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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Thursday 22 August 2013

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

The Speaker read the Prayer and acknowledgement of country.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Notices of Motions

General Business Notices of Motions (General Notices) given.

[During the giving of notices of motions]

The SPEAKER: Order! There is too much audible conversation. Members who wish to have private conversations should do so outside the Chamber.

TRUTH IN LABELLING (FREE-RANGE EGGS) BILL 2011

Second Reading

Mr JAMIE PARKER (Balmain) [10.07 a.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Mr David Elliott: I hear you have some big issues in your electorate, mate.

Mr JAMIE PARKER: We have indeed. Protecting consumers is a big issue. This bill originated in the Legislative Council where it was supported and now has been forwarded to this House for debate. I thank the Leader of the House for his assistance in the process to enable this bill to be introduced in this House. Consumers are being exploited and genuine free-range egg farmers are being pushed out of the market because there is no legal definition of what constitutes "free range". Increasing numbers of New South Wales households are rejecting the horrific treatment of animals in factory farms and looking for foods produced under more humane conditions. Free-range eggs offer this alternative to many consumers, who are comforted by the fact that the animals at least have access to the outdoors and enough space in which to live decently. This option must not be hijacked by industrial producers, who see the increase in ethical consumerism as an opportunity to use deceptive marketing and misleading words to charge a premium without delivering higher welfare outcomes.

As legislators, it is our responsibility to ensure this important consumer right is protected. Consumers already are making this choice with their wallets. We must now ensure that they get what they pay for. Despite receiving the bill and the Legislative Council's report on 8 November 2011, the Government has made it clear it will not support this Truth in Labelling (Free-range Eggs) Bill in this House. I urge the Government to reconsider this position. Instead of giving big industrial producers the green light to exploit consumers, I call on all members of this Parliament to support their constituents who want to pay extra for eggs that have been produced under humane conditions. We have heard from these constituents. Thousands of petitions have been lodged in this House and elsewhere expressing disappointment that simple and transparent food labelling will potentially not be supported by this House. Rural and regional members, who have egg production in their electorates, should be protecting genuine free-range farmers. Small farmers trying to build a market will be comprehensively sold out without legislation such as this to protect consumer rights by making clear what the value of their food products are.

The bill protects the rights of consumers who choose to pay more for higher welfare eggs by introducing a definition of "free-range" and penalties for producers who misuse that term on their labels. The bill seeks to define and regulate the labelling of eggs in New South Wales in line with existing industry

standards outlined in the Model Code of Practice for the Welfare of Animals: Domestic Poultry, fourth edition. Clause 4 of the bill, requirements for free range eggs, states that a person must not advertise, package or label eggs as "free-range" or "barn" unless the laying fowls are kept in accordance with the standards outlined in regulations. This will enable producers who seek to hijack the term "free range" in order to increase their profits without investing in better animal welfare standards to be penalised. Clause 10 of the bill states that the Minister may introduce regulations that relate to the keeping of laying fowl only if they are consistent with the current industry standards outlined in the Model Code of Practice for Welfare of Animals: Domestic Poultry, fourth edition, or any document that replaces that code. This will ensure that all free-range farms stock no more than 1,500 birds per hectare to allow laying hens to live decent lives.

Clause 6 introduces penalties for the mislabelling of cage eggs and requires the words "cage eggs" to be printed clearly on the label. Clause 7 creates provisions for the Minister to establish an accreditation scheme for the production of free-range eggs and the ability for the premises to be inspected to ensure compliance with the scheme. This will protect genuine free-range egg farmers from unfair competition. This legislation is important because the free-range label is under attack. The Egg Corporation, whose board is dominated by representatives of the larger industrial producers—Pace, Sunny Queen, Farm Pride—are pushing for a new free-range standard that increases the stocking density to 20,000 birds per hectare. According to the industrial producers, that is free-range! That represents an increase of 1,233 per cent over the industry accepted model code maximum of 1,500 birds per hectare.

The Egg Corporation's new standard, which in our view will deceive consumers, has sparked outrage from thousands of consumers and genuine free-range farmers. The issue has been discussed on online forums and members of this House have received many letters and other forms of correspondence. By inflating the stocking density to 20,000 per hectare, the standards fail to meet the most basic animal welfare standards. To brand eggs produced under those conditions as "free-range" is anticompetitive to legitimate free-range farmers and is misleading to consumers who pay more to ensure increased animal welfare. Small and medium farmers who have stocking densities as low as 750 birds per hectare—there is an argument that that is optimal—employ high standards of animal welfare. They are competing in a marketplace with no way to meaningfully differentiate their products. This bill is necessary for that reason. Consumers will not be able to tell the difference when making a choice at the supermarket if eggs produced by 20,000 birds per hectare are labelled as free-range and so are eggs produced by 1,500 birds per hectare. The big supermarkets are also pushing to intensify free-range standards—it as an easy way to charge consumers more while keeping costs down.

The NSW Farmers Association has also backed this move, despite the standard seeing a massive 6.7-fold increase in this industry accepted standard of 1,500 birds per hectare. These high stocking density rates would certainly result in many birds being de-beaked. This is the painful procedure where day-old chicks have their beaks cut off to stop injuries caused from pecking as a result of overcrowding. Older birds often need a repeat mutilation. We have heard loud and clear from community members across New South Wales that if a bird's beak needs to routinely chopped off to avoid pecking the other birds in the flock to death, then something is seriously wrong with these supposed free-range standards of 20,000 birds per hectare. Neither the Egg Corporation nor the NSW Farmers Association standards deserve the label "free-range". Consumers, farmers and animals in New South Wales deserve better.

No-one has to believe my arguments or those from animal welfare legislations. In November last year, the Australian Consumer and Competition Commission [ACCC] slammed the Egg Corporation's application for a trademark to market its sham free-range standard, which would see 20,000 birds crammed into a single hectare and labelled "free-range". I encourage members to look at the Australian Consumer and Competition Commission report. It states:

The ACCC considers that the proposed Rules do not ensure an environment for birds that is consistent with consumers' perception of a higher level of animal welfare associated with free range egg production.

When the Egg Corporation applied for a trademark the Australian Consumer and Competition Commission said it was clearly deceptive and misleading, yet the Government will not act to ensure that the definition of "free-range" is not the 20,000 birds per hectare the Egg Corporation is pushing. I continue the quote:

The ACCC considers that the proposed maximum outdoor stocking density of 20,000 birds per hectare is inconsistent with consumer expectations of farm practices adopted in free range egg production.

And further:

The ACCC is therefore concerned that the AECL Standards governing free range egg production ... are inconsistent with consumer expectations and understanding of free range egg production. The ACCC is concerned that the use of the CTM in the circumstances of such inconsistency has the potential to mislead or deceive consumers.

What more evidence do we need to show that the industrial producers controlling the Egg Corporation are seeking to mislead consumers and destroy legitimate free-range farm businesses? Action is required. In February this year, following the finding, the Australian Consumer and Competition Commission announced that it would be ramping up its investigations into the misuse of the term "free-range" eggs. With no legal definition of what constitutes "free-range", the Australian Consumer and Competition Commission will struggle to stop the Egg Corporation turning free-range into nothing more than a marketing term. The objective is for the term "free-range" to be marketing spin rather than a process that recognises the improved animal welfare and, therefore, marginally increased cost.

While the industry body group was blocked from getting a trademark—and congratulations to the Australian Consumer and Competition Commission for protecting consumers—in the absence of any law that would stop them, it is still free to implement this shonky new standard. If the Egg Corporation gets its way, consumers will see eggs labelled as free-range on the shelves despite the ruling of the Australian Consumer and Competition Commission because there is no law in this State to prohibit them from doing so. Without a legislative definition of free range, the Australian Consumer and Competition Commission has one hand behind its back. The consumer watchdog can protect the public from misleading claims only if it is given the tools to do so. The O'Farrell Government should pass this bill through the Legislative Assembly to give the industry standard some teeth.

I turn now to speak about Choice, the main advocate for consumers in our community. As a strong supporter of consumer protection, the themes of this bill are strongly supported by Choice. This leading independent consumer advocacy body is campaigning for the implementation of a standard definition and transparent labelling for free-range eggs to meet consumer expectations. Choice has stated:

Without an official standard for free range products, consumers are at real risk of being misled of businesses wanting to cash in on the premium that a free range product attracts.

Choice opposes the Egg Corporation's new standard and says increasing the stocking density from 1,500 to 20,000 per hectare fails to meet consumers' basic expectations of free-range eggs. As members well know, this legislation was debated in the Legislative Council. Over the past 12 months, consumers and welfare advocates and genuine free-range farmers have been successful in sending a loud and clear message to the Egg Corporation that their proposed 20,000 birds per hectare free-range standard is not acceptable. The push for truth in labelling has continued to spread across the country, with South Australia, Western Australia and Tasmania launching campaigns to protect free-range standards. As I mentioned, organisations such as Choice, the Humane Society International and Animals Australia have been working hard to get the message out that we need legislation to stop the exploitation of consumers.

I turn now to this issue of the exploitation of consumers and some of the problems that have already been identified. Some say it is not the Parliament's responsibility to prescribe bird density. They argue that the industry is competent, self-regulating and adapting to consumer preferences so we should let the industry do it. Let us have a look at the history of self-regulation in this sector. In 2006-07 the NSW Food Authority admitted that a situation existed in the egg industry where eggs from caged hens were being sold to consumers as free-range. Is that what we expect when we go to our supermarkets? No. In September 2009 the *Sydney Morning Herald* ran a story about the substitution of free-range eggs for cage eggs, entitled "Free range egg claims don't add up." It reported that there were not enough free-range chickens in Australia to produce the number of eggs being labelled as free range. Now the Australian Egg Corporation, the national egg industry body, is moving to change the definition of free-range production environments from a bird density of 1,500 birds per hectare to 20,000 birds per hectare.

In June 2000 the Federal Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry released a synopsis report on the review of layer hen housing and labelling of eggs in Australia. The report made it clear that if implementation of industry standards was not considered satisfactory then a move must be made to legislate label requirements. Recently a full-page advertisement for McLean's Run free-range eggs in the *Sydney Morning Herald Good Weekend* boasted: "It is the top of the range; in fact it is open range." The advertisement stated that the farm had a maximum bird density of 1,500 birds per hectare. Why can we not call that free range instead of open range? There is no clear definition of what is free range, open range or barn laid and the Government should take steps to address this issue

As policymakers we are on notice that any moves to degrade the free-range label to a marketing term will face opposition from those who want the right to transparent and ethical labelling protected. The appalling treatment of animals on factory farms is now firmly in the spotlight thanks to the hard work of many

organisations such as Animals Australia, Animal Liberation, Voiceless and Humane Choice. More and more consumers are refusing to buy into this cruelty. Free-range products provide a more humane alternative. If people want a higher animal welfare outcome, and they are happy to pay for it, then that is something we should support. It is our role as legislators to ensure that definition is protected, transparent and more than just a marketing term. This option must not be hijacked by industrial producers keen to cash-in on the higher prices these labels attract. The bill is not revolutionary; it has identified a deficiency in consumer law and simply seeks to rectify it.

Enforcement of the current industry standards for free-range egg production would stop the emergence of intensive egg producers who falsely claim to be free-range egg producers pushing genuine free-range egg producers out of the market. I have spoken to several free-range egg producers. They are very concerned that the bird density standard of 20,000 hens per hectare for labelling eggs as free range—which the Australian Egg Corporation sought a trademark for—will destroy their business. Free-range egg producers engage in business in an ethical and humane way. They charge more for their eggs because they have higher standards but if the term "free range" simply becomes a marketing term then their businesses will be destroyed. The exploitation of consumers and genuine free-range farmers by big industrial producers is not confined to the egg industry. We know there are similar problems in the chicken, pig and duck production industries. They too are facing problems with industrial producers using misleading and deceptive labelling as a marketing tool rather than a strong measure to indicate animal welfare treatment. The proper regulation of free-range eggs is a litmus test for policymakers and we need to get it right. I will now respond to some other concerns that have been raised so that the basis of this argument is fully understood.

Will the introduction of this bill disadvantage New South Wales egg producers compared with those in other States? That is a legitimate question to ask. We do not want to see New South Wales disadvantaged compared to other States but it is also up to us to protect consumers so we should take this first step. It is also important to recognise that the move towards regulated standards for the labelling free-range egg production in Australia has begun in other States and Territories. The Australian Capital Territory and Tasmania have both introduced legislation with the intention of regulating the sale and labelling of eggs. It is also interesting to note that the European Union has had mandatory labelling of egg production systems in place since 2004. The issue is not that New South Wales will be disadvantaged by regulating the labelling of free-range eggs, but if we do not introduce egg-labelling requirements we may well be left behind. Other States have recognised that consumers want to know about the conditions of the animals that produce their food and certainty that if the label says free range then the product actually is free range. Even if there were some level of disadvantage, is it not important that we take that step to protect free-range egg farmers and consumers?

The issue of consultation has been raised. As far back as 21 September 2009 Dr John Kaye and others met with the Australian Egg Corporation's Communications Manager Jacqueline Baptista and Jane Weatherley to discuss this matter. The first draft of the 2010 bill was sent to the Australian Egg Cooperation on 27 May 2010. On 8 August 2011 Dr John Kaye met with Mr Jeff Sorrel, Campaign Manager Government Relations, NSW Farmers Association, to discuss the bill. So there has been consultation and engagement. But there has not necessarily been agreement because the three big caged-egg producers they represent are not happy that consumers want transparency and consistency of labelling. I also note that the amendments to the original bill in the upper House were supported. In fact, those amendments, put forward by the Labor Party, have made it even easier for the Government to support this bill. Those amendments made changes that in the view of the upper House at least would be supported by the majority of people in our community.

Interestingly, some people have claimed that free-range egg production systems are not better for the animal or the environment. Cannibalism is an issue in highly-stocked farming environments. Indeed, cannibalism has been explicitly linked to highly-stocked density of laying hens. This has traditionally been the case in intensive farm production systems. Hens naturally peck at their environment. This behaviour can manifest itself in commercial laying flocks as hen bullying, injury and death. There is some approach to mutilate the layers when they are chicks by de-beaking them, but strong evidence exists that in the lower-density environments this behaviour is less obvious. In 2009 Compassion in World Farming explicitly linked feather-pecking behaviour and cannibalism with hen stress and environmental deprivation. Its report states that feather pecking is redirected ground pecking and foraging behaviour that the birds are displaying because they do not have the ability to move around their environment. It advised that the provision of space and better facilities encouraged natural behaviours and discouraged abnormal pecking that may injure other hens. So how do we manage feather pecking? The solution is simple. You improve the environment and that reduces feather pecking. I have spoken to farmers who produce free-range eggs and seen their farms. If you provide a free-range area with plenty of space, shelter and vegetation to peck at—as specified by our definition of free range—then the feather pecking becomes a non-issue.

Ms Katrina Hodgkinson: I really think you need to go and visit one of these farms.

Mr JAMIE PARKER: The Minister says that she thinks I should visit one of these farms. I hear the Minister advocating de-beaking.

Ms Katrina Hodgkinson: It is not de-beaking; they just laser off the hook at the end of the beak.

Mr JAMIE PARKER: I understand that the Minister is an advocate of de-beaking. We are simply saying that the way to avoid feather pecking is to have a lower density of birds. That issue can be avoided with reduced stocking densities and those reduced densities can be reflected in a label that identifies to people that animal welfare is improved. Importantly, we can improve the welfare of animals by having reduced stocking rates; we can ensure that consumers are protected by a standard which actually means something; and we can also ensure that those who are running legitimate and genuine free-range egg production enterprises are well supported.

