June of 2012, when breeding stock was selected and lights were used in the shed to encourage the hens to lay out of season so that the chickens would be able to hatch and mature by Easter. This provided an opportunity for all the agriculture classes at Queanbeyan High School to get some hands-on experience. The team managed to win all eight classes in their breed section, as well as the champion white Frizzle, the champion coloured Frizzle and the overall breed champion—a fantastic result for the agriculture department at Queanbeyan High School. The team intend to improve further for next time and try to become more competitive with other breeds for higher awards.

I make special mention of Kyah Wolf, Keely Warren and Asfiya Mansuri of year 8, who spent their recess and lunch times and after school training and grooming the 16 bantams to show for the judges. Several of the show bantams were sold in Sydney, with others being sold to Queensland, Victoria, Bega and Tumut. It is wonderful that we have such high-achieving students in the Monaro and that they are so eager to take an interest in agriculture and in rural lifestyles. The head teacher of the agriculture department at Queanbeyan High School is Mr Ian Crabb, who is dedicated to the students learning the importance of regional and rural life and raising farm animals. The principal, John Clark, continually introduces programs that are not viewed as normal at other schools but they are programs that the kids at Queanbeyan High School enjoy.

I may be a bit biased as I am a former student of Queanbeyan High School, and have fond memories of a great school with an agriculture department that was always functioning and doing very well. Queanbeyan High School commenced in 1959 and was officially opened in 1960. It has had extensions and expansions throughout the past 50 years, including a library and an auditorium. The A block was added in 1970. One of the most spectacular additions to the school in 1991, with the support of the community, was a school gymnasium. In 1994 and 2000 the special education facilities were upgraded, and in 2006 a lift was installed with funding from the then Howard Federal Government.

Queanbeyan High School is a fantastic school located in Queanbeyan. It has many student leaders. I note one particular student leader, Miss Grayce Cooper, who is my 2013 YMCA New South Wales youth parliamentarian. She will come to Parliament during the July break and have a go in the Chamber. I congratulate Grayce. I am sure she will enjoy her time representing the Monaro at the YMCA NSW Youth Parliament. Again, I congratulate those students on the fantastic work they have done within the school in promoting agriculture. Queanbeyan is no longer seen as a regional and rural community, but country life is still alive and well in our community because of the programs and students at Queanbeyan High School.

MARIST COLLEGE PENSHURST DIAMOND JUBILEE

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) [6.28 p.m.]: Today I have the privilege of congratulating Marist College Peshurst on celebrating its diamond jubilee. It is always an enjoyable experience to be given the opportunity to

congratulate a school on celebrating its diamond jubilee. Sixty years is an amazing achievement and milestone. However, it is with even greater pleasure and personal pride that I congratulate Marist College Penshurst as it is the school I attended from 1991 to 1994, from years seven to 10. I have fond memories of those years. Marist College Penshurst was established in 1953 when Kogarah Marist could no longer accommodate boys from the Penshurst area. Father Joseph Breen, the parish priest at St Declan's where I still go to church, urged the beginning of Marist Brothers Penshurst, which opened with 160 primary school boys in three classes. Three Marist brothers, led by Brother Leopold, formed the first community and ran the school from that time. They lived in a house at 33 Victoria Avenue until a monastery was built on the school site in 1958. Today that building houses the teaching and administrative staff of the school and is still in very good nick.

Interestingly, the story of the three brothers is similar to that of the patron saint and founder of the Marist Brothers, St Marcellin Champagnat, whose feast day was celebrated only two weeks ago, on 6 June. St Marcellin founded the first Marist school following his call to help a 17-year-old boy, Jean-Baptiste, who was ill. The boy unfortunately died and St Marcellin was saddened that the boy had not been taught even the basics of Christian faith. St Marcellin bought a simple house in La Valla in 1817 and recruited two fine young men, and together those three men from humble backgrounds formed the first community, with many others later joining them. St Marcellin opened the first Marist school in 1818, much like the founders of Marist College Penshurst, Brother Leopold, Brother Thomas More and Brother Dunstan, whose faith, prayers and hard work established a school that has educated and spiritually touched many local boys.

Brother Leopold was to see the first class through to the intermediate examination in 1957 and Brother Thomas More Davison took over as principal in 1960. Parents then, as they do today, played an integral role and soon the school had an oval. In 1962 Brother Dunstan was appointed principal and, under the Wyndham scheme, Penshurst Marist became a fourth form school. The school developed into a three-stream school in secondary classes. Six new classrooms and toilet facilities were opened and a new primary school and science laboratories were also built. Brother Simon became principal in 1968, and by then there was a community of nine brothers and four lay teachers teaching 430 boys in both primary and secondary classes. Brother John took over the leadership of the school from 1974 until 1976. Leading the school to its jubilee year was Brother Ronald, principal from 1977 until 1980. In 1981 Brother Salvius, whom I remember, took over. He taught many of my older cousins and led for eight years until his sad and sudden death in 1989. He was grieved by many in the local community.

Brother Neil was principal in 1991, when I attended the school, having assumed leadership in 1990. In 1992 he was tasked with phasing out primary education at the school, as St Declan's went to year 6 at that time, to make much-needed room for secondary school students. Brother Neil was my first principal at high school. He taught us many things regarding education in the Marist tradition. He oversaw the expansion of the school through technology and applied studies [TAS] and a new TAS block, which freed valuable space for other departments. The parents and teachers association grew under Brother Neil's leadership, allowing fundraising activities in the form of art and craft shows, and enrolments at the school increased.

Brother John McDonnell took over in 2000. The current principal, Mr Tony Duncan, is the first lay principal of the school and has led this extraordinary establishment to its diamond jubilee. Last weekend, on 16 June, I had the pleasure of attending the jubilee mass with my wife Adla at St Mary's Cathedral in Sydney. I was joined by the former member for Oatley, Mr Kevin Greene, who is also a former student of the school. The mass showcased the students, teachers and parents in a display of the school's motto, "To know and to love". Marist College Penshurst has a big future ahead, with the recent announcement that in 2015 it will become a co-educational year 12 school. On a personal note, I thank Brother Neil O'Leary, current principal Mr Tony Duncan, Brother Tony Butler and all the teachers who influenced my life during my school years.

BISHOP ANTOINE TARABAY APPOINTMENT

Mr TONY ISSA (Granville) [6.33 p.m.]: Today I welcome the appointment of Father Antoine Charbel Tarabay as the fourth Maronite Bishop in Australia. Bishop Tarabay brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to this very important position. His appointment was announced by Pope Francis in April and his installation as bishop took place on 25 May in Beirut in Lebanon. The celebration was attended by more than 1,000 people. The State Government was represented, as were the Federal Government and Opposition, and I take this opportunity to thank the Government for sending representatives on that day. At least 300 Lebanese Australians also attended the celebration, and I thank them for being there for the new bishop. On 29 May 2013 I had the pleasure of attending the installation ceremony of His Excellency Bishop Tarabay at St Maroun's Cathedral in Redfern. That ceremony was also attended by more than 1,000 people. Members from both sides of Parliament—Federal and State—were there, as well as many councillors and mayors.

Bishop Tarabay's biography is impressive. It not only demonstrates his talent, but also the depth of his knowledge in a range of areas. Bishop Tarabay has a Doctorate in Moral Theology (Bioethics) and master's degrees in human rights studies as well as extensive pastoral experience. Prior to his appointment he was the rector of St Charbel's Monastery, Church and College in Punchbowl. He has a Master's Degree in Human Rights from the Institute of Human Rights Catholic University in Lyon, France. He has written a number of theological and pastoral articles on nature and man. Bishop Tarabay speaks fluent Arabic, English, French, Syriac and Italian, and he has worked with many young people in his congregation.

Bishop Tarabay was born in northern Lebanon in 1967 and was ordained a priest in 1993. The Maronite faith has a strong presence in this country. It was officially established under the name of St Maroun in October 1973, when the first bishop, Archbishop Abdo Khalife, arrived. I have been a member of the stewardship committee of the Maronite Church for more than 37 years and over that time I have witnessed some historical developments. The year 2009 marked the silver jubilee of St Charbel's College and was a milestone in the mission of the monks of the Lebanese Maronite Order in Australia. Bishop Tarabay was responsible for overseeing the preparation and organisation of the silver jubilee.

It has been my privilege to be involved with the Maronite Church and to see Bishop Tarabay from St Charbel's appointed to this very high office within our church. A strong tradition of our church is to encourage young people to become involved in community activities and former Father Tarabay was very much involved in these activities. With him comes a new vision for the Maronite Church in Australia at a time when that is needed. He has developed programs to encourage young people to become more involved in the Maronite community. He is committed to the future of the Maronite Church and to broadening its base within multicultural Australia. I have known Bishop Tarabay for more than 10 years. During that time I have been involved in the church, in Our Lady of Lebanon Church, in many roles. I welcome the appointment of Bishop Tarabay as head of the Maronite Church in Australia and have offered him my support in any way I can. I wish him well in his new role.

SPECIAL OLYMPICS

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT (Baulkham Hills) [6.38 p.m.]: Tonight I acknowledge one of the most successful and prolific community organisations ever to grace our shores. The Special Olympics were held in my electorate not long ago and I have great confidence that all members of this House will join me in commending the invaluable work of the Special Olympics organisation across New South Wales. It was with great pleasure that I was able to join the Hills District local weekly Special Olympics sessions last week. My wife, Nicole, and I were delighted to be part of the celebrations of athletic prowess that occurred at Castle Hill. The participants in the Special Olympics can only be described as inspirational. I know, Madam Acting-Speaker, that you have taken more than a passing interest in people with disabilities in your professional life and would appreciate that while the commitment of the volunteers to the Special Olympics is an example of humanity at its best, their work is nothing less than humbling. What local communities across New South Wales are achieving every week as part of the Special Olympics cannot be underestimated.

The Special Olympics provides sports training and athletic competition for children and adults with an intellectual disability. Sports range from cricket and basketball to golf, and I am told the most popular is tenpin bowling. The Special Olympics aims to create continuing opportunities for participants to develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage, experience joy and participate in a sharing of gifts, skills and friendship with their families, other athletes and the community. That certainly occurred last week in the Hills District. There are few organisations in the community that could possibly claim to have a more commendable mission or a better record of success than the Special Olympics. The excellent ethos of the Special Olympics is perhaps best expressed by the Special Olympics athlete's oath: "Let me win, but if I cannot win let me be brave in the attempt".

The Special Olympics is not merely about competition; it is more about helping children and adults with an intellectual disability to grow as valued members of the broader community. What a wonderful attitude for an organisation that has continued to bring so much joy to so many people. From humble beginnings in suburban Maryland more than 40 years ago, the Special Olympics has grown into a global movement with more than four million participants in 170 countries. Despite its enormous global and national reach, the Special Olympics retains deep and close links to local communities not just in Australia but across the world. It is indeed in many ways a global phenomenon. In New South Wales alone more than 300 volunteers every week assist to deliver Special Olympics' sports programs.

Furthermore, local businesses have a long history of sponsoring Special Olympics events to support the Special Olympics and its competitors. These volunteers and local businesses should be widely commended for their involvement. Without their participation the Special Olympics simply would be unable to help so many people achieve their full potential. One of the great benefits of being a member of this House is that we get to see firsthand the many good works being done by community groups such as the Special Olympics. The ability of this organisation to bring the community together is outstanding. Also, it goes without saying that the brave participants are completely inspiring. Madam Acting-Speaker, given your former role with TAD Disability Services it is appropriate that you are in the chair as I commend the Special Olympics.

As I mentioned in my opening remarks, Nicole and I were delighted to be guests at the special day last week in Castle Hill. There is not much that can make a grown man tear up these days, but seeing such young children inspired and eager to perform, eager to please and eager to participate was certainly such an occasion. It was quite amusing to see the participants so excited about the barbecue that was to follow because nothing gives young Aussie kids more of an appetite than participating in sporting activity. I commend the Special Olympics for everything it has done to change the lives of countless people with an intellectual disability, not only in this State but around Australia. I wish all Special Olympics participants the very best for the future.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Melanie Gibbons): I thank the member for Baulkham Hills for his kind comments. Well done to everyone involved.

MACARTHUR FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON (Camden) [6.43 p.m.]: Today I speak about a very competitive football match I attended last weekend with the opal of the south-west, Bryan Doyle, and the Mayor of Camden, Lara Symkowiak. For the last four years the Macarthur Football Association has held a city versus country football match between the local government areas in the south-west—Wollondilly and Camden local government area teams versus Campbelltown local government area teams. The Macarthur Football Association was established in 1983 to encompass the three local government areas and over the years clubs have come and gone, but now with 25 clubs registered the association is home to some 8,500 players.

The association included women's soccer in 1998 and it has flourished ever since. Of course, associations such as the Macarthur Football Association would never exist if it were not for the commitment and dedication of the executives and committee members, and I would like to recognise them for the hard work they put in: General Manager Glenn Armstrong, Michelle Fulcher, Rob Laws, Phil McKnight, Steve Goodwin, Mark Davis, John Gale, Ralph Martin, Doug Brennan, Kerrie Gale, Jenny Mazuran, Roxanne Brannan, Richard Whicker, Richard Cameron, Lorna Graham, Kayleen Heinecke and Joanne Bond.