Before I conclude I will define what the free-range market is. Some people say that it is such a tiny portion of the market that it does not matter, and they question why the Government would get involved. They concede that the big industrial producers are throwing their weight around but wonder whether we need legislation to protect consumers and small farms. According to the 2010 annual report released by the Egg Corporation, in the 2010 financial year free-range eggs represented 26.6 per cent of the market in volume and 37.3 per cent of the market in value. It is a significant category. Free-range eggs are a significantly higher value product and represent almost 40 per cent of the value of the market. Australia-wide this represents 91.77 million dozen eggs produced annually with a combined value of \$174 million a year. Free-range eggs are not a niche or elite market; they are a mainstream market in Australia.

In 2009 the retail giant Woolworths announced that it would reduce its number of caged egg products sold from 20 to 11 and increase its free-range egg stock in acknowledgement of growing consumer demand. That was a significant achievement. Coles recently made the announcement that it would be phasing out its own brand of caged eggs by 2013 and reducing the price of its free-range eggs by 18 per cent in response to consumers' desire to purchase ethically produced eggs. There is a consumer movement around the ethical treatment of animals. That movement is also made apparent by the decision of Coles to sell products labelled as sow stall free. There are issues with the definition of "sow stall free", but it demonstrates that the ethical treatment of animals is a growing issue.

However, as the market grows so do the false claims on free-range eggs. I encourage members to look at the claims on the products sold in their local supermarkets. They variously claim to be barn laid, open laid or free range. Some of the products specify that the eggs come from farms that house no more than 1,500 hens per hectare; others provide no definition of what "free-range" on the packaging means. That is why we are here today. This bill protects the definition of free range and the farmers who should be benefitting from the considerable growth in ethical consumerism. This is an important matter for not only consumers but also producers. I have met with the Minister on this issue. We had a positive discussion, but it is clear that the Government does not feel comfortable supporting this bill. However, I encourage members to examine this issue. The bill is the beginning of a campaign which is about ensuring the protection of consumers and the protection of free-range farmers. The proper regulation of free-range eggs is a litmus test for policymakers. We need to get it right to protect the future of free-range egg farmers and their animals and the consumers who rely on their product. I urge the House to support the Truth in Labelling (Free-range Eggs) Bill. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON (Burrinjuck—Minister for Primary Industries, and Minister for Small Business) [10.32 a.m.]: The Government does not support the Truth in Labelling (Free-range Eggs) Bill 2011. The Government acknowledges that concerns exist about free-range egg labelling but strongly disagrees with The Greens and members opposite on how those concerns should be addressed. The egg industry is a significant national industry. New South Wales producers account for just under half of all eggs produced in Australia, and many of these eggs are marketed in other States. This bill erodes national consistency in food regulation by creating different labelling requirements for products that are traded freely between New South Wales and other States. The bill attempts to do this in a way that will impose significant additional costs on New South Wales producers but not on producers in other States.

Our national mutual recognition laws prevent individual States from imposing their own unilateral requirements on products from other jurisdictions. This means producers from neighbouring States would be

able to label their eggs just as they do now and sell their eggs in New South Wales in direct competition with New South Wales producers who have been saddled with the extra production costs that would be imposed by this bill. That sort of perverse outcome would inevitably impact the New South Wales egg industry. The impacts would flow on to around 200 egg producers and 4,000 workers currently employed in the New South Wales industry and their communities. These problems reflect the way the bill operates and no amount of amendments will overcome them.

We have already seen Queensland amend its animal welfare legislation, which imposes specific requirements for free-range poultry, because of the difficulties caused by adopting a State-by-State approach. Instead of this unilateral approach, the Government has taken constructive steps to address the issue of egg labelling at a national level and in consultation with industry. I placed the egg labelling issue on the agenda of the Council of Australian Governments Legislative and Governance Forum on Food Regulation, convening as the Australia and New Zealand Food Regulation Ministerial Council.

I have also raised the issue within the Primary Industries Ministerial Council. As a result, the Primary Industries Standing Council convened an egg labelling working group with membership comprising primary industry and food experts. The working group identified three key issues. The first issue was the perception of a direct link between stocking densities and bird welfare, which ignores the broad range of other issues that impact on bird welfare. The second issue was that there is work to be done in reviewing and improving the Model Code of Practice for the Welfare of Animals: Domestic Poultry. The third and perhaps most important issue was that there is a clear need to clarify the meaning of labels on egg packaging and improve consumer awareness.

The Government has already worked to ensure that the model code will be reviewed as a priority and has already posted information about widely available free-range schemes to help consumers make informed choices. The latter was achieved by analysing a number of widely available free-range certification schemes operating in New South Wales. This showed that the current free-range schemes all use the "Model Code of Practice for the Welfare of Animals: Domestic Poultry" fourth edition as a foundation, and in some cases the schemes are overlaid by additional criteria. This information is available on the Food Authority website to help consumers make informed choices.

The member for Balmain mentioned some specific examples. The Food Authority is also actively enforcing existing truth in labelling in relation to eggs, just as it does for all food products. The Food Authority already has the power under the Food Act 2003 to pursue food businesses if they are guilty of misleading or deceptive conduct in relation to the sale of food. Section 18 of the Food Act specifically states:

A person must not, in the course of carrying on a food business, engage in conduct that is misleading or deceptive or is likely to mislead or deceive in relation to the advertising, packaging or labelling of food intended for sale or the sale of food.

We have seen Glensung Pty Limited, trading as Paul Galea and Son Egg Farm, fined \$4,620 and placed on the name and shame register after Food Authority inspectors discovered that barn-laid eggs were being falsely labelled as free range. Section 18 of the Food Act is already in place and is being used effectively to address cases of misleading or deceptive conduct such as the Glensung example. Some might try to argue that this example demonstrates that more regulations are needed; however, the Government believes the opposite to be true. This response by the Food Authority shows that the system works and that there is nothing to be gained by duplicating regulatory powers that the authority already has and takes seriously.

It is also important to point out that this provision applies to all foods, not just eggs. This is important because terms such as "free range" do not apply exclusively to eggs. It is also common to see products such as chicken and pork labelled as free range. The approach taken in this bill is flawed because it duplicates existing regulatory approaches without providing additional benefits. This bill would create specific requirements and powers that relate only to eggs and that operate in parallel with the general powers that I have outlined. Those powers are already vested in the Food Authority under the Food Act.

Even if the arrangements proposed in this bill represented an effective solution to egg labelling issues—and in the Government's view they do not—it would be more appropriate for these arrangements to be conferred generally so that they could be applied in any situation where they were warranted. The Government is serious about reducing red tape and does not support arrangements that clearly and unnecessarily add to the red tape burden. The Government supports truth in labelling particularly where consumers are paying a premium at the register in the belief that the animal which produced the food has been housed or kept in a particular way. The preferable way to achieve this is on a national basis with industry engagement informed by appropriate consultation.

It is not just the Government that holds this view. This approach accords entirely with the position on consumer values adopted by the Council of Australian Governments Legislative and Governance Forum on Food Regulation, convening as the Australia and New Zealand Food Regulation Ministerial Council. The ministerial council's position in respect of industry-initiated self-regulatory approaches to dealing with values-based claims was clearly articulated in its response to "Labelling Logic: Review of Food Labelling Law and Policy". In its response to recommendation 38 the council commented, among other things:

Consumer values are dynamic and likely to change significantly over relatively short periods of time. For this reason, a market-driven approach, as recommended by the review panel, is likely to be more responsive to consumer needs than a regulatory approach.

The ministerial council went on to support industry-initiated activities and noted there may be opportunities for government to support or contribute to the development of this self-regulatory approach. Food labelling, including the labelling of free-range eggs, is a national issue. It is also worth pointing out that the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission has announced that it will be looking at premium claims for foods such as free-range eggs as part of its 2013 compliance program. Although the commission has given indications that some current practices and proposed standards may not correspond with consumer expectations about free-range production, there are still widely differing expectations within the community. Adoption of stand-alone New South Wales arrangements which do little other than duplicate existing legislative requirements does not represent a feasible alternative to consistent national arrangements. In addition to its many flaws and the many problems it would create, the Truth in Labelling (Free-range Eggs) Bill 2011 is clearly out of step with our national arrangements and the approach preferred by all Australian jurisdictions. The Government does not support the bill.

Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool) [10.40 a.m.]: I lead for the Opposition in the debate on the Truth in Labelling (Free-range Eggs) Bill 2011. The Opposition will support the bill as it is currently presented to the Legislative Assembly. This legislation addresses concerns in the community about truth in labelling of eggs. Many people in New South Wales choose to pay more and buy free-range or barn-laid eggs. They do so because they believe that the chickens producing those eggs are being kept in more humane conditions than caged chickens are. When this legislation was considered in the upper House after being introduced by Dr John Kaye, Labor successfully moved amendments that made it practical and linked the labelling to national standards. I note that the Government did not seek to divide on either the amendments or the bill in that place.

The national standard is outlined in the Model Code of Practice for the Welfare of Animals: Domestic Poultry. The current standard is the fourth edition and was agreed to by the Primary Industries Standing Committee. The bill provides that the New South Wales regulations mirror those standards or the standards that replace them, so that we can keep up to date with changes without having to amend this legislation. The national standard includes standards for the keeping of hens, the production of eggs, and the definitions of "cage", "barn-laid" and "free-range" eggs. The reason for making this link is practical. The egg industry crosses State boundaries. A large slab of Australia's egg-production industry is in New South Wales. However, our product crosses into other States, particularly our bordering States. Many eggs sold in the Australian Capital Territory, for example, come from New South Wales. It is important that the definitions match Australia wide, for obvious practical reasons.

The bill addresses an issue of concern for many people in New South Wales. Our egg industry is extremely important to New South Wales and many people will buy eggs produced by caged hens. But there is a problem with people not getting what they are paying for. Many consumers in New South Wales continue to buy eggs from caged hens because they are a cheaper product. Many New South Wales residents, including many of the people I represent, do not have the luxury of being able to afford the more expensive option. It is important, however, that consumers have a choice about the product they buy. I support their right to have a choice. Consumers should be able to be confident that when they buy a product labelled in a certain way they will get what they expect.

Labor has a very strong record when it comes to working with the egg industry in New South Wales to improve standards of welfare for hens and standards for customers. The former Government had a good record of introducing more humane conditions for the production of eggs from cage birds in New South Wales and at the same time ensuring, through our food safety schemes, the safety of eggs. All eggs, regardless of the production system, are an important and nutritious part of people's diets, and we want to encourage people to consume them. They are a natural product that has significant nutritional benefits. Many people choose to buy eggs that are not produced in cages but are barn laid or free range. This legislation will guarantee that consumers in New South Wales will know that they are getting what they pay for.

The Australian Capital Territory already has legislation similar to this. This legislation therefore does not set a new standard; it takes the national standard for cage eggs, barn-laid eggs and free-range eggs and imposes conditions on advertising to ensure that the products are accurately promoted. Labor's amendments seek to match this bill with the fourth edition of the Model Code of Practice for Welfare of Animals: Domestic Poultry. If the Government were to agree and this bill became law, it would be up to the Minister of the day to participate in the Primary Industries Standing Committee on the formulation of changes to those standards. Should this or a future Government want to push for changes to, for instance, the density of stocking or the way birds are treated, they would do it through the national system. Draft changes to the standards have been discussed over several years.

Another issue raised in the original bill brought forward by The Greens was a change to specify that a free-range egg comes from a farm that has fewer than 750 hens per hectare. Currently the national standard specifies that the aim is to have fewer than 1,500 hens per hectare. But egg farmers raise their chooks in different conditions, and many chooks producing free-range eggs move around to different ranges. Because of these processes there has effectively been no national or enforceable standard for the maximum number of chickens per hectare. Currently people can say that they are free-range egg producers if they have up to 80,000 hens, or thereabouts, per hectare. The standards that the industry is currently circulating suggest that the maximum should be two hens per square metre, which would effectively be 20,000 per hectare. That might seem a lot to some people but, given that the hens congregate in different parts of the area and in their roosts, two hens per square metre may not be that much.

Enforcement of this legislation would fall to the NSW Food Authority. The Food Authority is well placed to undertake this work; it already has a role in the enforcement of labelling in New South Wales. The NSW Food Authority already undertakes the prosecution of people who are using false labelling for things such as country of origin. Local council inspectors will also be able to undertake some of that work. The Food Authority is actively involved in the inspection of egg production facilities to ensure that they are meeting the New South Wales Egg Food Safety Scheme standards. The Royal Society for the Protection of Animals [RSPCA] is currently involved in the inspection of caged-bird and other types of egg production facilities to ensure that they meet the current standards for humane egg production. So the mechanisms are already in place for that work to be undertaken if the legislation is adopted and implemented.

The Opposition supports the Government's introducing regulations that mirror the national standards, because we have received advice from the Parliamentary Counsel that that is the most practical way to undertake this work. With national standards the legislation would not need to be changed in future; the regulations would change to go along with the national standard. That would enable the Minister and the Government of the day to ensure that industry is properly consulted in that process. The egg industry is an important—\$197 million—industry in New South Wales. It produces 44 per cent of Australia's eggs, and there are about 7.4 million laying hens. Many of those hens are in country New South Wales but there are also some in the Sydney Basin, in areas such as Kemps Creek. Many people in New South Wales are concerned about the conditions in which egg-producing chickens are kept. People want to have confidence that they get what they pay for when they buy eggs or egg products. This legislation would give them that confidence. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla) [10.46 a.m.]: I am a softie when it comes to animal welfare. I am also an economic liberal who believes that markets generally deliver the best outcomes and that, as part of markets delivering the best outcomes, it is important that consumers and other participants in markets be fully informed. But I oppose this bill because it will achieve nothing in practical terms to support animal welfare or informed consumer choice, for a number of reasons. First, there is already State and Federal legislation in place to prevent false or misleading description of eggs that are offered for sale. Anyone reading this bill in isolation could be forgiven for assuming there are no existing legislative safeguards to prevent false or misleading description of eggs offered for sale, but nothing could be further from the truth. We have State laws. We have the Food Act 2003 and the Food Regulation 2010, which already contain strong provisions to regulate the labelling of packaged food such as eggs and the safe production and handling of eggs intended for sale.

We have a strong regulator, the NSW Food Authority, with a record of successful enforcement action against those who engage in misleading or deceptive conduct. In June 2010 Australia's largest manufacturer of smallgoods, Primo Pty Ltd, was fined about \$233,000 plus \$200,000 costs for labelling imported pork products as Australian. Similarly, Glensung Pty Ltd was recently fined \$4,620 when it was found to be labelling barn-laid eggs as free range. That company was added to the Name and Shame register. We have national laws. In September 2012 the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission took Rosie's Free Range Eggs to court

for selling cage eggs labelled as free range. That company paid a penalty of \$50,000 under the then Trade Practices Act 1974. In 2011 a Western Australian wholesaler, C.I. and Co. Pty Ltd, which had labelled eggs as free range when in fact a substantial proportion were not free range was ordered to pay a civil pecuniary penalty of \$50,000 for contravention of the then Trade Practices Act. So we have strong national laws already in place.

The member for Balmain made some comments about the Australian Egg Corporation's attempt to trademark a "free range" certification. The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission rejected that application and the Egg Corporation ultimately withdrew it. The member for Balmain's assertion that somehow a density of 20,000 hens per hectare could properly be described as free range is just wrong, given that the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission rejected an attempt to certify a trademark "free range" for that stocking density. It is pretty clear that if anyone attempted to pass that off as free range the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission would come down on them pretty heavily and take court proceedings. That is a furphy.