The annual city versus country match held last weekend is a contest that is seen as a representative honour for the selected players who are given the opportunity to represent their district in an annual match which is played at Lynwood Park, the home of football in Macarthur. During half-time the six- and seven-year-olds also get to be part of the event and they love the opportunity to be part of the spectacle that is city versus country. I think it is their little "State of Origin". The wonderful clubs involved were the Camden Tigers, St Marys Eagle Vale, Narellan Rangers, Campbelltown Cobras, East Campbelltown Hawks, Bradbury Bears, Eschol Park Wolves and Harrington Park Hornets.

At the end of the competition the losing council flies the other council's flag over its chambers for a day. I am proud to say this initiative was put in place when I was mayor of Camden and Aaron Rule was mayor of Campbelltown. The city versus country concept has become a focal point of the Macarthur Football Association's football calendar and is a greatly anticipated event. As the member for Camden I am pleased to say that the country men's team has been successful for the last four years. Both this year's matches were cliffhangers, with country winning both men's and women's events in a penalty shoot-out.

We cannot forget the players of both the men's and women's teams and I thank them for their participation in a highly competitive competition. The women's city team comprised Dana Buttigieg, Michelle Naden, Michelle Manjon, Natalie Thomson, Leesa Thomson, Miranda Mathews, Carmen Cueva, Kira Bradley, Angela Francis, Christy Brooks, Alex Langley, Jess Sapsed, Sarah Hazelton, Dawn Lansley, Ashley Francis, Jessica Jackowski, Sarah Tabbaa and Amy Ridgeway. Their coach was David Smirthwaite and the manager was Mary Mathew. The women's country team comprised Erin Boyd, Kristy Ashton, Mel Browne, Teeearn Page, Rebecca Brierley, Kerri Lowe, Monique Troy, Samantha Finnie, Maddie Schwizler, Jane McLennan, Megan Bardsley, Nyrie English, Jazmine Thomas, Mandy Carlile, Jasmine Rooke, Tarni

Proberts-Roberts, Chantal Page and Leanne Perrins. Their coach was Paul Ellis and the manager was Kim Johnson. Thank you to the referee, Michelle Cerda, who was assisted by Emma Atkinson and Emma Kitchen and fourth official Kalia Blaney.

The men's city team consisted of Jason Petty, Tim Hooker, Heath Kearns, Matt McHugh, Ryan Connell, Yusuf Raffie, Ben Mackay, Ray Ward, Chris Stevens, Andrew Towers, T-Jay Tallah, Dean English, Brad Naden, Ben Greenwood, Rhys Gorrison, Matt Fairbrother, Selwyn Kishore and Craig Harris. The coach was Brad Piggot and the manager Mark Richardson. The men's country team comprised Haydon Armstrong, Blair Grant, Brody Page, Guy Goodwin, Mick Jennings, Kynan Mathew, Tim Wells, Darren Shadlow, Glen Wilson, Alec Fleming, Matt Weatherburn, Mitch Smith, Leigh Stevens, Scott Tanner, Darren Kinder, Adam Whitburn, Brendan Palmer and Brad Caldicott. Their coach was Ray Zammit and the manager was James Cleaton. Thank you to the referee, Rob Nieuwenhuis, who was assisted by Laken Leeden and Adam Vainauskas and fourth official Aaron Delaney.

It is competitions such as this that bring our rural and city communities together and I wish the Macarthur Football Association all the best for many years to come. Watching that game on Saturday night, as I have for years, it was fantastic to see both communities come out and support their local players, local teams and local communities. Today I attended a Friends of Western Sydney Wanderers meeting. I compliment Western Sydney Wanderers on the fantastic season they had, and the member for Parramatta and the member for Fairfield on their wonderful efforts with the Western Sydney Wanderers Friendship Committee.

Mr CRAIG BAUMANN (Port Stephens—Parliamentary Secretary) [6.48 p.m.]: I acknowledge that wonderful contribution from the member for Camden on behalf of the Macarthur Football Association. I think he has set a goal for Hansard and he should make sure they are on his Christmas card list. I think the member set some sort of record tonight. He should just read out the electoral roll next time.

BLUE MOUNTAINS CROSSINGS BICENTENARY

Mrs ROZA SAGE (Blue Mountains) [6.48 p.m.]: As members would be aware, the bicentenary commemorations for the first successful European crossing of the Blue Mountains by Blaxland, Lawson and Wentworth have commenced in the Blue Mountains. On the cool early morning of 11 May, the Governor, Professor Marie Bashir, sent off the Blue Wave re-enactment team. A few hundred people enjoyed the proceedings, which included a poetry reading by Jack Thompson. The Blue Wave re-enactment of the crossing of the Blue Mountains began at the site of Gregory Blaxland's farm at South Creek, St Marys, which is the same spot that the intrepid three explorers, their four convict servants, five dogs and four horses began their journey.

The team for the day, which included John O'Sullivan, Uncle Graham Cooper, Malcolm Brown, descendants of the explorers Chris Blaxland, Stephen Wentworth and Robert Bettington—a Lawson descendant—finally set out with the horse handlers and students from the Penrith-Mulgoa area. Many were dressed in period costume—including the member for Mulgoa, who looked splendid—which added to the flavour of the day. Members of the Blue Wave committee, Colin Kenny, Cathy Sargeant, Richard Brymora and Trevor Lloyd, were also present for the beginning of the journey, which was the culmination of six years of preparation. John O'Sullivan conceived the idea of re-enacting the crossing six years ago. The idea was to trek across the Blue Mountains following in the footsteps of the three explorers as close to the same route and with the same timetable from 200 years ago.

The party slowly wound its way through to Penrith and Emu Plains and up to the Blue Mountains. I was able to catch up with the group, which was camped at Faulconbridge at the Norman Lindsay Gallery grounds. Along the route the public cheered the team on, becoming part of this historic journey. Various descendants came from far away to participate and walk with the party. They included Greg Blaxland from Tamworth; David Blaxland from Warnambool, Victoria; Sarah Wentworth from Sydney; and other descendants from the Lawson family who live locally. The re-enactment party wound its way through the mountains and visited every school along the way. It finished at Mount York with a wonderful final Blue Mountains event, which was resplendent with police band and horses, and two of the mounted police dressed in the 1913 uniform.

As well as the re-enactment, numerous other events have taken place. Ken Goodlet's book *Blue Mountains Journeys* was launched by the Governor at Blaxland High School. After the book launch there was a viewing of Wendy Blaxland's play *The Crossings*. Ken Goodlet is a well-regarded local historian who has written several history books dealing with the history of the Blue Mountains. The *Blue Mountains Journeys* deals with the many crossings of the Blue Mountains, including the indigenous history of the area, the explorers,

the surveyor Evans, and the road-builder William Cox, as well as the Cooee marches through the mountains from Gilgandra. It is a fascinating history that was researched meticulously. Wendy Blaxland's play, which was aimed at children, was entertaining and educational. The performance was thoroughly enjoyed by all the adults present, including the Governor.