The second reason for this bill to be rejected by this House is that this really is not a truth in labelling bill: It is an untruth in labelling bill. Clause 6 refers to non-complying eggs; in other words, eggs that will not meet the prescribed standards to warrant their description as free range or barn eggs. According to clause 6, non-complying eggs have to be labelled "cage eggs" and no words, images or other means can be used to suggest that the laying fowls are not kept in cages. For example, under this legislation a producer could not say, "We keep them free range but we don't meet the prescribed per hectare standards.", so this is an untruth in labelling bill. It is not surprising that we would have this type of Orwellian doublespeak from The Greens. This is the political party that cannot get its colours right and is dominated by an eastern bloc under the leadership of Lee Rhiannon, which really should be called a red party and not a green party. If The Greens cannot get truth in labelling of their own party right, how will they get truth in labelling of eggs correct?

Mr Paul Toole: They are not truthful at all.

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN: Not at all.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! Members have made their contributions to the debate. The member for Cronulla will be heard in silence.

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN: Notwithstanding that the member for Balmain repeats the phrase "transparent labelling", what we have in this bill is the opposite—a lack of transparency and a lack of truth in labelling. The third flaw in this bill is that it fails to recognise the limitations of applying unilateral New South Wales labelling requirements to eggs sold in other States, and that it will result in erosion of national consistency in food labelling requirements. Under mutual recognition legislation and the Mutual Recognition (New South Wales) Act 1992, if eggs are packaged in a way that is lawful for sale in another Australian jurisdiction, they can be sold in New South Wales. This bill will add to consumer confusion when eggs that do not comply with this legislation can be imported from other States and Territories and will be able to be sold lawfully in New South Wales.

The fourth flaw is that it attempts to tie descriptions and prescriptions to the Model Code of Practice for the Welfare of Animals: Domestic Poultry, fourth edition. That model code also has its own problems. It refers to a maximum of 1,500 laying hens per hectare, but it goes on to state that any higher stocking density is acceptable where there is regular rotation of birds onto fresh range and close management is undertaken to provide some continuing fodder cover.

Mr Jamie Parker: You've been talking to the Egg Corporation.

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN: No. I have been reading the member for Balmain's sloppy ham-fisted bill. That is what I have been doing. I also have been reading the model code and what the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission [ACCC] has to say about this. The model code does not define what is meant by a higher stocking density, regular rotation, close management or continuing fodder cover.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! The member for Balmain will have an opportunity to reply to the debate.

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN: There are two choices. One is application of the code that has vague expressions that are not capable of proper enforcement, unless the terms can be redefined in some objective

manner. The other is that any attempt to address those limitations would require regulations to be drafted in properly defined terms. That alone means that the regulations would need to go further than the model code. Furthermore, strict application of any requirement for consistency with the model code as it currently stands would render the regulation unenforceable. I have been goaded by the member for Balmain saying, "Move an amendment." But the problem is that the whole approach to this bill is misconceived. It is not a matter of amending this bill. It is a matter of the need for a uniform national approach. When eggs are imported into New South Wales, we do not want inconsistent standards among States. We heard from the Minister about her attempts to achieve uniformity and progress at a national level.

I take animal welfare very seriously. After I saw the movie *Babe*, I was put off eating pork forever. However, I do not believe in trying to protect animals and consumers by adopting a ham-fisted, illogical and piecemeal approach. If The Greens and others have concerns about animal welfare, they are best addressed in animal welfare legislation. We have the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Regulation 2012 that sets out standards for caged and non-caged housing of fowls. Clauses 5 to 12 of the regulation set out standards that must be adhered to, such as access to water, cage floors, cage height, cage doors and stock density for caged fowls. Clauses 13 to 17 of the regulation set out standards for non-caged housing that include standards relating to access to food and water, height of housing, multi-level arrangements and stock density. I could see nothing in that regulation that set out standards for open range or free-range fowls. The animal welfare problems sought to be addressed by this bill are better addressed in animal welfare legislation, and consumer protection can best be protected by national legislation.

For the reasons I have stated, I believe this bill is totally misconceived. It may be a laudable objective to increase transparency, but this bill does not do that; rather, it creates confusion and inconsistency. This bill does nothing to protect animal welfare. For example, it will not change the standards that apply to caged animals and it will make life more difficult for free-range producers. If there is a move towards greater prescription for free-range production, that should be done at a consistent national level. For the reasons I have stated, I oppose the bill.

Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) [10.55 a.m.]: I strongly support the Truth in Labelling (Free-range Eggs) Bill, which would legislate the industry standard so that eggs sold as free range must be produced in areas populated by no more than 1,500 birds per hectare. The bill also introduces penalties for misleading information. I congratulate The Greens on bringing this much-needed reform to the House, in particular the member for Balmain, who is accurately labelled "Green", and for standing up for animal welfare and for consumers. This bill has strong and widespread support in the community, including within my electorate of Sydney. I am opposed to factory farming and mass egg, meat and poultry production, on animal welfare grounds. The suffering imposed on live, sentient, intelligent and social beings merely to reduce production costs is simply inhumane.

In the case of battery eggs, laying hens are crammed into tiny cages where they cannot act out their natural instincts to spread their wings, scratch the dirt, socialise or search for food. They live under artificial lights, eat pellets all day and often suffer from fractures and osteoporosis. Parliament has failed to protect these animals from lifetimes of physical and mental torment. The response from the Government against outright bans has been that it is up to the consumer, and that consumer choice must be preserved. This bill does not ban any form of farming method, but makes sure that those who do not want to support cruel egg production and are willing to spend the extra money to buy eggs produced by chickens raised in a humane way can confidently do so. This bill is about choice and the consumers' right to not be misled about where eggs they buy come from.

There is no question that some sections of the industry want to mislead consumers. The Australian Egg Corporation Limited has long pushed for the term "free range" to be used on eggs produced in areas of 20,000 birds per hectare. This is in stark contrast to the images that come to mind in response to the term free range—images of chickens roaming open grasslands, looking for insects, digging, and flapping their wings. Coles recently was found selling eggs labelled free range produced in areas of 10,000 birds per hectare, which it made its new free-range standard. Some eggs have been sold as free range from densities of up to 50,000 hens per hectare. While the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission has expressed serious concerns about industry attempts to deceive egg consumers, its power to act is limited because labelling laws are lax, with free range having no legislated standard.

People should be free to use their consumer power to shape the market, but this is possible only if they can make an informed decision supported by accurate labelling. Also, producers who invest in more humane forms of farming should be rewarded for their practices. If cheaper eggs produced without the same animal

welfare standards are allowed to use the free-range label, those doing the right thing will not be able to compete. The term free range will be devalued, with consumer confusion causing a drop in demand for humanely produced eggs. Some people will choose to boycott eggs altogether. This bill empowers consumers who do not want to support the appalling treatment of animals in the name of profit and encourages transparency and accountability for those consumers. It will increase business confidence for legitimate humane free-range egg producers. The bill should have bipartisan support. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst—Parliamentary Secretary) [11.02 a.m.]: I speak against the Truth in Labelling (Free-range Eggs) Bill 2011. This bill has been drafted on the run. The member for Balmain put the bill before the House but has said that he intends to make amendments to amendments.

Mr Dominic Perrottet: It is like *Chicken Run*.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: It is just like *Chicken Run*. The bill is being drafted on the run, without proper thought. It is a sloppy bill. There is adequate State and Federal legislation governing animal welfare in New South Wales. Perhaps those opposite have never been to a poultry farm to see what happens there. If they were to inspect animal welfare standards on those farms, they would see that the birds have adequate food and shelter, roosting racks and room to move. There is a difference between animal rights and animal welfare, but I do not think the member for Balmain realises that. Last year, or perhaps the year before, The Greens discussed at their conference how they would describe themselves to aliens if they were to meet any. The Greens are also talking about the welfare of chickens, pigs and ducks. Is the member going to introduce legislation on animal welfare and animal rights in those industries also? He has introduced an ill-conceived bill, which the Government will not support.

Mr David Elliott: Absolutely eggstraordinary!

Mr PAUL TOOLE: It is eggstraordinary. The bill states that it is "An Act to define, and to regulate the labelling of, free-range eggs". The bill proposes to do that by creating the offence of advertising, packaging or labelling eggs for sale as "free range" or "barn" unless certain requirements are met. Amendments introduced by the Opposition in the other place further provide for these requirements to be prescribed by regulations in terms that are consistent with the Model Code of Practice for the Welfare of Animals—Domestic Poultry, 4th Edition. However, as the Minister for Primary Industries and the member for Cronulla mentioned, the model code of practice is primarily about animal welfare and can be interpreted to define a production system as, "free range, even though it may not conform to the expectations of some consumers". This will only confuse consumers further.

The bill contains serious flaws, many of which have been discussed already by the Minister and the member for Cronulla. It is not just what the bill sets out to do that is problematic; it is also the way the bill sets out to do it. The need for a national approach to the labelling of food products that are readily traded across State and Territory borders has been widely canvassed in this debate. But we must also consider the efficient operation of New South Wales legislative arrangements. While the bill is ostensibly about egg labelling, the Hon. Cate Faehrmann gave a clear indication that animal welfare objectives are also a priority of the bill. Turning to debate on the bill in the other place, I can see that there was some friction among The Greens. On 21 October the Hon. Cate Faehrmann said:

I support the amendments moved by the Opposition to Dr John Kaye's bill but I do so reluctantly. I have serious concerns about the animal welfare implications of these amendments. They weaken the strong animal welfare gains that Dr John Kaye's bill would put in place. I am the animal welfare spokesperson for The Greens and it would be a shame if this bill, in all its ambition, passes in a way that forbids New South Wales to introduce regulations for poultry welfare that are more ambitious than the current Code of Practice.

The problem is that New South Wales already has legislation in place to regulate animal welfare and related animal production standards and to impose penalties if these requirements are not met. The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979 and the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals General Regulation 2006 prescribes requirements and penalties with respect to the welfare and housing of laying fowl, including standards for production of cage and non-cage eggs. These standards are already based on the model code.

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

Mr PAUL TOOLE: New South Wales also has legislation in place to regulate food labelling and to impose penalties for misleading or deceptive behaviour in relation to the advertising, packaging or labelling of

food. Section 18 of the Food Act 2003 prohibits conduct that is misleading or deceptive or is likely to mislead or deceive in relation to the advertising, packaging or labelling of food intended for sale. This applies to the sale of all food, not just eggs. This bill will create additional legislation that cuts across both these areas, but only in relation to eggs for sale. Creating a new piece of legislation to address each specific animal welfare or food labelling issue can only result in an unworkable proliferation of interrelated and potentially inconsistent or conflicting requirements.

An outcome of this kind would compromise the efficient operation of our legislative framework in New South Wales. Instead, it is important to acknowledge that, wherever possible, it is sensible to frame any new legislative provisions within our existing legislative framework by including provisions that relate to animal welfare within the prevention of cruelty to animals legislation and provisions that relate to food within the food legislation. The Truth in Labelling (Free-range Eggs) Bill 2011 fails to do this. That is another reason the Government does not support the bill.

Mr RICHARD AMERY (Mount Druitt) [11.10 a.m.]: The Opposition supports the Truth in Labelling (Free-range Eggs) Bill 2011, introduced by Dr John Kaye in the other place, amended there by the Labor Party and introduced in this House by the member for Balmain.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! There is too much audible conversation in the Chamber.

Mr RICHARD AMERY: I have listened to debate on the bill, from the second reading speech of the member for Balmain to the contribution by the member for Bathurst. I am happy to support the bill because it will not do everything that Government speakers claim it will do. The member for Bathurst attacked The Greens and the Minister for Primary Industries referred to New South Wales having to go it alone on this issue. The bill is specific about maintaining existing Australian standards. I do not agree with the comment by the member for Balmain that large egg producers are industrial producers. That is an example of the colourful language that has permeated the egg-producing industry and this debate for some time.

One of the large egg producers named by the member opposite, Pace Farms, had its origins in my electorate. Frank Pace was one of the regulated industry operatives. His operations were situated on Richmond Road, at the end of Rooty Hill Road. When the egg industry was deregulated in 1991 by the Greiner Government, Frank Pace and his family nearly went broke. But he made some bold investment decisions and is now possibly the largest egg producer in the country. He has represented the industry at State, national and international levels. As a member representing a Western Sydney electorate, I am proud to say that the Pace family is a Western Sydney success story. Deregulation caused a reduction in the number of egg producers. Quotas were bought and sold, similar to what happened in the dairy industry. As occurs in all deregulated industries, the same production quotas were met by fewer producers. Those who survived are doing quite well, but many went broke or shifted into other industries.

Then there was a big move not only in New South Wales but around the world to ban what was called "cage egg" production. I was the Minister for Agriculture when this movement was at its peak. I received postcards from Belgium, the United States and Canada—from all over the world—calling for a ban on cage egg production in New South Wales and in Australia. I certainly did not support the ban, but the animal welfare groups that pushed the campaign—they have been derided somewhat in this debate—made some progress, although they do not believe it is enough. The first result was an examination of cage egg production industry standards. Cage sizes, ventilation, food types and various supervisory roles came into public focus and were raised at ministerial council meetings. The outcome was the definitions "barn"—the birds are kept in a barn or large shed; it is self-explanatory—and "free-range", where birds are kept in paddocks with feeding and laying points.

Much of the past debate centred around cage and barn sizes, and definitions of "cage production" and "free-range"—which is a topical subject in this debate. Today's debate has highlighted the many abuses of the definition "free-range" eggs. Obviously an unscrupulous operator in a business producing all three types of eggs would not find it difficult to label cage eggs as "free-range" merely to maintain production numbers. Some Government members highlighted the fact that prosecutions were undertaken in such circumstances. We know about the problem of dishonest producers, but what is this bill about? The member for Balmain certainly piqued my interest when he highlighted the push to increase the stocking or density rates of free-range poultry, with figures varying to around 1,500 birds per hectare. As legislators with an interest in animal welfare, we should keep an eye on any increases in density rates. We are sending a message to the Minister for Primary Industries

to be conscious of this industry push when she attends ministerial council meetings. It would not be sustainable to have 20,000 birds per hectare, and certainly any such move would activate the animal welfare lobby to highlight abuse within the system.

This bill defines truth in labelling in its title and its contents. So far this debate has highlighted the fact that we should devise clear definitions of "cage", "barn" and "free-range" eggs. I appreciate that descriptions, national codes and so forth exist already, but stipulating an exact stocking rate within the definition of "free-range" either in legislation or via a national code will protect the birds. Then when consumers go to the supermarket or local store and see eggs labelled "free-range" they will know that, according to legislative definition, those eggs were produced by a system that encompassed a set stocking rate. Whether that rate is 750, as mentioned in the debate, 1,500 or—heaven forbid—20,000, at least the consumer will know what the stocking rates are because "free-range" is defined in legislation. This bill does not make things more onerous for the New South Wales industry; Government members' statements to that effect are misleading. The bill is commendable, especially as the Legislative Council included the Labor Party's safeguard amendments. The House should support the bill.

Mr JOHN WILLIAMS (Murray-Darling) [11.16 a.m.], by concurrence: It gives me great pleasure to speak in debate on the Truth in Labelling (Free-range Eggs) Bill 2011. Undoubtedly, everyone wants truth in labelling for the items they purchase. People want to know the source of their products, how they were created and their production processes. This is yet another bill introduced by The Greens that has evolved from navel gazing in an attempt at relevance. The Greens are trying to be relevant by appealing to a tiny niche in the community. What is Australian produce? The average consumer believes they are buying an item that was produced in this country when the words "Australian produce" are printed on that item. However, manufacturers can dilute the standard by buying the source product overseas and then calling it "Australian made" because the materials used in the end product were made predominantly in Australia.

Unfortunately, we have not got the regulations right. Agricultural producers must compete daily with imports that are concealed by the Australian brand. Consumers are becoming wiser and realising that the labelling is not always true. We must know the source of the product. Problems will arise with truth in labelling of eggs, for example. Most horticultural products on the domestic market are grown in China and imported to Australia. That poses a challenge. Somewhere down the line we will be importing eggs from China—if we are not doing so already. How can we control that product and that market? We can control only what is produced in Australia and the standards that apply to those products. The importation process raises complex issues as goods from overseas are not always produced to the same standards as apply in Australia. This could have long-term health implications for consumers.

It certainly creates problems for Australian farmers, who produce quality goods that comply with stringent standards. They must compete in the market against imported goods that have low production values and are not of the same standard as locally produced food consumed by Australians. With free-range eggs, substitution is easy. A manufacturer can produce cage eggs or free-range eggs and package the majority of them as free range. A consumer who buys an egg cannot differentiate between free-range and cage eggs. There is no difference in the size, shape or colour of the eggs. We are dreaming with this bill. We are not over the first hurdle yet.

We have to guarantee citrus producers in the Riverina that their competitors' juice has not come from Argentina or some other country looking to dump its products in Australia. The apple industry has been just about wiped out in Australia. It ceased to exist in Queensland because someone decided to import apples from China—even though we have no idea about the standard of their product. That problem has not been fixed and yet the bill seeks to go a step further. We cannot enforce the current regulations. The Greens have invented another idea to legitimatise themselves as a real party. They have come up with this bill and introduced it in the House without any knowledge of its likely consequences.

Mrs Barbara Perry: Oh!

Mr JOHN WILLIAMS: I do not know what the member for Auburn sees in all this namby-pamby stuff—and that is all it is. If this bill is passed she can go to the shop to buy free-range eggs and say, "We now have a set of standards for this product, and I am buying it." But the member for Auburn will have absolutely no idea what she is buying.

Mrs Barbara Perry: I want the truth about what I am buying.

Mr JOHN WILLIAMS: Absolutely—every consumer wants the truth. That is exactly my argument.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! The member for Murray-Darling will direct his remarks through the Chair.

Mr JOHN WILLIAMS: I was having a nice cross-Chamber debate with the member for Auburn, who likes to interject. Her interjections are very distracting.

Mrs Barbara Perry: Because they are right.

Mr JOHN WILLIAMS: They are not right. The member for Auburn needs a trip to the real world. Go west of the mountains and see farmers producing good-quality produce for the Australian market. But those farmers are getting pushed out by imported goods that are falsely marketed as being produced in Australia. We have not got those regulations right and The Greens want to confuse the process by introducing this crazy notion of cleaning up the egg industry. We have a long way to go. It will always be a problem when importers are able to import whatever they like and then brand it however they want. The object of this bill is a dream. I cannot see why the Government should support it.

Mr Jamie Parker: You are a dreamer; I can see it in your eyes.

Mr JOHN WILLIAMS: The member for Balmain is a frustrated National who dreams of getting out of the city. All his life he has lived in the concrete jungle. I reckon he would have his eggs hard boiled; I am sure he is a hard-boiled egg man. He is obviously very interested in eggs because they constitute a big part of his diet. The fact remains that this is a crazy bill that has been introduced by The Greens to make them look as though they are working for the people of New South Wales and of Australia. But the bill has many problems, the overriding problem being that we do not have truth in labelling for products that are regulated. I wish them luck, but the Government will not support it.

Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron) [11.26 p.m.], by concurrence: I support the Truth in Labelling (Free-range Eggs) Bill 2011. I acknowledge the important contribution to this debate by the member for Murray-Darling, who began by speaking considerable sense. He brought to the House's attention an issue that other participants in the debate have not considered—certainly in this House; I do not know about the other place. How does the State or the Commonwealth control the labelling of imported eggs, or any other product, and how will this legislation impact upon it? We can start from the premise that the community has lost confidence in the labelling process for free-range eggs. It matters not how many times the Government of the day, or the former Government, asserts that it has prosecuted offenders or that the food authority is a terrific organisation and all the regulations are enforced. The reality is that sections of the community have lacked confidence in the labelling of free-range eggs for some five or six years. A June 2008 article published in consumer watchdog magazine *Choice* states:

Do you pay extra for free-range eggs hoping the chooks that laid them have a better life? Or maybe there's a chance that they'll taste better or be more nutritious than cage eggs?

The cartons may have pictures of happy hens roaming in lush green paddocks but the reality of free-range eggs can be very different. The industry is dominated by three big producers (Novo, Pace Farm, Manning Valley) who account for well over half the free-range eggs sold in Australia.

Their "free-range" eggs are produced on a truly industrial scale and some come from flocks of up to 120,000 birds.

These hens may be housed in huge sheds, they may never find the door to go outside and their eggs come off conveyor belts.

Their verdict was:

If you're buying free-range eggs because you believe in animal welfare, the brands in the big supermarkets may not be meeting your expectations.

Barn-laid eggs (if they're certified by the RSPCA) meet humane standards or you could buy certified organic eggs (check the labels) or go to smaller local shops or markets to find eggs with independent free-range certification.

Nothing much has changed. The bill, which the Government opposes, does nothing more than establish a regime to enable the Government to enact regulations that set a particular standard. It does not say how many chooks should be in a barn or a paddock. In fact, it does not even define what a chook is. I did not know what a *Gallus gallus* was until I read the bill. Does anyone else know what a *Gallus gallus* is?

Mrs Leslie Williams: Is this a test?

Mr RON HOENIG: If you had read the bill, you would know what it is. The bill says, "fowl means a domesticated chicken or *Gallus gallus*." I did not know that, and no-one else has mentioned that definition. So people are contributing to this debate—with the exception of the member for Cronulla—when they have not even read this bill. If members read the bill then they will see that it does not do anything other than set up an opportunity for the Government to be empowered to set regulations for the labelling of free-range eggs. The Opposition asserted in the other place, and the member for Liverpool repeated it here, that we are looking for a national standard, including standards for the keeping of hens, the production of eggs, and the definition of cage, barn-laid and free-range eggs. As for the assertion made by the member for Murray-Darling, we do not have jurisdiction for eggs produced in another country but we can deal with our own producers in New South Wales.

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

BLACKTOWN HOSPITAL MATERNITY WARD

Dr ANDREW McDONALD (Macquarie Fields) [11.31 a.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) Condemns the comments of Mr Ted Sage following the unattended delivery of Kristy Jones' baby in the maternity ward at Blacktown Hospital to "look at the behaviour of the nursing staff who would rather sit around and do nothing".
- (2) Notes that NSW Health open disclosure guidelines state "open disclosure means that every patient receives an apology and appropriate information following an incident that may have happened during the delivery of their healthcare—whether or not harm was caused".
- (3) Calls on the Minister responsible for the delivery of health care in New South Wales Hospitals to apologise to Kristy Jones and Paula Bailey.

As Justice Garling said in his report, New South has one of the better health systems in the world. Some 100,000 committed staff work in the New South Wales health system. The staff at Blacktown and Nepean hospitals, which have two of the busiest maternity units in the State, deserve support and understanding at this difficult time. Their reputation within the healthcare system for high-quality care is well deserved. This motion is not about their professionalism or competence; it is about the impossible circumstances that they are expected to cope with on a daily basis that are caused by this Government and this Minister.

What is now known, but was not known publically when this motion was proposed, is that both hospitals were very short of midwives at the time of these near-misses. On 4 June Blacktown Hospital had 7.1 full-time equivalent vacancies for midwives, and Nepean had a staggering 21 full-time equivalent vacancies in its maternity unit. Today whoever is deputised to read out the speech of the ministerial staff will tell us how many more midwives they have employed. What we should be told is how many full-time equivalent staff are employed now; how many they need to meet the birth-rate plus standard, which is the formula used for maternity unit staffing; and how many of those midwives who have been employed, often from overseas, have actually started work at either hospital. As a stop-gap measure until the new midwives arrive, the hospitals have started to employ assistants in midwifery [AIMs] to pick up some low-level tasks that midwives do, such as cleaning and restocking.

Most patients—well over 80 per cent—are happy with their care in the New South Wales health system. About one in 10 patients in New South Wales hospitals have something go wrong during their hospital stay, sometimes with tragic results. When things go wrong, New South Wales has open disclosure guidelines for how to deal with these most distressing circumstances. If the New South Wales Health Open Disclosure Guidelines had been followed by this Minister, then Paula, Scott and Madison Bailey would have been offered an apology by the Minister soon after 5 February, and Kristy Jones would have been offered an apology soon after 19 February because page 5 of the guidelines state that both of these families should have been met within 24 hours of the identification of the incident and offered an apology.

Mrs Leslie Williams: Not by the Minister. That is not what it says.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD: I note the interjection by the member opposite, "Not by the Minister." The Minister is responsible for health care in New South Wales, and her modelling is vital to the delivery of health care for every person in New South Wales. The open disclosure guidelines state:

Open disclosure is defined as the ...process of providing an open, consistent approach to communicating with the patient and their support person following a patient-related incident. This includes expressing regret for what has happened, keeping the patient informed, and providing feedback on investigations, including the steps taken to prevent a similar incident occurring in the future. It is also about providing any information arising from the incident or its investigation relevant to changing systems of care in order to improve patient safety.

The key principles are openness and timeliness of communication, acknowledgement of error, expression of regret, recognition of the reasonable expectations of patients and their support person, support for health staff and confidentiality. Open disclosure means that every patient receives an apology and appropriate information following an incident that may have happened during the delivery of their health care whether or not harm was caused.

Mrs Leslie Williams: But not from the Minister

Dr ANDREW McDONALD: The Minister responsible for the delivery of health care in New South Wales should have apologised. If those opposite say that it is not the job of the Minister to apologise when things go wrong then that needs to be put on the public record. I expect the member opposite to place on *Hansard* that the Minister does not apologise for things that go wrong in the healthcare system that she is responsible for. Everybody in the State needs to know that it is apparently not the responsibility of the Minister to apologise to patients when things go wrong.

Mrs Leslie Williams: No, I said that that is not what is in the open disclosure statement.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD: If those opposite believe that then they need to say so. I first called for this apology to be given by the Minister to Kristy Jones on 21 February. Had the Minister followed her own guidelines then she would have offered this apology. To date, no apology has been received. The attitude to blame the staff for failing to do the impossible rather than looking at the O'Farrell Government's responsibility to deliver safe health care is the problem here. The Minister does not even appear to know her own open disclosure guidelines. As the *Daily Telegraph* said:

Mrs Bailey said she was struggling to cope and that she was made to feel ashamed and embarrassed by the ordeal. The couple contacted State Minister for Health, Jillian Skinner, whose office told them to call the hospital's head of public affairs. They have lodged an official complaint with the hospital but said they had been "brushed aside".

The Minister had an opportunity to take control of this situation and make the apology that is required by her own open disclosure guidelines. How can it happen that in a few short weeks we had two remarkably similar cases of mothers being sent home in labour only to have precipitate deliveries well away from the safe birthing environment of a modern delivery suite?

Near-misses happen when staffing levels are inadequate, and tragedy is inevitable when near-misses are ignored. The families concerned required an apology, explanation and a commitment to do something about this. But what have we got? We have got a refusal to apologise, a refusal to explain and no commitment to come clean about what was happening in Blacktown and Nepean maternity units when these near-misses occurred. The people of New South Wales have a right to know what is going on with the healthcare system. At the moment everything done in the health system is treated as a state secret and the people who suffer most are the patients in our healthcare system.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! I inform the House that the titling system for the broadcast of proceedings is currently not working. The problem is being addressed and hopefully will be rectified shortly.

Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Hawkesbury—Parliamentary Secretary) [11.37 a.m.]: Unfortunately, the motion before the House is a smutty attempt to smear health industry workers and has been put forward by a person who probably should know better. Rather than delve into smutty, gutter politics as the motion seeks to do, the Government will amend the motion. I move that the motion be amended by leaving out all words after "That" with a view to inserting instead:

this House:

- (1) Commends the nursing staff at the maternity ward at Blacktown Hospital for their valued service to the people of the region.
- (2) Notes NSW Health disclosure guidelines.
- (3) Supports the Government's critical investment in hospitals, including funding of \$324 million for Blacktown-Mount Druitt Hospital.
- (4) Supports the Government's achievement of employing 4,000 additional nurses since March 2011 and acknowledges the efforts of all health employees in New South Wales.

An old saying that the students in the gallery should take heed of is that people who live in glass houses should not throw stones. It means that if a person has done some bad things in the past they need to be careful when they point the finger of blame at others. The mover of this motion did not heed that warning. The member has said that 80 per cent of people are satisfied with our health system—I think the percentage is a little bit higher than that under this Government. He also said that only a small percentage of people are upset with the help they receive in our hospitals. But let me inform the House of the case of a person who was upset with the help he received back in 2009 when the mover of this motion was the Parliamentary Secretary for Health.

Sundermurthi Naidoo is a constituent of mine at Rouse Hill. I will call him Suren Naidoo, because he goes by that name. He came to see me on 22 December 2009 after suffering some dizzy spells and headaches. Prior to visiting me he had gone to his doctor, who had instructed him to immediately seek an MRI scan at Westmead Hospital. During the scan, Suren suffered the symptoms of a stroke—apparently that can sometimes happen during an MRI scan. There is no question that during the episode Suren received impeccable health treatment at Westmead Hospital. However, some days later when Suren was discharged from the hospital the person issuing the discharge report failed to give him the results of the MRI scan that he had originally gone to the hospital for.

He came to see me about a week after this incident and said that he had been instructed to issue a freedom of information request seeking his health information from the hospital. He issued the freedom of information request and, on 22 December, I wrote to former Minister for Health Carmel Tebbutt. I asked her to provide information as to why Suren had not received all of his documentation from the hospital. To her credit, Minister Tebbutt wrote back. Indeed, the response I received five months later, in April, was sent on her behalf by the mover of this motion, the member for Macquarie Fields, in his capacity as the Parliamentary Secretary for Health.

At the time I sent the letter to the Minister I told Suren not to hang by the throat waiting to get a response from the Labor Government. I told him that he should undertake to get another scan because if there was something wrong with him his life could be in danger while he waited. Those turned out to be famous last words. When Suren received the MRI results, and a host of other documentation from Westmead Hospital, it was revealed that he had a four millimetre aneurysm in his brain. One does not need to be a medical professional to know the dangers of an aneurysm. As I said, after five months I received a response from the Parliamentary Secretary, which said that the results of Mr Naidoo's MRI scan were normal, excluding the stroke-like symptoms he experienced while he was there. The letter was signed, "Dr Andrew McDonald, FRACP, Parliamentary Secretary for Health", and I have a copy of that letter for the information of members. The member for Macquarie Fields signed that letter in his capacity, I suppose, as a medical professional.