I attended a very different performance called *Into the Unknown*, a special presentation of music, dance and storytelling of the journey across the mountains from an Aboriginal perspective. The performance featured excerpts from *Crossing Country*, *Making Tracks*, *Sharing Culture*, which was directed by Jo Clancy, who is a Wiradjuri dancer, with voiceovers by Auntie Carol Cooper and Uncle Graham Cooper. The music and story were devised by singer/songwriter Jacinta Tobin, who is a Darug woman. The storyteller was Paula Novotna. It was a thought-provoking and enjoyable evening. I attended the Upper Mountains combined churches commemoration service, which was held at the Blue Mountains Grammar School with the theme *Crossing the Divide: Thanksgiving for God's Goodness*. It was a fabulous service led by Reverend Ray Robinson of St Hilda's Church at Katoomba.

Welcome to Country was given by Auntie Carol Cooper, who is also a parishioner at St Hilda's. Greg Blaxland gave a wonderful talk about his ancestor Gregory Blaxland and his own faith. Another highlight was the Bicentenary flyover, organised by Phil Hammon, featuring the RAAF Roulettes and 60 other aircraft. It was a busy and enjoyable May that commemorated the crossing of the Blue Mountains by Blaxland, Lawson and Wentworth in 1813. The community embraced the events, a number of which I have not touched upon. All of the students in the Blue Mountains will have a lasting memory as a result of their receiving the commemorative holy dollar.

CENTRAL COAST QUEEN'S BIRTHDAY HONOURS RECIPIENTS

Mr CHRIS HOLSTEIN (Gosford) [6.53 p.m.]: I acknowledge 16 wonderful citizens on the Central Coast who were recently named in the Queen's Birthday Honours list, with one Member of the Order of Australia recipient, 14 Medal of the Order of Australia recipients, and another receiving the Emergency Services Medal. I will name all recipients and talk about some of them in depth. First, I acknowledge Dr Tony Collins of Terrigal, who received the Member of the Order of Australia. He was awarded for his contribution in the field of dentistry, specifically implant dentistry. Dr Collins has been the Federal President of the Australian Society of Implant Dentistry since 2002 and was instrumental in having a funding program for implant dentistry introduced into five universities. Dr Collins is a volunteer with Rotary Australia's world community service dental program and has raised more than \$160,000 for the oncology department at the Westmead Children's Hospital.

I acknowledge Peggy Docksey, who was awarded an Order of Australia medal for services to veterans and their families. Unfortunately, Peggy died in July last year. She was the foundation president of the Gosford Ex-Servicewomen's Group from 1965 to 1977 and was made a life member in 1978. She was also patron of the Gosford Sub-Branch, the Australian Women's Legion of Ex-Servicemen and Women, and committee member and secretary of the Gosford Sub-Branch and Returned and Services League of Australia. Mr Bob Fraser of Holgate also received an Order of Australia medal. Bob is a retired architect and has been a member of the Gosford North Rotary Club for 41 years. He was recently awarded the Rotary International Service Above Self Award. He has worked for an employment service for people with moderate and severe intellectual disabilities, and been involved with the Matcham Holgate Rural Fire Brigade and Lifeline.

I acknowledge Cecily Prentis of Umina Beach for her service with the Umina community on the Central Coast. She has been involved in parents and citizens' associations and other organisations, including the Central Coast Historic Car Club, brownies, girl guides, senior citizens and the chamber of commerce. Clive Thomas, now of Wagstaffe, has been acknowledged for 67 years of voluntary service in the Forbes district of New South Wales. Arthur Curruthers received an Order of Australia medal for his work in the National Servicemen's Association and Returned and Services League over the past few decades, including the Bush Fire Brigade and State Emergency Services. I acknowledge the dedication of Clifford Smith, a health worker from Terrigal. Clifford was awarded the Order of Australia medal for his service to medicine, particularly in Papua New Guinea, where he worked with remote communities from 1970 to 1982. He is responsible for the *Health Care Manual* for community workers in Papua New Guinea.

I acknowledge David Williamson of Erina Heights, whose family has been known for the iconic Egg Shed on the Central Coast Highway for more than 65 years. He has worked with the community, including the NSW Farmers Association and the parents and citizens' associations at Terrigal High and Erina Heights Public School. Christine France of Kulnura was awarded the Order of Australia medal for her contribution to the arts.

She is an adviser on the Windmill Trust, a regular contributor to the *Art and Australia* magazine, and she has been an arts tutor at the University of New South Wales for 10 years. She is presently involved with the Margaret Olley Trust. John Moriarty of Narara was awarded the Order of Australia medal for his service to cricket for the Narara Wyoming Club for the past 28 years. As the outgoing President of the Gosford City Lions Club, he has been involved in the community in various capacities for 38 years, including Gosford Council's Australia Day Committee.

Ray Southeren of Green Point has done a lot of voluntary work with Regional Youth Support Services and the Parkside Youth Centre, and has been a long-serving member of the Gosford North Rotary Club. He has worked tirelessly with overseas aid programs in New Guinea, Mongolia and Nepal. I acknowledge Trevor Lawrence, Bill Raper, Enid Monaghan and Dr Christopher Lennings of Woy Woy, who is a co-author, publisher and reviewer of more than 90 scientific papers, journals, articles reports and books. He is a university lecturer and works voluntarily on numerous community organisations, including the Barnardos Adoption Panel. Last but not least I acknowledge Pat Fayers, who received the Emergency Services Medal for her wonderful work with the Royal Volunteer Coastal Patrol and now the Marine Rescue. Pat has provided an outstanding service to the Central Coast as well as the Central Coast boating community and emergency services. She has served the community of New South Wales with distinction.

RIVERWOOD NORTH HOUSING PROJECT

Mr ROBERT FUROLO (Lakemba) [6.58 p.m.]: I will provide the House with an update on the Riverwood North Housing Project, which is under construction in Riverwood and which will change the lives of hundreds of families. The project, which was initiated by the former Labor Government and conceived by the former member for Lakemba and Premier, Morris Iemma, will provide more than 600 new dwellings in the beautiful Riverwood wetlands. This project is significant on many levels. More than 150 dwellings will be made available to elderly pensioners through St George Community Housing. They will replace 150 old bedsit and small apartments that were well beyond their best years.

The new apartments are beautifully designed and well built. They will make fantastic new homes for tenants who are now inappropriately housed or who are on the waiting list for affordable social housing. The project is also important because it will make available more than 500 new dwellings for sale to local families. These apartments will have views over the beautiful Riverwood wetlands project, which I was pleased to deliver as the Mayor of the City of Canterbury. This project is the realisation of a vision to utilise an ageing and expensive-to-maintain public asset and in return to provide modern, attractive and appealing social housing as well as to provide new, affordable housing for families, especially those entering the housing market for the first time.

I am proud that this fantastic Labor initiative is progressing and I am pleased that the O'Farrell Government has carried on with the work commenced by the former Labor Government. I am also proud that this project, which is a partnership between the New South Wales Government and Payce Communities, will deliver a fantastic new library and new senior citizens' centre. These new facilities will exist because of the vision of Canterbury City Council and the willingness of the builder, Payce Communities, to work with the council to deliver them. The council has provided the land and has worked with Payce Communities to utilise the section 94 contributions and to construct these facilities, which will be worth more than \$5 million. As mayor, I was pleased to play a role in ensuring this element of the project was delivered and I look forward to local residents enjoying these fantastic new facilities.

I put on the record my appreciation of the efforts of the staff of Canterbury City Council, who worked with the Department of Housing to ensure that this project could proceed. I also pay tribute to Payce Communities and, in particular, Brian Boyd and Dominic Sullivan, who not only worked to deliver this project but also ensured that the local community, the local public school and the community centre have all benefited from their goodwill and generosity. Developers and builders are often maligned as rapacious and greedy, but this is a great example of the opposite. The proponent has worked with the council, the Government and the community to deliver not only a great housing project but also fantastic programs and services. This is a model for how things can be done properly.

I have attended a number of events at Riverwood Public School and visited the community garden, which was possible only because of the willingness of Payce Communities to help out. As I said, its activities are a great example of good corporate citizenry and what can be achieved when partnerships are formed. Given my long and considerable involvement in this project, I was more than a little disappointed when Minister

Pearce visited. While I acknowledge the Minister's right to visit housing projects—even projects in Canberra—it is a shame that I, as the local member, was not invited. I hope that I will be invited to attend when he next visits this project.

THE *LAND* SYDNEY ROYAL SHOWGIRL 2013

Mr TROY GRANT (Dubbo—Parliamentary Secretary) [7.03 p.m.]: In the first half century of its existence, the *Land* Sydney Royal Showgirl Competition has awarded its top honour to a Dubbo girl only twice—in 1973 and again in 1986. On Easter Saturday we added a third name to that list—Kennedy Tourle. Kennedy's win was front-page news in Dubbo—she was referred to as the "Dubbo Dynamite"—and that helped to highlight the significance of this rare achievement. Kennedy is a direct descendant of Thomas Baird, who served on the first Dubbo Show committee in 1873. She is a proud member of a farming family that has occupied the same parcel of land just outside of Dubbo for six generations. Kennedy's parents, Scott and Liz, and her brothers, Tom and Sam, continue to run the family property—Naroo—which was acquired by Arthur and Isabella Baird in 1857 and which includes a beautiful old homestead. The family once held more than 26,000 acres of land in the area and the fact that it is still there after more than 160 years is remarkable. Kennedy's attachment to the family home and to Dubbo is obvious to anyone who strikes up a conversation with this impressive young Australian.

Kennedy spoke recently about the importance of volunteering and the example that her parents set for her and her siblings. One gets the feeling that Mr and Mrs Tourle must be doing something right in the parenting department, given that they have managed to raise and educate a person of Kennedy's calibre. Not only has she demonstrated a strong determination to remain on the land that her forebears have worked for generations, she has also embarked on a career beyond the family farm. She holds down the responsible job of community safety officer with the NSW Rural Fire Service's Orana Team. Kennedy joined the team in 2009, having previously been a member of the Emmagool brigade since 2006. Her role with the Rural Fire Service involves community engagement through the adoption of bushfire mitigation measures.

It has been a busy year for Kennedy, given that she spent January helping volunteers to battle a bushfire in Coonabarabran by organising the delivery of resources and supplies from the fire control centre. I know that Kennedy is intent upon building her career with the Rural Fire Service and that she is keen to continue to do all she can to raise awareness and to further promote the role of women in rural firefighting. She is an enormous asset to the service and provides an ideal role model for other young women considering following a similar career path.

Kennedy is also ideally placed to use her recently expanded profile to encourage a greater role for women in rural Australia, especially in central western New South Wales. Kennedy's achievement in being selected as the *Land* Sydney Royal Showgirl marked the end of a 12-month journey that began with her winning the Dubbo title the previous year. She then progressed to February's zone 6 final in Eugowra before taking on the best showgirls in the State at Easter. It is worth reflecting upon the important tradition that is attached to the showgirl competition. Many entrants have used the experience to highlight particular causes that are close to their heart. Each year rural communities throughout the State put forward their best and brightest young people to represent them at this showcase event.

It is important to remember that, unlike other similar competitions, the showgirl competition is not a beauty contest nor are the entrants judged on the costumes they wear. Its primary purpose is to foster closer links between the city and rural and regional communities. The criteria for judging the showgirl competition has remained largely the same since its inception in 1962. The 16 finalists are put through an intense interview and judging process during which each is assessed on her personality, confidence, ambition and life goals, general knowledge, rural knowledge, presentation and speech. The competition has come a long way in its 51 years: it attracts more than 500 entrants each year and involves more than 120 regional show societies.

Kennedy follows in the proud footsteps of previous Dubbo showgirls, Margo Bassett and Melanie Trethowan, who also took out top honours at the Sydney Royal Easter Show. In a week full of events surrounding the competition, the 16 finalists attended a lunch and dinner hosted by the Royal Agricultural Society, visited Westmead Children's Hospital to hand out show bags and attended an official Government House reception hosted by Her Excellency the Governor, Professor Marie Bashir. Kennedy clearly has a busy year ahead of her as an ambassador for the showgirl competition. She can be justifiably proud of her achievements. She brings tremendous credit not only to her family but also to the community of which she is

very much a part. Kennedy Tourle is a truly remarkable young woman with a very bright future. I expect we will be hearing more good things about her in the years ahead. I offer her my congratulations on behalf of the electorate of Dubbo.

DAVIDSON ELECTORATE QUEEN'S BIRTHDAY HONOURS RECIPIENTS

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson) [7.08 p.m.]: Once again the Davidson electorate has shone with local residents recognised in the Queen's Birthday honours list. Among them this year in East Lindfield is a very special couple, Adjunct Professor Ralph Tobias and his wife, Barbara Cali, who both received Order of Australia honours. Ralph has been made a Member of the Order of Australia for his significant service to the development and commercialisation of technological innovations. A teacher and engineer, Ralph worked on the creation of landing systems used at American airports, has worked for the Department of Science and Technology, was the program developer for the Defence and Technology Department of Supply and worked for the Department of Industry and Commerce developing technology for the Government Aircraft Factory and St Mary Guided Weapons Repair Facility. He was also the local industry content coordinator for the Destroy Project.