One week after I received that letter, Suren had to have the top of his skull removed so that doctors could operate on his aneurysm, which by this time had grown so large that it could not be addressed through a minor procedure. I also have a photo of the top of Suren Naidoo's head after his operation for the information of members. That photograph shows what my constituent had to put up with because of the failures of the health system under our predecessors and the response that came back on behalf of the then Minister for Health by the then Parliamentary Secretary for Health, with his credentials as a medical professional. He did not say, "I am advised". He said, "... results of Mr Naidoo's MRI scan were normal." They were anything but normal: they were abnormal. As the photograph shows, this person had to have the top of his head stitched and stapled back on after a life-threatening operation he was forced to undergo because of the procedural failings of the people involved at the time. Now the former Parliamentary Secretary for Health has moved a motion asking us to apologise. He does not have the decency to apologise to Suren Naidoo. [*Time expired.*]

Mr RICHARD AMERY (Mount Druitt) [11.44 a.m.]: I support the motion moved by the member for Macquarie Fields as it is listed on the *Business Paper*. The first part of the motion calls on the House to condemn the comments of Mr Ted Sage following the unattended delivery of Christie Jones's baby in the maternity ward at Blacktown Hospital to "look at the behaviour of the nursing staff who would rather sit around and do nothing". The amendment moved by the member for Hawkesbury seeks to strike that from the motion. Should we say something about that? The Government wants to strike it from the record, but I believe that point in the motion moved by the member for Macquarie Fields should be particularly endorsed.

The Government will put its own words into this motion and leave out the deplorable comment made by a person in relation to the nursing staff. In fact, the amendment by the Government that "commend" the nursing staff at the maternity ward at Blacktown Hospital seems to be in contradiction to the word "condemns"

in the motion by the member for Macquarie Fields. Those words of Mr Ted Sage are as insensitive as they are inaccurate. The Government's amended motion talks about what a valuable service nurses provide to the region, so why will it not condemn the comment contained in the first paragraph of the original motion?

The maternity ward at Blacktown Hospital is associated with the hospital in my electorate of Mount Druitt. Blacktown-Mount Druitt Hospital is regarded as one hospital with two campuses, and is referred to in the third point of the Government's amendment to the motion. I am a great supporter of Blacktown Hospital and the maternity ward. Both of my children and three of my four grandchildren were born in that ward. The motion by the member for Macquarie Fields also calls for appropriate apologies to be made to Christie Jones and Paula Bailey. I feel sorry for the nursing, medical and administrative staff at Blacktown Hospital in general, including the maternity ward, because of the pressure they are under.

It is one of the busiest hospitals. Things have been made even more difficult for the operators of that very busy hospital by the way the Government is managing both Blacktown and Mount Druitt hospitals at the moment. All hospitals are busy and at peak times nurses in particular are run off their feet. However, Blacktown Hospital could be much better. Why? Because while the nurses and doctors are being run off their feet, working long hours and under stress at Blacktown Hospital, Mount Druitt Hospital is half empty. When you walk through Westmead Hospital, where I was recently, Liverpool Hospital, where I was in the last couple of weeks, or Mount Druitt Hospital, where I go regularly to visit local constituents, you see a contrast with Blacktown Hospital.

Westmead and Liverpool hospitals are extremely busy and at Blacktown hospital they are run off their feet while Mount Druitt hospital is half empty—you could fire a shot down the hall and no-one would be hurt. What is happening with all of this? Will this continue? A motion is to be debated next week in relation to a petition about the closure of the cardiac ward at Mount Druitt. More patients will be bussed into Blacktown from Mount Druitt as a result of that closure. Blacktown Hospital will get busier, nurses will be under more pressure and doctors will be under more stress as Mount Druitt's workload gets lighter and lighter. The Minister will not apologise to these people. It is not my role but I certainly apologise. I feel sorry for those young people who were somewhat defamed by these comments. I support the motion.

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie) [11.48 a.m.]: I also welcome the student leaders from the North Coast. I particularly welcome those from Port Macquarie High School and Westport High School. A number of them attended my leaders lunch early in the year and it is great that they have had the opportunity to come to Parliament House. I am pleased to support the amendment of the member for Hawkesbury to commend the nursing staff of the maternity ward at Blacktown Hospital for their valued service to the people of the region. Most members know that before entering Parliament I worked as a nurse, so I commend the work of the nurses. I note that the shadow Minister for Health is nodding his head in acknowledgement. He and I well know that they do an amazing job, often under very trying and demanding circumstances. I congratulate them. No doubt that part of the amendment will be supported by both sides of the House. The second part of the amendment is to note the NSW Health disclosure guidelines. The NSW Health website states:

Open disclosure is a frank discussion with a patient and their support person about a patient-related incident that may have resulted in harm or injury to the patient.

The New South Wales Government wants to ensure that if an incident occurs, patients receive an apology and explanation and are treated with empathy, honesty and transparency in a timely manner.

The disclosure statement recognises that staff also need to be supported while they are working in our health system. The third part of the amendment is about the Government's critical investment in hospitals. In my local area that is exactly what we are seeing. At Blacktown-Mount Druitt Hospital there is to be an upgrade and rebuild to the tune of \$324 million. I understand that early works are already underway and the bulk of the excavation is now going on. The upgrade includes \$22 million for Blacktown car park alone, where main works have commenced and there will be more than 600 car spaces upon completion. There will be 170 additional beds, additional intensive care high-dependency beds and additional outpatient clinics and so on.

I place on record that I, the Minister and the New South Wales Government know that there is nothing more important than improving patient care in our hospitals. It is one of our highest priorities. I understand that as a former nurse, as does the Health Minister, the Hon. Jillian Skinner, and that is exactly what we are doing in metropolitan and regional hospitals right across this State. The Government has recognised the need to improve patient care by employing 4,000 extra nurses. I challenge anyone on the other side of the House to tell me that that is not a good thing for patient care. We have recruited 900 more doctors, as well as more paramedics.

A record 924 medical interns have been employed across this State, many of them in regional areas. We are investing nearly \$5 billion in rebuilding our hospitals, including the substantial spend at Blacktown Hospital. I support the amendment to this motion.

Mr KEVIN CONOLLY (Riverstone) [11.52 a.m.]: In the motion we see a deplorable attempt by a member to besmirch a member of the public whom this House has no business criticising. It is a below-the-belt move to attack family members of members of Parliament. Earlier this year, when a family member of the member for Heffron was "outed" by people on Facebook, the member for Heffron made a passionate case why family members should be left out of these sorts of grubby, tawdry little motions. He noted that family members of members of Parliament do not sign up for this sort of treatment. He said:

Members of Parliament know that when they seek public office they will be subject to criticism in the popular press and from other avenues, including their political opponents. Being criticised is part of our job ... This place can be tough, but attacks on our families have always been out of bounds.

That is exactly what the member for Macquarie Fields has stooped to on this occasion. He has done so in the most deplorable way because the story of Health in Western Sydney is entirely different from the story he has tried to tell.

Indeed, what has happened in Western Sydney in the Health portfolio under this Government is a good news story. We made an election commitment to employ 2,475 extra nurses over four years. We have exceeded that target; we have performed even better than that. We were told by the then Government that the numbers we were proposing would not be possible to deliver. We have over-delivered. That is a good thing for the patients of New South Wales—a good thing for the patients of Western Sydney hospitals. They now have more nurses working in the system than the previous Government ever provided. In 2013 we employed over 2,000 new graduate nurses and midwives—more than any other State. At the end of May this year more than 4,000 extra nurses, by headcount—which is 2,700 full-time equivalent—had commenced since the election.

There were 600 more nurses by headcount, or 360 full-time equivalent, across the Western Sydney, South Western Sydney and Nepean Blue Mountains local health districts. Forty additional clinical nurse educators and clinical nurse specialists have been employed for small to medium rural facilities in addition to the 275 positions committed to by the New South Wales Government. There were 35 additional senior nurses to provide a consistent level of in-charge support in New South Wales' busiest emergency departments and 60 new clinical support officers to relieve nurses from non-clinical duties. This Government has been delivering front-line services for the people of New South Wales, and in particular for the people of the region we are discussing today, Western Sydney.

In terms of hospital facilities, the Blacktown-Mount Druitt expansion project, which not only has been committed to but also has commenced, will provide 170 additional beds. It will provide additional intensive care high dependency beds, additional outpatient clinics, a new in-centre renal dialysis unit, a new comprehensive cancer centre, additional dental chairs, additional cardiac catheterisation capability and establishment of a nuclear medicine service at the Blacktown campus. That type of support could not have been dreamed of under the previous Government. The former member for Blacktown, Paul Gibson—one of Labor's own—went berserk trying to get something done at Blacktown Hospital, and it never happened under the previous Government. Under the O'Farrell Government, the people of Western Sydney, in particular those in the Blacktown-Mount Druitt Hospital area, finally are getting the quality of service they deserve. This Government is to be commended for its efforts in relation to health in New South Wales.

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE (Wagga Wagga) [11.56 a.m.]: I state for the record my disdain at the actions of the member for Macquarie Fields, who moved the motion. As stated by the member who preceded me in this debate, the member for Riverstone, a member attacking the family members of another member in this House is terribly unparliamentary and marks a new low to which the Labor Party has stooped. The member for Macquarie Fields is well respected in this Parliament and he is well respected in his community, but I have never previously seen such a low reached that a member would attack a new member of Parliament, especially when there are so many other things that can be spoken about that are good news for this State.

Funds have been invested in Blacktown Hospital to the tune of \$300-odd million. That funding was long sought after by the former member for Blacktown, Paul Gibson, who was a good member—a member who spoke his mind in this place, a member who was well respected, who had a good reputation and who fought hard. The Labor Government did nothing. Right across this State, communities were crying out for investment in hospitals. Mr Deputy-Speaker, you were urging investment in a hospital for Lismore. In Wagga Wagga, we

campaigned for 30 years for a new hospital, and the Coalition Government is delivering a brand-new hospital worth \$400 million. This Government put \$300 million on the table and the hospital is being built. In Wagga Wagga, Dubbo, Parkes, Forbes, Lismore, Port Macquarie, Campbelltown and Blacktown, new hospitals are being built. Since the election, the Government has employed 4,000 nurses. Yet, sadly, the member for Macquarie Fields raises an issue that relates to a member and attempts to trash their reputation. His attack represents a new low in debate.

This morning I heard the shadow Minister speaking on the radio about an important health issue, and the commentator said how well respected the member for Macquarie Fields is. I assure the House that Government members will not stoop to the type of low reached in this House today. His comments mark a new low. I urge members to vote in favour of the amendment that has been moved because this Government supports nurses, doctors and hardworking physicians, and administrators who work in our health system. Since this Government was elected, it has invested funding that had been long sought after and long campaigned for by Liberal-Nationals members, and finally it has been delivered. Mr Deputy-Speaker, you worked to get radiotherapy services in Lismore and to get a hospital in Lismore. When I first took my seat in this House some 14 years ago, the member for Dubbo at that stage was promised a new hospital by the former Labor Government, but it was never delivered.

The people of my electorate of Wagga Wagga were promised a new hospital. The students in the gallery are from Wagga Wagga. They remember a new hospital being promised, and absolutely nothing happened under the former administration of which the shadow Minister was a member. The member for Macquarie Fields has visited Wagga Wagga hospital in his professional medical capacity. He is a well-respected member of the medical profession and of course he knows a lot of doctors and physicians in Wagga Wagga who respect him. But once the word gets around of his low attack in this Parliament, sadly he will have to work very hard to rebuild his reputation.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD (Macquarie Fields) [11.59 a.m.], in reply: I listened with interest to the comments of all members who contributed to the debate. I note that not one of the Government members mentioned the names Christie Jones and Paula Bailey, the mothers who, unattended, had their babies away from medical care. Fortunately, they did well. This motion is all about the care of Christie Jones and Paula Bailey. The Minister for Health has not entered the Chamber to defend the nurses. The answer to health care is how this Government is aiming to deliver health care—with spin rather than transparency. There is \$3 billion worth of budget cuts to the State's health care system. The labour expense cap is \$775 million. There has been \$2.2 billion worth of so-called efficiency savings, and no transparency.

Mr Kevin Conolly: Where did those extra nurses come from?

Dr ANDREW McDONALD: The 4,000 extra nurses, or the 2,700 full-time equivalent nurses, are the result of an award signed by the previous Labor Government to apply ratios in various wards. This Government is refusing to extend those ratios. As the member for Port Macquarie said, nothing is more important than improving patient care. The way to improve patient care is to listen to the nurses.

Mrs Leslie Williams: It is to have more nurses on the wards.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD: The member for Port Macquarie is right. All she needs to do is listen to the nurses and extend the nursing ratios to the areas that the Nurses and Midwives' Association is asking for—the emergency departments, the rural wards and wards in some hospitals such as the children's ward. When things go wrong, families deserve an apology, an explanation and a commitment that the incident will not be repeated. Near misses, such as occurred to Paula Bailey and Kristy Jones, are what happen when there is insufficient staff. The Minister for Health promised transparency when she was in opposition, yet the most basic knowledge of local health services such as midwife staffing levels is treated by her Government as a State secret. This is information that the people of Western Sydney have a right to and deserve to know.

When it comes to the subject of building hospitals, the Labor Government built every hospital in Western Sydney. Whitlam built Westmead. We built Mount Druitt, Nepean and Blacktown hospitals. If Government members wish, I could read out a list of all the hospitals built by Labor: Royal North Shore Hospital at a cost of \$1 billion, the Children's Hospital at Westmead, and Royal Prince Alfred Hospital. Every hospital in the State had a significant upgrade under Labor. Today the Minister has had the opportunity in this House to provide the explanation and apology that should have been given to the Bailey and Jones families. The words of Government members in *Hansard* from this debate should be read by every person in New South

Wales because the names Kristy Jones and Paula Bailey did not get a mention, yet their near-miss experience is what this motion was about and this was what we needed to talk about in relation to Health. Instead what we got was not a response to the apology, the explanation and the commitment that the families require. I commend the motion to the House.

Question—That the amendment be agreed to—put.

The House divided.

Ayes, 59

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

Noes, 19

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

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Amendment agreed to.

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

Motion as amended agreed to.

KIAMA DOWNS SURF LIFE SAVING CLUB

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

That this House:

- (1) Acknowledges the role that the surf lifesaving movement plays in coastal communities.
- (2) Thanks the Kiama Downs Surf Life Saving Club for establishing a crisis accommodation centre on Sunday 24 February 2013 during the severe weather events in Kiama.

The events of early Sunday morning 24 February 2013 will live with me forever. At around 3.00 a.m. a mini tornado hit the Kiama community. The storm did not seem to last long, but its damage left a distinct impression.

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

Mr GARETH WARD: I headed into Kiama and was struck by the intensity and focus of this unusual weather event. As I surveyed the damage with Mayor Brian Petschler, it quickly became clear that this was no ordinary wind storm. Normally, the Kiama Leisure Centre is the home for crisis accommodation in Kiama, but because its roof was scattered across the community we were to proceed to the Ex Servicemen's Club. However, the power supply being out in the Kiama community, the Kiama Downs Surf Life Saving Club hosted the homeless. Previously, I have mentioned the roles of other emergency services, such as the State Emergency Service, the Rural Fire Service, police and particularly Kiama Council for doing a wonderful job in the aftermath of this storm, but it is appropriate on this occasion that I acknowledge the role of Kiama Downs Surf Life Saving Club.

Every time I went to the Kiama State Emergency Service command centre I saw a representative from surf lifesaving—volunteers lending a hand in any way. We are used to surf lifesavers playing their role in the water, but this time they played whatever role they could, and I thank them for doing so. The primary role of the surf lifesaving movement is to save lives on our beaches. Our 129 surf lifesaving clubs and more than 75,000 members in New South Wales make it one of the largest volunteer movements in Australia. Surf Life Saving NSW is a not-for-profit organisation that relies on community generosity, including donations, fundraising, and corporate and council sponsorship. Surf Life Saving is an inclusive and uniquely Australian movement that offers particularly young people, and older Australians, the opportunity to make a difference, make friends and maybe save a life.

My electorate has a number of surf lifesaving clubs, including at Shellharbour, Nowra-Culburra, Shoalhaven Heads, Gerringong, Kiama and Kiama Downs. These clubs are all part of an important movement that plays a vital role in coastal beach culture. I have a deep level of respect for this iconic Australian organisation and its role in training young people in water skills and in saving lives. Undoubtedly, surf lifesaving is written into Australia's history. From its fledgling beginnings as various Sydney lifesaving clubs and brigades in the 1870s, surf lifesaving now has more than 160,000 members in more than 300 clubs around Australia. The origins of Surf Life Saving NSW, and indeed Australia, can be traced back to the actions of Mr William Gocher at Manly Beach in September 1902 when he defied the law of the time by bathing during prohibited hours—in the daytime. His actions and those of others forced the recognition of daylight bathing, and the pastime of surfing became part of our national culture.

As surf bathing grew in popularity, its dangers just as rapidly became apparent. Small groups of experienced and regular surfers began to form lifesaving bodies to assist those who required rescuing from an unfamiliar environment. As these clubs grew in size and number, the need for a united front to raise funds and seek assistance from local and State governments resulted in the New South Wales Surf Bathing Association being formed on 18 October 1907. However, surf lifesaving had to broaden its charter beyond the realms of water safety. As Australia identified and actively promoted its beaches and coastline as one of its most valuable assets to domestic and international tourists, the modern day surf lifesaver had to develop into a public relations officer, a resource for beachgoer information, an ambassador promoting our beach culture and a custodian of our seaside playgrounds and their safety. To keep our beaches safe, surf lifesavers patrol beaches from September to April. Each year surf lifesavers spend in excess of 500,000 voluntary hours patrolling most of the accessible beaches along the New South Wales coastline.

Since recording began in 1949, Surf Life Saving NSW has saved more than 345,000 lives. This organisation makes an invaluable contribution to the community by providing safe and enjoyable destinations for all beach visitors. Thanks to the dedication and professionalism of its fine volunteers, New South Wales beaches are amongst the safest in the world. Hence, Surf Life Saving's motto, "vigilance and service", has not changed since its inception in 1907 and is as relevant today as it was when the association was formed. Recently, I was able to provide a contribution on behalf of the Government to Kiama Downs Surf Life Saving Club. I acknowledge Peter and Margaret Raisin, who put together *Evolution of an Icon—100 Years of Surf Life Saving in NSW*. This book, which is proudly displayed in my office, chronicles the changing nature of surf lifesaving not just in the Kiama community, but generally. It contains some great excerpts from minutes, articles from local newspapers and contributions from members past and present.

I commend the extraordinary work invested by Peter and Margaret and, indeed, Margaret's patience in storing many files at their home for such a long period. This book will allow the club to build on future generations and preserve its history for years to come. I was delighted also to be able to provide a grant to the Kiama Downs Surf Life Saving Club for a new lift. This will assist in making this club more accessible and able to raise greater revenues for its work in surf lifesaving. I thank Minister Graham Annesley for providing that money and for his assistance. I am proud of the contribution of surf lifesavers when my community faced a

difficult and tragic historical event in the February storms, the likes of which I have never seen. I hope we never see them again, but I am pleased to know that in the event of a crisis or need or when humanity and communities need assistance, the surf lifesaving movement is ever vigilant.

Mr ROB STOKES (Pittwater—Parliamentary Secretary) [12.27 p.m.]: I support the motion of the Kiama Blow Hole, the member for Kiama, the Jamberoo Jester, the Illawarra Illuminato, who works so hard to support his community. I am pleased to support his motion as it acknowledges the role of surf lifesaving in coastal communities. Surf Life Saving clearly is the pre-eminent organisation in my Pittwater community with 11 surf clubs, each of which has approximately 1,000 people—a considerable number of people in each beach community incorporating the vast majority of my electorate. The local surf club is one important centre of those communities. It provides a vital rescue service protecting resident beachgoers as well as the many visitors to Pittwater's beaches. It also is an important venue for social interaction for the hundreds of thousands of nippers who congregate on our beaches each Sunday morning and, increasingly, on Saturday afternoons.

Surf lifesaving clubs also are recognised as registered training organisations within the vocational education sector. Certificate II in Public Safety (Aquatic Rescue), more commonly known as the bronze medallion, and some more advanced awards for many young Australians are rites of passage to learn the mechanics of rescue, the basics of cardiopulmonary resuscitation [CPR] and the use of basic beach equipment, such as rescue tubes and boards. Of course, an element of competition characterises the surf lifesaving movement across New South Wales and Australia. A lot of the rescue equipment is used not just for the purposes of training but also in competitions. The surf boats that were the principal pieces of rescue equipment 50 years ago are now used more in exciting competitions.

Like the member for Kiama, I too recognise the vital work of Surf Life Saving New South Wales and the important role played by the clubs in my local community. The member for Kiama also noted the importance of the surf lifesaving movement. It is emblematic of Australia's nationhood. The surf lifesaver personifies the Australian character, with elements of professionalism, iconic humour and a larrikin streak. That lives on in today's surf lifesavers. The surf lifesaving community is imbued with compassion and free spirit and the desire to serve those in need. Recently I attended a commemoration service at Palm Beach in my community of Pittwater. A wonderful but solemn ceremony was held on the beach where the local surf club community gathered to remember the life and contribution of Lieutenant-Colonel Douglas Marks, who received a Military Cross for his service in World War I. He lost a lung during that service. One day he was picnicking on the sandhills at Palm Beach when he saw a young girl in distress and, without a moment's thought for his own safety, dashed into the surf to save her. Tragically, both of them drowned. The fact that he survived the horrors of World War I to then give his life selflessly in the surf at Palm Beach personifies the spirit underlying the surf lifesaving movement.

In an extraordinary quirk of history on that day a young boy by the name of Adrian Curlewis watched the tragedy unfold in the breakers off Palm Beach. He later became Judge Adrian Curlewis, who was one of the leading lights of the modern-day surf lifesaving movement. Seeing that tragedy unfold before his eyes had a dramatic impact on him, and he spent a huge proportion of his life in service to surf lifesaving and, fundamentally therefore, to the beachgoers and other people of New South Wales. I commend the member for Kiama for supporting his local surf clubs. I recognise that members on both sides of this Chamber are active supporters of their local surf clubs, and in fact help patrol the beaches in their electorates. On behalf of all members in this place, I extend my very best wishes to the surf lifesavers as they soon begin the next season of patrolling our beaches. I wish them luck as they fulfil their motto of vigilance and service.

Ms NOREEN HAY (Wollongong) [12.33 p.m.]: I congratulate the member for Kiama on his recognition of Kiama Surf Life Saving Club. It is no surprise to me—and it would not surprise anybody else—that surf lifesavers from clubs throughout the Illawarra and the South Coast, including Kiama, step up to the plate and help whenever there is an emergency. The club provided crisis accommodation following the recent storms on the coast. We applaud that service; it is happening more and more in times of crisis. The members of surf lifesaving clubs take an interest in and support their community. Port Kembla Surf Life Saving Club and North Wollongong Surf Life Saving Club have many times gone beyond what is expected of them to provide assistance and support to the community. I join the member for Kiama and other members in this place to acknowledge the fantastic and dedicated volunteer work of surf lifesaving clubs in New South Wales of which our community is the beneficiary.

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) [12.35 p.m.], in reply: I thank the member for Pittwater—who is a surf patroller—and the member for Wollongong for their contributions to this important debate. Parliament does

spend time—but not nearly enough—acknowledging the efforts of volunteers across the State. I am sure that all members, particularly those who live in coastal communities, will agree that our surf lifesaving clubs make a particularly outstanding contribution. I hope that governments continue to fund those clubs so their members can focus on saving lives, not selling raffle tickets.

Many members attend awards ceremonies for the surf lifesaving clubs in their electorates. Recently, the Acting-Speaker and I attended the Surf Life Saving Illawarra awards. I was delighted to sit next to Val Zanotto, the new group president, and to discuss with him some of the issues affecting surf lifesaving in the Illawarra. I acknowledge Stephen Jones, the president of South Coast Surf Life Saving. He does a fantastic job advocating for the surf lifesaving community on the South Coast, which includes my electorate of Kiama. The *raison d'être* of today's motion is the contribution of surf lifesaving during the Kiama storms. In particular, I thank Josh Douglas, the Kiama Downs Surf Life Saving Club captain, who was exceptionally inspirational during this time.

Those members who saw on the news the devastation that the storms caused in Kiama will realise the enormous community effort involved. The State Emergency Service, Rural Fire Service, the police and councils are making huge contributions to get our community back on its feet. Although it is not within the traditional territory of the surf lifesaving movement, I was impressed when the clubs came to the fore. Members of the surf lifesaving movement attended every briefing session with Commander Wayne Starling at the Kiama State Emergency Service and they played a huge part in the recovery effort. As summer approaches, I look forward to seeing our surf lifesavers on our beaches. I look forward to seeing the volunteer effort involved in training the nippers. Lifesavers make a huge contribution to water sports safety. I acknowledge the training and investment that supports important qualifications such as the bronze medallion.

To those members who have the great fortune to represent coastal communities, I thank you for your support. Regardless of which side of the House we occupy, all members are united in their support for surf lifesaving—an iconic and emblematic cause. I thank Josh Douglas of the Kiama Downs Surf Lifesaving Club and all lifesaving clubs for their assistance during this difficult time. Like so many volunteers, surf lifesavers wear numerous different hats and many in my community are involved in other volunteer pursuits. They should be commended for that involvement, for being active citizens and for being interested in the welfare of others, particularly on our beaches, which are so important to our culture. I thank members for listening and for participating in the debate. I thank the surf lifesaving movement for its contribution, and I commend the motion to the House.

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

Motion agreed to.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Postponement of Business

Private Members' Business item No. 2516 in the Order of Precedence postponed on motion by Ms Noreen Hay.

WOLLONGONG CITIZEN OF THE YEAR MARTY HAYNES

Ms NOREEN HAY (Wollongong) [12.40 p.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) Congratulates i98FM radio presenter Marty Haynes on recently being awarded Citizen of the Year for Wollongong.
- (2) Acknowledges Marty as a champion of the hugely successful and popular annual Camp Quality Convoy for Kids, helping to raise almost \$3.2 million in the Illawarra.
- (3) Notes Marty's outstanding contribution to the community over many years and wishes him well in all his future endeavours.

Radio presenter Marty Haynes was named Wollongong Citizen of the Year for 2013 as part of the Australia Day honours. He has entertained Wollongong i98FM listeners on his breakfast show for more than a decade. To many people around the town, he is known simply as "Marty". He is often seen at charity events performing the duties of master of ceremonies. The ceremony for the presentation of this award was held at North Wollongong

beach on Australia Day. Marty is always promoting young people and the community. He was named Citizen of the Year for his tireless fundraising efforts and his contribution to our city. It is right that, as the member for Wollongong, I have the opportunity today to recognise him and to speak about him. For a radio presenter he is quite a shy individual when it comes to talking about his personal contribution. I am not suggesting for one minute that he is shy when he is on the radio or participating in the community, but certainly he is reluctant to receive praise.

Marty is a champion of the annual Camp Quality Convoy for Kids. He has helped raise almost \$3.2 million in the Illawarra, which is a fantastic achievement. This is a convoy of trucks and motorbikes. My husband is a keen motorbike rider, and he and I have both joined the convoy. Before anyone asks, no, I am not on the motorbike; I have joined the convoy in a truck on occasions. We are so proud of this event. To begin with it was fairly small but it is now a huge convoy of trucks and motorbikes. The convoy finishes with a day-long celebration in a local park. Everybody gathers for this event, including children and families, and it is a wonderful example of what a community can achieve together. Marty started this truck and motorbike convoy for kids in 2005, when it raised \$20,000. The convoy has gotten bigger and better over the years, with last year's event raising \$1,340,921 for Camp Quality. The Camp Quality Convoy for Kids in the Illawarra is the biggest in Australia. Last year the event attracted 748 trucks and 893 motorbikes. I know that my husband will be very proud of the fact that the motorbikes outnumber the trucks. Some of those trucks bid significant amounts of money to be the lead truck and those funds are added to the coffers of Camp Quality. It is a magnificent achievement.

This year the i98FM Camp Quality Convoy for Kids will be held on Sunday 17 November, and I encourage motorbike or truck enthusiasts to participate. I am sure the event will be even bigger than last year's as it is getting a lot of public and media attention. The convoy includes not only big trucks from the professional trucking industry but also small trucks, utes and commercial vehicles used by small businesses and workmen. The event brings together men, women and children—enthusiasts across the board. On behalf of my community, I place on record my gratitude to Marty Haynes. He is a very deserving winner of the Wollongong Citizen of the Year award for 2013. Hopefully Marty will continue the success he has achieved to date. I am sure that he will receive further awards and accolades for his great dedication to and involvement in charity work.

Mr LEE EVANS (Heathcote) [12.46 p.m.]: I congratulate the member for Wollongong on moving this motion. I am pleased to recognise radio presenter Martin Haynes for his contribution to the Illawarra community, and I support the motion acknowledging his outstanding efforts. I arrived in the office early this morning and did some research on Mr Haynes. He was educated at a Marist Brothers school, which is interesting, and started his career as a cameraman at Channel 9. He later moved to Wollongong, where he became a cameraman for WIN Television and later became an on-air radio announcer. Mr Haynes was recognised by Wollongong City Council as the 2013 Wollongong Citizen of the Year for his fundraising efforts and his contribution to the city. Many high-profile people in the media choose just to do their job from nine to five and then clock off and go home. It is a credit to Mr Haynes that he has decided to do more for the community, and raising money for children is one of the greatest things anybody can do—especially children who suffer from illnesses. Since the launch of the Wollongong Camp Quality Convoy for Kids in 2004, Mr Haynes has helped raise almost \$3.2 million for kids with cancer. Last year alone, Mr Haynes used the platform of i98FM radio to inspire more than 756 trucks and 700 motorbikes to take part in the convoy.

I often hear people ask: What difference can one person make? Everybody can make a difference in their community. Mr Haynes has obviously made a huge difference in his community. I was once told a story about a father and his child walking along the beach and discovering some starfish. The child picked up one starfish and threw it back into the water. The father asked the child, "What difference does it make to throw one starfish back into the sea?" The child answered, "It makes a lot of difference to the starfish." That is the sort of sentiment that I think inspires Mr Haynes and it is why he helps the community, particularly people who are less fortunate or who have fallen on hard times. I am inspired to recognise not only Mr Haynes but also Wollongong City Council and Shellharbour City Council for their contributions to this worthy cause. In just a few years the convoy has become a major event in the Illawarra, as the member for Wollongong said. It sounds to me like momentum is building for an even bigger event this year. I again congratulate the member for Wollongong on bringing this matter to the attention of the House, and I support the motion.

Ms NOREEN HAY (Wollongong) [12.49 p.m.], in reply: I thank the member for Heathcote for joining me to congratulate Marty Haynes and wish him well. I also thank him for recognising the support that Wollongong and Shellharbour councils gave to this worthwhile project. As I said earlier, I hope that there is much more from Marty in the future. I encourage him to keep up the good work.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Gareth Ward): I also congratulate Marty Haynes. He is a great bloke, a fantastic radio presenter and a terrific citizen of the city of Wollongong.

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

Motion agreed to.

ST GEORGE HOSPITAL EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) [12.50 p.m.]: I move:

That this House congratulates the Government for promising, funding and now building a new emergency department located at St George Hospital.