Not to be outdone, Ralph's wife, Barbara Cali, was appointed an Officer of the Order of Australia for her distinguished service to public health through advocacy and advisory roles for people with Alzheimer's disease. Her work has been fundamental in raising awareness of Alzheimer's and in helping those affected by it. In fact, it is her second honour having been made a Member of the Order of Australia in 1997 for her service to business and management, in particular, as an advocate for women as entrepreneurs in business. Also on the North Shore we are proud of St Ives resident Terence Fitzgerald, who was made a Member of the Order of Australia for his service to the credit union movement. Mr Fitzgerald has been part of various credit union organisations over the past 40 years, as the chief executive officer of Prospect Credit Union from 1983 to 1995 and again from 2004 to 2005. He was awarded the Credit Union Distinguished Service Award in 2001.

Meanwhile on the northern beaches side of my electorate, Sylvia Pretti of Belrose was recognised with a medal of the Order of Australia for her work with Rotary, the Northern Beaches Family Network, the Hope for Children Foundation, Dalwood Children's Home, Bear Cottage and Lifeline. That is an impressive and long list representing many years of volunteering to help people in need. Then Denise Dapre of Frenchs Forest earned her Order of Australia medal for her services to the sport of fencing. Fencing is not counted as one of Australia's major sports, but it certainly would not have received as much exposure and success if it were not for Denise. Denise has been a member of the Australian Fencing Federation for more than 30 years, a national team selector, and manager of many Australian teams to the Junior World Championships. She has been Technical Director of the New South Wales Amateur Fencing Association for 19 years, a State selector and Australian representative on technique for both the Sydney 2000 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Representing Italy and Frenchs Forest, Giuseppe Musso has been recognised with an Order of Australia medal for his work for the Italian community. Giuseppe has worked with the Interco mites, an organisation which defends the rights of Italians in Australia and the Italian union body Itl-Uil. He has also worked with the Italian Consulate and the Italians in the World Conference in 2000. So it is a mixed lot in the electorate of Davidson. I am sure that others in my electorate have received awards and I have highlighted the substantial and meritorious achievements of some of those who have been awarded in my local area. I add my congratulations to all others who received awards in adjoining areas and, indeed, across the State. In my electorate we have a fencer, an innovator, an advocate for Alzheimer's and another for Italy, a tireless volunteer and an executive of a credit union, all of whom operate in very different fields of activity but clearly all of them very dedicated and committed. They deserve recognition in the awards list and I again congratulate them.

ILLAWARRA SURF LIFE SAVING AWARDS OF EXCELLENCE

Mr RYAN PARK (Keira) [7.13 p.m.]: I congratulate award winners at the Illawarra Surf Life Saving Awards of Excellence evening. I am one of the fortunate members of this House who lives very close to the beautiful Pacific Ocean or the Tasman Sea and I often pay tribute to those men and women who keep us safe throughout the summer season on the beach when the Illawarra has a significant increase in the number of tourists flocking to our magnificent beaches. I acknowledge the 2012-13 President of Surf Life Saving Illawarra, Mr Bill Seay, who is a legend in surf lifesaving in the Illawarra. He has contributed an enormous amount of time to the development of surf lifesaving and continues to advocate strongly on behalf of surf lifesaving and respective clubs in the local region. Mr Seay has worked tirelessly to ensure that our community is better educated in keeping people safe on our magnificent beaches.

I also attended the Woonona Surf Life Saving Club awards ceremony. I acknowledge Gina Crick from Woonona, who won the Surf Sports Masters Athlete of the Year award. Gina is an icon in surf lifesaving in the region, was a trailblazer for women and continues to compete at the very highest level. Recently Gina received an Australian medal at the Australian titles. Gail Erven from the Corrimal Surf Life Saving Club, which is close to my home at East Corrimal, received the Surf Sports Official of the Year award and officiates at these important events. I congratulate her and the Corrimal club for their work in keeping people safe throughout our local region. Craig St George from Corrimal received a Facilitator of the Year award for his important role. Craig also works tirelessly in the surf lifesaving community and is an important member of the Corrimal Surf Life Saving Club. Members of the club work hard to ensure that locals and visitors to our region, particularly from nearby caravan parks and tourist venues, are kept safe throughout the summer months.

Woonona Surf Life Saving Club was announced as the patrolling club of the year. It has grown from strength to strength and continues to be run by a well-resourced and knowledgeable executive team. The volunteers on that team work tirelessly to ensure that the club upholds the highest standards. Woonona is now high on the list of the best and leading clubs in this State. I refer also to Bellambi Surf Life Saving Club which is located close to where I live. At the moment it is doing it a bit tougher than most surf lifesaving clubs; it has a recruitment drive and covers an important part of our coast that needs to be patrolled. Young Jaclyn Percy, the president, is doing an outstanding job in that club. She was announced as the Volunteer of the Year, which is a big accolade and a tribute to someone who is doing her best to keep men and women safe on our beaches, ensuring that young children are actively involved in surf lifesaving and trying to encourage a greater number of participants right across the region.

Those of us who live on the coast know that these men and women do a wonderful job each and every year. They work tirelessly and are always present when we are experiencing the most difficult conditions. The surf in the Illawarra can be treacherous at times, as it can in other parts of this State. On behalf of the Keira community I offer my heartfelt thanks to our surf lifesavers for what they do each and every day throughout the summer months to keep safe locals and visitors to this beautiful part of the New South Wales coastline.

HORNSBY ELECTORATE QUEEN'S BIRTHDAY HONOURS RECIPIENTS

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby) [7.18 p.m.]: Tonight I acknowledge some remarkable residents in my electorate of Hornsby who were recently awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia. These citizens embody the best of what it means to be Australian and have helped to shape the electorate of Hornsby, New South Wales and Australia through their various fields of endeavour. Bill Roberts, Ian Cavanagh and Robin Timmins were recognised for their remarkable achievements. They should be proud in the knowledge that they have actively contributed in their chosen fields to help make the Hornsby community a better place in which to live.

I begin by acknowledging the achievements of Cherrybrook resident Ian Cavanagh. Ian has been a member of the Australian Army Cadets for 52 years and has served the Lions Club of West Pennant Hills-Cherrybrook for more than 30 years. He is well known to many in my community. He was the deputy principal of Galston High School for many years. This great contributor has dedicated his life to mentoring and inspiring young people to learn. I place on the record my gratitude for the enormous service he has given to our community. Ian is a commanding officer of the 26th Australian Army Cadets Battalion and is in charge of 15 school-based units with 4,700 cadets, including cadets from Baulkham Hills High School and The Kings School. As I said earlier, he has dedicated his life to education and to inspiring young people and in retirement he continues to do so. Among his many achievements he is also helping young urban kids to learn new leadership skills in a bush environment.