This is a great win for our local community after 16 long, hard years of inaction at St George Hospital under the former Labor Government. During that time no new buildings were constructed. I have had the honour of visiting St George Hospital with the Premier and the Minister for Health on a number of occasions both when I was a candidate and now as a member of Parliament. In opposition we promised to build a new emergency department and now we are delivering. We have funded the project and we are building it.

For those who know the area, we will move the emergency department from its current site at Kensington Street around the corner to Gray Street. This will increase the capacity of the department and improve facilities for patients by providing up-to-date systems and models of care. The project has a capital budget of \$39 million and is funded by the Government. After 16 years of inaction and broken promises by the Labor Government, we are getting on with the job of building a brand-new emergency department at St George Hospital. When I walk the streets in my electorate people tell me that they are thankful that Premier Barry O'Farrell and Jillian the Builder are getting on with the job of building the new emergency department. For so long people have waited for capital works to proceed at St George Hospital, and we are fulfilling our commitment and delivering them. Construction has already started. Earlier this year, I was on site to turn the first sod with the member for Rockdale, Minister for Health Jillian Skinner and Premier Bob—

Mr Nathan Rees: Those were the days.

Mr MARK COURE: Bob Carr should have delivered it but he did not. Of course I meant to say Premier Barry O'Farrell. The member for Kiama was not there, but he wishes he was. The new emergency department will be completed by the end of next year or early the following year. The new facility will have double the capacity of the old facility. There will be a number of ambulance drop-off zones, expanded waiting and triage areas, satellite imaging, a new emergency medical unit, an acute hall with 34 beds and an adult fast-track zone. There will also be 12 treatment spaces, five resuscitation bays and, more importantly, the potential of up to six additional floors for future projects. We are planning and building for the future—unlike the previous Government. The previous Government did not build for the future, undertook no forward planning and was not forward thinking.

The new emergency department will also provide enhanced models of care, improve relationships with other functions, and make improvements to the front entrance of the hospital. As I mentioned, the department has been relocated from Kensington Street to Gray Street, and construction is already underway. I was recently on site with the Minister for Health and the member for Rockdale to see the progress. I acknowledge the staff of the hospital, whom I have met a number of times. In conjunction with the Department of Health, they have put this extensive plan together. We promised this emergency department, we have funded it and now we are delivering it. It is great to see a brand-new emergency department at St George Hospital after 16 years of inaction by the previous Government. The member for Kiama said to me, "Our track record on St George Hospital is fantastic, isn't it?" That is demonstrated by several media releases from over the years that I have with me. One from Nick Greiner mentions the \$53.5-million clinic and one from Ron Phillips says that stage four of the \$200 million upgrade of St George Hospital has been completed. Our track record on St George Hospital is 10 out of 10—unlike the previous Government.

Mr Daryl Maguire: What did they do?

Mr Gareth Ward: Nothing.

Mr MARK COURE: That's right. They did nothing. The only thing they wanted to do was rename St George Hospital and have it taken over by St Vincent's. That would have meant a loss of beds and jobs. That is the track record of members opposite.

Mr Gareth Ward: Cuts.

Mr MARK COURE: Exactly right. A Coalition Government is the only government that can be trusted to deliver a new emergency department for St George Hospital. Members opposite failed the people of St George. For 14 years the member for Kogarah failed the residents of Kogarah and the St George community.

Ms CHERIE BURTON (Kogarah) [12.57 p.m.]: I put on record that during its 16 years the Labor Government upgraded 220 hospitals.

Mr Mark Coure: Except for one—St George Hospital.

Ms CHERIE BURTON: We have listened to the member for Oatley cite his Joe Hockey rubbery figures. He has a selective memory. There are buildings at St George Hospital that were built by the Labor Government but because members opposite have not been there for such a long time they have never seen them.

Mr Mark Coure: Name them.

Ms CHERIE BURTON: The psychiatric unit, the medical research centre, the acute unit and the medical emergency unit at St George were all built under a Labor Government. North Shore Hospital was also completely rebuilt and a further 220 hospitals were upgraded. Let us remind ourselves of the Greiner days, when more than 20 hospitals across New South Wales were downgraded or closed.

Mr Mark Coure: Point of order—

Ms CHERIE BURTON: I did not take a point of order on you. Sit down, you fraud. You are a fraud.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! What is the member's point of order?

Mr Mark Coure: Is the member for Kogarah going to sit down?

Ms CHERIE BURTON: Just state your point of order; you are not in the chair.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! The member for Kogarah will resume her seat.

Mr Mark Coure: I ask you to direct the member for Kogarah to speak to the motion. The motion is about St George Hospital, about the Government delivering on its commitment—

Ms CHERIE BURTON: There is no point of order; he is just taking my time.

Mr Gareth Ward: To the point of order: I ask the member for Kogarah to withdraw the word "fraud". I could use many words to describe the member for Oatley but I do not think "fraud" would be one of them.

Ms CHERIE BURTON: I am just getting into it. I made that comment because while the member for Oatley stands on the other side of the Chamber saying that he is a champion for St George Hospital—who voted against not making St George Hospital a priority? The member for Oatley and the member for Rockdale did. Who has hidden from the Staff Medical Council code red campaign—

Mr Mark Coure: To the point of order—

Ms CHERIE BURTON: —and refused to support an upgrade of the wards that are urgently needed in that hospital? The member for Oatley and the member for Rockdale did. The two of them sat silently and just toed the political line.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! The member for Kogarah will resume her seat.

Mr Mark Coure: This is absolutely extraordinary. I ask you to remind the member for Kogarah that this debate is about St George Hospital, nothing else, and the fact that this Government delivered a new emergency department—

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! There is no point of order. Members will allow the member for Kogarah to complete her remarks.

Ms CHERIE BURTON: They try to gag all debate—all democracy—in this Chamber. It is all about getting up and giving themselves a rap without telling the people of New South Wales the facts. The facts are these. The hospital has been campaigning and so has the Medical Staff Council. I have received almost 10,000 petitions from people who are demanding an upgrade of St George Hospital—

Mr Mark Coure: And what did you do in 16 years?

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! The member for Kogarah and the member for Oatley will resume their seats. If the member for Kogarah does not resume her seat she will be removed from the Chamber.

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

LEGISLATION REVIEW COMMITTEE

Report: Legislation Review Digest No. 39/55

Debate resumed from 15 August 2013.

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) [1.00 p.m.]: I update the House on the comments made by the Legislation Review Committee in the "Legislation Review Digest No. 39/55" tabled on 18 June 2013. This digest considered seven bills introduced in Parliament in the sitting week commencing 28 May 2013. Of those seven bills, the committee made no comment on three: the Local Government Amendment (Conduct of Elections) Bill 2013, the Local Land Services Bill 2013 and the State Revenue Legislation Amendment Bill 2013. I now turn to the bills on which the committee provided comment, including the Aboriginal Land Rights Amendment Bill 2013, in which a minor point was raised about a potential lack of clarity in the regulation-making power of the bill. Given that the concern was relatively minor, the committee made no further comment on this point other than to highlight it.

The committee made comments on the Heavy Vehicle (Adoption of National Law) Bill 2013. This bill is uniform legislation, facilitated through the Council of Australian Governments, which has the agreement and cooperation of all the States. The bill provides that the Heavy Vehicle National Law, as periodically amended, set out in the schedule to the Queensland Act is to apply as a law within the jurisdiction of New South Wales and will apply as if it were an Act of New South Wales. The committee noted that the effect of this bill will be to remove from the New South Wales Parliament the ability to scrutinise any subsequent bills to amend the Heavy Vehicle National Law.

However, the committee also recognised that the nature of cooperative federalism and the design of model legislation will often require that one jurisdiction take the lead on model legislation, with other jurisdictions providing reference to the model legislation. The committee raised a number of other points on this bill, including the increase in maximum penalties for heavy-vehicle-related offences, the denial of the mistake of fact defence for persons charged with an offence in relation to the prevention and causation of driving while fatigued, and the denial of the right against self-incrimination in criminal proceedings brought under the national law. Given the overall safety objectives of this legislation, the committee made no further comment on these issues.

The committee noted in the Protection of the Environment Operations Amendment (Illegal Waste Disposal) Bill 2013—in which the Minister for the Environment and Minister for Heritage, who is sitting at the table, will be vitally interested, as the author of that legislation—that the maximum penalties for offences by repeat waste offenders include a monetary penalty of up to \$250,000 for individuals or imprisonment for two years, or both, and that this offence is a strict liability offence. The committee considered that a term of imprisonment is a significant penalty for committing a strict liability offence, and therefore referred the issue to Parliament for further consideration. The committee does not make any determination in relation to the legislation; it merely highlights facts for the Parliament to consider, and that is what was done on this occasion.

The Public Health Amendment (Vaccination of Children Attending Child Care Facilities) Bill 2013 provides for restrictions on the enrolment of children at childcare facilities unless vaccination evidence is

provided—with a couple of strictly defined exemptions, including an exemption due to a medical contraindication. The committee noted that providing evidence of a medical contraindication may involve the forcible disclosure of a child's sensitive medical information and, as such, may constitute an interference with the child's privacy. The committee also considered that the restriction on enrolling an unvaccinated child in a childcare facility may deny that child's right to education. On both these issues, the committee considered that the overall public health objectives of the legislation, including the health interests of the unvaccinated child, outweigh concerns about privacy and right to education.

The committee considered the Privacy and Personal Information Protection Amendment (CCTV) Regulation 2013. The object of the regulation is to exempt local councils from provisions of the Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998 relating to the collection of personal information by using a closed-circuit television [CCTV] camera installed for the purpose of filming in a public place, and the disclosure to the NSW Police Force of that information by way of a live transmission. While the regulation gives local councils some privacy exemptions when using closed-circuit television, councils will still have to comply with the remaining information protection principles of the Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998 which provides some privacy safeguards for individuals. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

Nevertheless, because the proposed amendments could impact on an individual's right to privacy, the committee referred this issue to Parliament for further consideration. This digest, like others before it and those to come after it, provides a valuable reference tool for members. I thank the staff for their contribution and the work they do in preparing this digest.

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

Report noted.

LEGISLATION REVIEW COMMITTEE

Report: Legislation Review Digest No. 40/55

Report: Legislation Review Digest No. 41/55

Motion by Mr Stephen Bromhead agreed to:

That in accordance with Standing Order 306 (7) the reports of the Legislation Review Committee, being Orders of the Day (Committee Reports) Nos 2 and 5, be considered together.

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) [1.09 p.m.]: I update the House on the comments made by the Legislation Review Committee in its two most recent digests, which were tabled on 13 August 2013 and 20 August 2013. These are the fortieth and forty-first digests prepared by the Legislation Review Committee of the Fifty-fifth Parliament. In relation to the fortieth digest, the committee considered eight bills including the three budget bills. These bills, together with the Road Transport Amendment (License Disqualification on Conviction) Bill 2013 did not present issues of significant concern.

In relation to the Police Legislation (Special Constables) Bill 2013, the committee discussed the increase in penalties imposed on individuals convicted of assaulting special constables, although in the circumstances did not consider the increase in penalties to be disproportionate to the offences. However, the committee had further regard to the provisions in the bill that may infringe on the right to silence and the right against self-incrimination with respect to the prohibition on refusing or failing to answer questions asked by an inspector under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979.

In relation to the Ports Assets (Authorised Transactions) Amendment Bill 2013, the committee considered whether there had been an inappropriate delegation of legislative powers by allowing certain functions to be placed in regulations rather than the enabling legislation. On a similar note, the committee considered whether modifications to the regulation-making power in the Security Industry Amendment (Licenses) Bill 2013, which would remove the requirement for Commissioner of Police guidelines to be tabled in Parliament, would also remove the guidelines from parliamentary scrutiny given that those regulations would no longer be subject to disallowance. The possible inappropriate delegation of legislative power, together with possible removal of subordinate legislation from parliamentary scrutiny, formed the basis of much discussion in the fortieth digest.

I now turn to the forty-first digest, in which there were three bills for consideration, of which only one warranted committee comment: Entertainment Industry Bill 2013. In particular, clause 29 of the bill will allow the Secretary of the Treasury to keep a register of offences committed against the Act or regulations, including such information as the name of the offender, address and a description of the nature and circumstances of their offence. Orders under section 10 of the Crimes (Sentencing Procedure) Act 1999 also will be included in the register. I mention that ordinarily the effect of section 10 of the Crimes (Sentencing Procedure) Act 1999 is that the offence is proven, but the magistrate or justice does not proceed to conviction but orders either that the charge be dismissed or, alternatively, that a penalty such as a good behaviour bond apply. When one has a section 10 order on one's record, it is maintained on the criminal record simply to ensure that a magistrate or judge does not give that person another section 10 order.

When employers or others seek a copy of that person's record, the reference to a section 10 order—or its predecessor section 556A of the Crimes Act—is removed from the record and is not made public. In this particular bill, the order will remain on the public record. The reason for that is that when an entertainer is considering the engagement of an agent and discovers that a particular agent has received a section 10 order and has a record of not paying their performers, the entertainer may think twice about engaging that agent. The quandary of protection of privacy afforded by section 10 versus public interest was discussed by the committee.

Clause 30 of the bill provides that the register will be made available for public inspection on the Treasury website. The committee notes that section 10 of the Crimes (Sentencing Procedure) Act 1999 deals with circumstances in which a person is found guilty of an offence but the court decides not to proceed with the conviction. Section 8 (2) of the Criminal Records Act 1991 provides that a finding that a person is guilty of an offence without proceeding to a conviction becomes a spent conviction immediately after that finding is made. This has the effect of limiting the circumstances in which the conviction can be disclosed in the future.

The committee noted its concern that including orders under section 10 of the Crimes (Sentencing Procedure) Act 1999 as part of the public register of offences against the proposed Act and regulations is contrary to the intent of the spent convictions scheme, which is to limit the circumstances in which those kinds of offences can be made publicly available and accessible. The committee considered whether this provision would undermine the integrity of the spent convictions scheme and, as such, referred this matter to Parliament for its further consideration. I thank the committee staff for their efforts involved in preparation of the reports, especially considering there was a short turnaround time. I commend the digests to the House.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) [1.15 p.m.]: Before contributing to the discussion of Legislation Review Digest Nos 40 and 41 of the Fifty-fifth Parliament, I take this opportunity to acknowledge my fellow committee members: the chairman and member for Myall Lakes, the member for Parramatta, the member for Rockdale, the member for Swansea, and our colleagues from the Legislative Council, Mr David Shoebridge, the Hon. Shaoquett Moselmane and the Hon. Dr Peter Phelps. I also take this opportunity to commend the hardworking committee staff. Given that we are in the second week of a three-week back-to-back sitting, I have no doubt that has placed tremendous pressure on the staff to complete the digests. Probably the most significant bill reviewed by the committee and discussed in digest No. 40 is the Port Assets (Authorised Transactions) Amendment Bill 2013. Ironically, that bill was reviewed six weeks after it was rammed through the Parliament, which of course defeats the whole purpose of the Legislation Review Committee, whose objectives are to review bills prior to their being debated in this House. The committee raised concerns that the bill trespasses on personal rights and liberties, in particular in the denial of compensation. The digest states:

The Committee notes the Principal Act excludes compensation rights, which may impact on the rights and liberties of individuals. The amendment Bill extends the Principal Act to a new port, Port of Newcastle.

It is disappointing when the committee is not afforded the opportunity to review legislation before it is brought to the House, but this is just another example of the Government's contempt for the people of New South Wales.

This week three bills were reviewed by the committee. While no comment was made about the Hunters Hill Congregational Church Property Trust Bill 2013 or the Totalizator Amendment (Exclusivity) Bill 2013, the committee commented on the Entertainment Industry Bill 2013, which seeks to repeal and replace the 1989 Act and implement recommendations from the report of the review by the Better Regulation Office and NSW Industrial Relations of the Entertainment Industry Act. I understand that a number of individuals and stakeholders were consulted in the review. The recommendation was that licensing be removed, if strong protections were in place for performers. The committee raised concerns that the bill would trespass on personal rights and liberties in relation to spent convictions. The digest states:

The Committee is concerned that including orders under section 10 of the Crimes (Sentencing Procedure) Act 1999 as part of the public register of offences against the proposed Act and Regulations is contrary to the intent of the spent convictions scheme, which is to limit the circumstances in which these kinds of offences will be disclosed in the future.

I also note that Labor has supported the bill in principle in the Legislative Assembly. As occurred in debate on the library bill, and given the lack of legislation for debate in Parliament this week, a whole host of Coalition members contributed to debate on the Entertainment Industry Bill. I again thank staff for preparing both digests, and wish them luck with their preparation of next week's digest for the third week of the sittings. I commend the reports to the House.

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

Reports noted.

COMMITTEE ON COMMUNITY SERVICES

Report: Outsourcing Community Service Delivery—Interim Report

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

Mr KEVIN CONOLLY (Riverstone) [1.20 p.m.]: On behalf of the chair, Mr Kevin Anderson, I am pleased to put before the House the interim report of the Community Services Committee. The chair will address Parliament on the matter next week. The committee inquired into the transfer and outsourcing of housing, disability and home care services from government to non-government agencies. It is a matter that has proceeded for some time without a consistent framework across government agencies. The committee received 83 submissions from service providers, clients, government agencies and other interested parties and held four days of hearings, taking evidence from 57 witnesses. We also did a number of on-site inspections in inner Sydney, Western Sydney and in places such as Mount Druitt and Parklea. The committee travelled to Narrabri and Walgett where a site visit enabled us to see the services operating in remote locations in New South Wales.

The committee examined a range of issues, including the development of appropriate models to monitor and regulate service providers; better systems to meet the needs of clients and to ensure service quality for clients; remote and regional service access; capability frameworks and capacity building for local providers, including the use of technology to enhance service provision; and incentives for philanthropy. This is a broad and challenging area to come to grips with. There are so many models of service with a multiplicity of service providers. Many service providers are small organisations which are struggling to cope with the burdens of accountability. A proper process needs to be set in place in the expenditure of public funds. However, committee members are conscious of the fact that we do not want to place an undue burden on what are, in many cases, not-for-profit groups or volunteer groups providing services with a genuinely good motivation, for the people of New South Wales. It is challenging to deal with a wide range of providers, large and small, and from inner city to remote rural locations. The services which they provide vary widely in the scope of the needs they are addressing from needs relating to extreme physical disability or multiple disabilities at one end of the spectrum to less severe at the other.

The huge range of services makes a single policy response difficult to identify. The committee has attempted to identify a number of principles which assist the activities of this sector while allowing it to be accountable and transparent in its dealings. The committee wants to ensure that Government policy can be verified in terms of its outcomes for our vulnerable citizens. The interim report tables a number of recommendations. One recommendation simplifies the way in which applications are made by potential service providers for contracts or tenders. It will assist providers in their relationship and communications with government when seeking the funding that will allow them to continue their worthwhile activities. That has been described in the interim report as a gateway process so that there is a single point of contact for all the multiplicity of providers to talk to government, to make a proposal and to have that proposal assessed in a standardised and simplified way wherever possible, so that government objectives on behalf of the community can be met, without making the process too burdensome for providers. I commend the interim report on Outsourcing Community Service Delivery to the House.

Mr TONY ISSA (Granville) [1.24 p.m.]: I am pleased to speak on the interim report of the Community Service Committee. After extensive briefing, the committee resolved to conduct an inquiry into outsourcing community service delivery. I would like to thank everyone involved in this inquiry: The Chairperson, the member for Tamworth; the Deputy Chair, the member for Riverstone; the member for Auburn; the member for Shellharbour; and the staff who played an important role in facilitating a range of meetings, inspections and interviews. The inquiry was advertised in the *Sydney Morning Herald* on 10 January 2012 and called for submissions from government organisations, non-government organisations and individuals.

Eighty-three submissions were received from a wide cross-section of the community. The hearing took place with meetings and inspections. I was pleased to see members of the committee take the time and effort to attend the inspections, especially when they were held in rural areas. I was not able to attend but I am pleased that other members of the committee were able to.

I also take the opportunity to thank all members of the service providers who attended the inquiry, provided us with a briefing and answered our questions. Their assistance has led us to the recommendations in the report. The report contains six recommendations and I encourage everyone to read it. It addresses the background of the inquiry and also the outsourcing arrangement which highlighted funding diversity, the contracting arrangement, the application process, the contract period and the complaint mechanism, and other issues such as contract design and the code of conduct. The report contains six recommendations which were reached after detailed inquiries and questions which were answered by private providers and asked by the committee members. It was a privilege for me to be able to contribute to the process, together with my colleagues, and attend the briefing, inquiry and inspection. I commend the report to the House.

Debate adjourned on motion by Mr Jonathan O'Dea and set down as an order of the day for a future day.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE

Report: Quadrennial Review of the Audit Office 2013

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

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson) [1.28 p.m.]: As Chair of the Public Accounts Committee I speak on the report on the Quadrennial Review of the Audit Office 2013. The Public Finance and Audit Act 1983 details the legal basis for the accounting and audit arrangements for the New South Wales public sector. Under section 48A(1) of the Act, the Public Accounts Committee is obliged to appoint a reviewer to conduct a review of the Auditor-General and his or her office at least once every four years. Members of this House may recall that we changed that requirement in the last year from once every three years. The review is to examine the auditing practices and standards of the Auditor-General and to determine whether the Auditor-General is complying with those practices and standards in the carrying out of the Auditor-General's functions under the Act. The previous independent review was conducted in 2009 and published by the Public Accounts Committee on 3 August 2009. In line with the requirements of the Act, the review was conducted by a person appointed by the Public Accounts Committee and, following a competitive tender, the firm of Grant Thornton, Chartered Accountants, was appointed on the terms and conditions agreed with the Public Accounts Committee.

In summary, there are two points I will highlight in relation to the report. Firstly, the evidence that was gathered indicated that the Audit Office had demonstrated that the Auditor-General had in place methodology and tools that did, effectively and efficiently, deal with its core business and ensure compliance with the appropriate standards. Secondly, various observations and recommendations were made with the object of further strengthening and improving the effectiveness and efficiency of the Audit Office's methodology. Grant Thornton also looked at the recommendations in the 2009 review. In summary, Grant Thornton noted that significant progress had been made on those recommendations; in particular, 16 of the findings had been fully addressed, three had been partially addressed and two were no longer applicable. The Public Accounts Committee had done a review follow-up of the 2009 report previously. One matter that was partly addressed related to publishing a rolling three-year plan of performance.

On a previous occasion the Public Accounts Committee had indicated that a three-year program was not necessary. Grant Thornton agreed that it was not necessary. Indeed, it made a recommendation relating to publishing an intended program. It noted that the Audit Office commits a significant amount of time and effort in its annual strategic audit planning process, and it encouraged the Audit Office to publish a rolling annual audit work program, which would be revisited during the year as an alternative to the publication of a three-year plan for performance and compliance audits. That is relevant to members of this place who follow the Audit Office program. I hope that in the future we will see a clear program on a rolling 12-month basis. I will touch on a number of specific recommendations that relate to different areas. First, the financial audit recommendations related to the use of computer-assisted audit techniques, the completeness of audit documentation, assessing the need for additional quality reviews and, finally, documenting work done by management experts.

The recommendations relating to performance audits included feeding outcomes of Public Accounts Committee follow-ups back to the audit planning process, ensuring that appropriate time is allocated for the

Auditor-General to review and have input into final reports, reviewing practice notes, ensuring internal policies and procedures are followed, improving the effective use of checklists, consolidating checklists, having a mandatory audit schedule, seeking additional funding potentially from the Australasian Council of Auditors-General for the support role the Audit Office plays, providing staff with a breakdown of the training budget, and implementing a new audit methodology platform for performance audits.

A couple of recommendations particularly relevant to Treasury related to the Audit Office and Treasury working together to ensure that the appropriate budget is maintained, and to including compliance audits in the Act. Finally, Grant Thornton recommended that the Public Accounts Committee maintain a register of performance audit reports, and emphasised the importance of seeking evidence about implementing recommendations. I was pleased to see the report completed satisfactorily. I commend the Audit Office for its ongoing good work. I thank Grant Thornton for all its work in relation to the report.

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

Report noted.

[Acting-Speaker (Mr Lee Evans) left the chair at 1.33 p.m. The House resumed at 2.15 p.m.]

REPRESENTATION OF MINISTERS ABSENT DURING QUESTIONS

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I inform the House that in the absence of the Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Healthy Lifestyles, and Minister for Western New South Wales from the Chamber today:

- (1) The Deputy Premier, Minister for Trade and Investment, and Minister for Regional Infrastructure and Services will answer questions today in relation to Western New South Wales.
- (2) The Minister for Health, and Minister for Medical Research will answer questions today in relation to Mental Health and Healthy Lifestyles.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Notices of Motions

Private Members' Business Notices of Motions (for Bills) given.

QUESTION TIME

[Question time commenced at 2.19 p.m.]

DEPARTMENT OF FAMILY AND COMMUNITY SERVICES CASEWORKER VACANCIES

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: My question is directed to the Minister for Family and Community Services.

The SPEAKER: Order! I would like to hear the question. The member for Baulkham Hills will come to order.

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: On 28 February the Minister told this House that caseworker numbers had increased on her watch. Given that her department then informed her on 4 and 6 March that her statements to the Parliament were incorrect, and that the number of caseworkers had fallen, why did the Minister fail to correct the record as required under the Westminster parliamentary convention?

Ms PRU GOWARD: Finally, the right question. I welcome this question from the Opposition. It is a good opportunity to talk about the facts. I know that for Labor that is going to be very inconvenient. The first inconvenient fact is 12,259—the number of face-to-face assessments that were completed for reports of children at risk of significant harm in 2010 when Labor left office.

Dr Andrew McDonald: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister has just commenced her answer, but I will hear the point of order.

Dr Andrew McDonald: I agree that it is early, but the Minister clearly has no intention of answering the question about her letter of 28 February.

The SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. The Minister is being relevant to the question asked. The member for Macquarie Fields should not try my patience. The Minister will be heard in silence.

Ms PRU GOWARD: That was an inconvenient fact provided by the Ombudsman. What is the percentage under this Government? It is 16,409—better than one in four, 27 per cent and for the first nine months to March this year—

Ms Linda Burney: You are in trouble and you know it.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Canterbury will be in trouble shortly.

Ms PRU GOWARD: —in western New South Wales and northern New South Wales it is more like one in three. That is 4,150 more face-to-face assessments completed. These are huge improvements on the legacy, but we have much further to go.

[Interruption]

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will come to order.

Ms PRU GOWARD: Another inconvenient fact is 497—the number of vacant caseworker positions under Labor in 2010. That is not me saying it; that is again the Auditor-General in his report. The inconvenient facts keep coming: 2,182—

[Interruption]

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

Ms PRU GOWARD: —is the number that my department advised me was the headcount of caseworkers in March this year.

The SPEAKER: Order! Opposition members will cease interjecting. The Minister will be heard in silence.

Ms PRU GOWARD: Further, 184 is the number of caseworkers my department advises me—

Mr John Robertson: Point of order: My point of order is under Standing Order 129, relevance.

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

Mr John Robertson: The question did not relate—

The SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition does not need to repeat the question. The Minister is being relevant to the question asked and she will be heard in silence.

Ms PRU GOWARD: As I was saying, 184 is the number of caseworkers my department advises me have been recruited since I gave the instruction in March. Sixty-four are already on the job. Now I mention an inconvenient fact about our northern New South Wales region. The Opposition will certainly not want to hear about it because it calls its credibility into account when it leaks information and lies. That is the number 20.

Ms Linda Burney: Point of order: My point of order is under Standing Order 129, relevance. It is about the Minister's credibility—

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister is being relevant to the question asked. There is no point of order. The member for Canterbury will resume her seat.

Ms Linda Burney: She is just not answering the question.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Canterbury will resume her seat.

Ms Linda Burney: The member for Goulburn is a disgrace.

Ms PRU GOWARD: There were 2,182 caseworkers—

Ms Linda Burney: Absolute disgrace.

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

Ms PRU GOWARD: Twenty is the number of full-time equivalent caseworkers that my department advises me are in the Ballina office, for example. They are funded for—

The SPEAKER: Order! The level of interjections is astonishing. The Minister should be heard in silence. Opposition members will cease interjecting and behave in a parliamentary manner. The Minister has the call.

Ms PRU GOWARD: The Ballina office is funded for 16 and, as at 30 June, it was over its funded allocation by four. Not only that, but they were doing—

Ms Linda Burney: There are eight people there now.

Ms PRU GOWARD: I would have thought that the members opposite would like to hear about the number of children who have been seen.

The SPEAKER: Order! Opposition members who continue to interject will be removed from the Chamber.

Ms PRU GOWARD: They are doing a much improved job. Our northern region caseworkers are completing 29.7 per cent of face-to-face reports. I remind the House that in 2010, under Labor, it was 21 per cent. [*Time expired.*]

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will cease arguing across the Chamber.

HUNTER CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE SPECIAL COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

Mr GARRY EDWARDS: My question is directed to the Premier. How is the Government addressing concerns about child sexual abuse allegations in the Hunter?

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I thank the member for Swansea for his question and his interest in what is obviously, by any measure, a serious matter—a matter that, regrettably, through a previous member for Swansea, even touched this Chamber. We never want to see those issues that revolved around Milton Orkopoulos repeated.

[*Interruption*]

Labor members interject. They have to live with the fact that two of their number were aware of the allegations and they did not take them to police. That is the sort of attitude we need to stamp out across our society—people turning a blind eye because they think their friend cannot possibly be guilty of these sorts of crimes. If people hear these rumours and are made aware of them they need to go to the police and the appropriate authorities.

Ms Linda Burney: Don't look too hard on your side.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: Did the member for Canterbury know? Was she one of the two members who were told about Milton Orkopoulos? Was the member for Canterbury told?

Ms Carmel Tebbutt: Point of order: The Premier was asked a question about a very serious matter.

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

Ms Carmel Tebbutt: The Premier is not answering the question he was asked. He is, instead, persisting in his attacks on members on this side of the House.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Premier was responding to a rather unsavoury interjection from the member for Canterbury. He is entitled to do so. There is no point of order.

Ms Carmel Tebbutt: The standing orders make it clear that members should not respond to interjections.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: The only thing worse than child sexual abuse is those who do nothing about it when they are made aware of it. On 21 November last year I announced the terms of reference for a New South Wales special commission of inquiry into matters relating to police investigations of certain child sexual abuse allegations in the Catholic Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle. Margaret Cunneen, SC, was commissioned to conduct the inquiry. She is one of the State's most respected Crown prosecutors. Everyone would agree that she has done an excellent job to date in the way in which she has conducted the special commission of inquiry.

The inquiry is investigating, firstly, the circumstances in which Detective Chief Inspector Peter Fox was asked to cease investigating certain child sexual abuse allegations involving Father Denis McAlinden and Father James Fletcher and, secondly, whether officials of the Catholic Church assisted or hindered police investigations into those allegations. Everyone is clear that extensive work has been undertaken by the inquiry. Public hearings have been held in the Newcastle Supreme