Mr Kavanagh says that the skills acquired in Army cadet training help children learn how to fend for themselves in new environments and practice leadership skills. One of his favourite memories is training a year 12 officer who went on to lead a group of 600 cadets. Importantly, this demonstrates why Mr Kavanagh should be acknowledged as a leader—namely, he is helping develop the leaders of tomorrow who in turn will inspire other young leaders. As I mentioned before, he was a teacher for more than 40 years in my electorate and taught many generations of young students at Galston High School before retiring in 1999. He remains an active member of my community and places a strong emphasis on helping others and volunteering with not-for-profit community groups.

Bill Roberts was also recognised in the honours list. Bill has volunteered with a range of Vietnam Veterans Affairs groups for more than 19 years. He served in the Australian Army from 1963 to 1972 in Malaya and Borneo and then worked as a police clerk for 25 years. Following his army days he became a senior

vice-president of the New South Wales Branch of the Vietnam Veterans Peacekeepers and Peacemakers Association of Australia. He is also national secretary for the Vietnam Veterans Federation of Australia and works as a director of the Australian Veterans Children Assistance Trust. Mr Roberts told the *Hornsby Advocate* that he has a huge sense of achievement in helping veterans down on their luck and who do not know where to turn for help. I thank Mr Roberts for his enormous contribution in supporting veterans and the widows of veterans. I also acknowledge the role he plays in educating people about what happened during the Vietnam War.

The final Medal of the Order of Australia recipient is very special to me and many others in this House. Robin Timmins is a lioness of the Liberal Party and has dedicated her life to the cause. Nothing is ever too much trouble for her and she is always available to lend a hand. She is one of the hardest working Liberals I have ever met and she has encouraged me since I began my life in politics at a very young age. Robin will be embarrassed by all the fuss but the fuss is necessary. Robin's commitment to the Liberal Party is only surpassed by her commitment to her other great love: the sport of rugby, in particular her beloved Woodies. For 44 years Robin has worked tirelessly in a variety of roles for the NSW Rugby Union, including as a referee and behind the scenes as an administration volunteer. Robin Timmins should be applauded for her many sporting accomplishments, which include being Australia's first female referee and the first woman in 139 years to become an honorary life member of the NSW Rugby Union. I am proud to know her. I am also very grateful for her friendship, loyalty and support over many years.

This recognition is fitting for the enormous contribution she has made to our community; I am but one of the people she has helped. As the local member for all three award winners I am very proud of their significant achievements and their selfless volunteering dedication, which has spanned several decades. Each award winner deserves recognition and credit for the countless hours of community work they have performed over the years. They are great role models for our younger generations and an inspiration for many others in the community. Tonight I honour each of them for their contribution and the difference they have made to the lives of so many. They represent all that is best about being Australian. I am delighted to congratulate them on behalf of the community of Hornsby—a community they have done much to enrich and to serve. Tonight we all shine in the light of their generosity and selflessness and I thank each of them for that.

Private members' statements concluded.

DRUG ACTION WEEK

Matter of Public Importance

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie) [7.25 p.m.]: I ask the House to note as a matter of public importance that 16 to 22 June 2013 marks Drug Action Week. This week provides the community with the opportunity to raise awareness about the harmful effects of alcohol and many other drugs. Drug Action Week began 17 years ago; it was known as "Treatment Works Week". Over the years it has had various themes, including "Alcohol is a drug—TOO!" and "Looking After Your Mind". This year's theme is "Drugs, Communities and Families!" Drug Awareness Week focuses on something different each day. For example, on Monday the focus was on illicit drugs, stimulants and inhalants—the member for Mulgoa will speak about that. Today the issue was alcohol and tobacco. On Wednesday the issue will be pharmaceuticals, both legal and illegal. On Thursday it will be families and youth issues and on Friday it will be building resilience in communities.

It is not surprising that alcohol is the most widely used drug in Australia but, sadly, the harmful health effects of its abuse are not as well-known and the cost to individuals, families and the community is often underestimated. The total cost of alcohol misuse is estimated to cause harm worth \$36 billion annually to the Australian economy. Overall, the trends are moving in the right direction. Broadly, daily drinking in New South Wales has decreased from 8.3 per cent in 2007 to 7.4 per cent in 2010. We also have the lowest levels of alcohol use at 78.2 per cent, and the lowest proportion of risky drinkers in Australia: 46.2 per cent for males and 27.2 per cent for females. However, alcohol continues to be an issue with more than 25,000 alcohol-related assaults and more than 49,000 hospitalisations recorded in New South Wales in 2011. Up to 2005 young women were presenting to hospital at a greater rate than young men and since 2008 they have continued to present at similar rates.

Members will agree that the trend of an increasing lack of personal responsibility is a genuine concern. Local communities must be supported to effectively address this issue, and the O'Farrell Government is doing

just that. For example, the Government is committed to addressing the alcohol-related problems at Kings Cross, including coordinated and integrated messages aimed at educating young people about the risks associated with binge or excessive drinking and public drunkenness. The "What Are You Doing to Yourself?" campaign is aimed at educating young people of 18 to 29 years about the risks associated with binge or excessive drinking and public drunkenness. The "Know When to Say When" campaign engages with the broader community about how and why we drink and how as a community we need to change negative drinking behaviour. It seeks to challenge the values, beliefs and norms that surround alcohol consumption and highlights that all of us have a role to play in changing the culture. These are important parts of our commitment to tackle the binge drinking and alcohol-fuelled antisocial behaviour that we see night after night on the local media.

It also includes the use of sobering up centres, the Three Strikes scheme and the Kings Cross Plan of Management. The Government has also committed an additional \$10 million over four years for drug and alcohol treatment services and programs to help an extra 5,000 people end their addiction. Funding has been made available to non-government organisations to increase the capacity of community-based treatment services. The O'Farrell Government is committed to increasing the level of drug and alcohol support to the emergency departments of hospitals such as St Vincent's Hospital, so that people who present with alcohol and drug problems receive an assessment, education and other clinical interventions if required. In addition, 80 community drug action teams operating statewide are implementing local responses to the problems caused by alcohol in our communities. The O'Farrell-Stoner Government has acted swiftly to protect the community from dangerous and potentially deadly synthetic drugs. As I said, the member for Mulgoa will talk about that in more detail. I look forward to hearing about the strong action the New South Wales Government and, thankfully, the Federal Government have taken.

Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) [7.30 p.m.]: I thank the member for Port Macquarie for drawing our attention to Drug Action Week so that we can have this discussion today. Drug Action Week—three simple words with a complicated message on lifestyle and a potential solution for our communities. Having worked as a personal development, health and physical education teacher in local high schools, I can say that the conversation about drugs with our young people, who will be our adults in the future, is difficult and challenging in their understanding of what is going into their bodies and the possible ramifications of that. I say from the outset that not everything about drugs is bad. Drugs are our medicines. We have drugs in caffeine, in coffee, tea and chocolate. In some regards drugs are an important part of our daily lifestyle and who we are as a people. Indeed, drugs are important to the health and quality of life for some people.

By the same token, it is also a sort of yin and yang. Drugs are also at the other end of the spectrum. Drugs can be incredibly damaging. In Australia nobody should lose sight of the fact that tobacco kills more Australians than any other drug. Tobacco is legal and is available to any person over the age of 18 years. So we have that ongoing issue. From a financial perspective, not only do we have the lost potential of life for those who have died from tobacco and the cancers associated with tobacco; we also have the significant health implications and costs associated with tobacco illness. It is important that we do not lose sight of that. Another drug that is perfectly legal and available is alcohol. I note that the good member for Dubbo is in the Chamber today. As a former member of the great NSW Police Force I am sure he can attest to the fact that alcohol in domestic situations is the scourge of our society. A great number of people in our communities can have a couple of drinks and still do things sensibly and safely. However, a significant number of people cannot do that; they cannot limit their intake and control their behaviour after consuming alcohol.

I appreciate that we place significant emphasis on the service of alcohol in the public spectrum and the behaviour of people in the public spectrum before, during and after consuming alcohol. Undoubtedly the biggest problem in society and in our communities is the consumption of alcohol before going home or at home and the domestic violence that ensues. I am a relatively young person who grew up in a home where unfortunately my father, who was a wonderful, brilliant man early in his life, later became an alcoholic and brought a significant amount of domestic violence into our household. Alcohol was the bug, the germ, the virus—the addiction got him and unfortunately he became someone other than a wonderful man. But that happened away from the pubs and clubs, and the public entities on which we focus so much of our energy these days.

I turn to the three strikes rule, which was introduced by the member for Port Macquarie and which we debated earlier in this Chamber. Prior to coming into this Chamber I spent 10 years working as a barman at the local pub. I got on well with the owner of the establishment and I talked to him about the three strikes rule. He said, "Mate, we're talking about three strikes in a public place where you have security, you have RSA and you have alcohol priced at a stage where hopefully people can limit their intake." What we do not have is any

control on the intake of alcohol in the home where so much domestic violence occurs. That domestic violence occupies so much time and energy of our police force, which then occupies so much time and energy of our health services in the impact of domestic violence on this State more broadly. Domestic violence affects the children living in those domestic situations. Obviously it affects parents, adults and the broader family relationship.

Only 1 per cent—sometimes it has been said to be 2 per cent—of the total drug problem and deaths on our streets are related to the illicit drugs that get so many headlines: speed, marijuana, cocaine, LSD, ecstasy and all that sort of stuff. The great thing I love about Drug Action Week is the range and diversity of topics that are covered during the week. We draw attention to the fact that drugs are not only tablets, pills, lines or injections. Drugs are much broader and significant than that. Drug Action Week—three words for a complicated message. I thank the member for Port Macquarie for bringing the matter to the attention of members.

Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa) [7.35 p.m.]: I make a brief contribution to the matter of public importance. I thank the member for Port Macquarie for bringing an important matter to the attention of the House and the community. The Liberal-Nationals Government is taking the opportunity of Drug Action Week to raise awareness specifically of the dangers of synthetic drugs. This subject is especially poignant at this time because only a few weeks ago 17-year-old Henry Kwan died after he plunged off a balcony thinking he could fly after he took a form of synthetic drug. His photograph in the newspapers and on television was one of a youthful, intelligent, respectful young man full of potential with the world at his feet. Knowing that he died in such tragic and preventable circumstances was appalling and distressing to many of us. That is why the Liberal-Nationals Government took decisive and firm action on Sunday 9 June, when it announced an interim ban on 19 named synthetic drugs, as well as any like products, that are commonly sold in tobacconists and sex shops in New South Wales.

The interim ban is in place for 60 days but there is an option to extend it for an extra 30 days. Failing to comply with the interim ban carries a maximum fine of \$220,000 for an individual or \$1.1 million for a corporation. NSW Fair Trading officers are already out in the marketplace inspecting shops and enforcing the banning order, with 120 officers in the field statewide. This has been the largest product safety compliance operation in New South Wales history, with more than 1,000 retail premises inspected over the first four days alone. In all, only 65 traders were found to be selling synthetic drugs or to still have them in stock post the ban, which represents a 94 per cent compliance rate. The Minister for Fair Trading, whom I commend for this decisive action, said that Fair Trading officers are travelling throughout New South Wales. The actual program is called Operation Salt.

I commend the Minister for responding so swiftly. Many traders have welcomed the ban, with some saying that they stocked the products only out of marketplace necessity, because a competitor did so. The Government is determined to do all it can, and the interim banning of certain products and like products is a step forward. This ban has dramatically reduced the supply of synthetic drugs and makes it clear that these drugs are not recreational; they are unsafe and dangerous. I urge all parents to talk to their children about the risks and to play an active role in ensuring that their children do not purchase these drugs for consumption.

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie) [7.38 p.m.], in reply: I thank the member for Cessnock and the member for Mulgoa for their contributions to this discussion about Drug Action Week, and for helping to raise awareness about this important activity that is happening across all electorates. Their contributions were insightful and thoughtful, particularly the detail that was provided to us by the member for Mulgoa about the recent events surrounding synthetic drugs. Drug Action Week is very important. It is about raising awareness and supporting the work of our local communities around the issues of drugs and, most importantly I think, alcohol. The work of communities is supported by our Government, but as local members we need to work hard to support our communities. Obviously we can do that by attending community events but also by talking about the issues when we attend those events and perhaps highlighting them in local newsletters and newspaper columns.

I again emphasise the concerns I have—which I am sure are shared by many members—regarding the seemingly increasing lack of personal responsibility. As a parent of two young people who are now in their early twenties, I remember going through a really stressful time when they reached drinking age. Of course their friends were a similar age and so drinking became a fairly significant part of their social life. I tried to stress to them the importance of drinking responsibly and not only looking after themselves but also looking after their mates. That is extremely important, particularly in regional areas. My family lives 10 kilometres out of town and

when our kids left the pub they did not have access to public transport. So having a plan B was exceptionally important: They had to work out whether they would stay at a mate's place or ring a parent. I am pleased to say that my children and their friends all behaved responsibly and survived to continue to enjoy each other's friendship to this day.

The drink responsibly message has also been supported by the work of local liquor accords. I know that many electorates have accords and I am sure that local members attend meetings, as I do, whenever they can. I congratulate the liquor accords on their work, especially the Hastings Liquor Accord in my electorate, which has introduced some excellent initiatives. It is fantastic that hoteliers and publicans come together to make sure that the message about drinking responsibly is out there in the community. I thank all members for their contributions this evening.

Discussion concluded.

**The House adjourned, pursuant to resolution, at 7.43 p.m. until
Wednesday 19 June 2013 at 10.00 a.m.**
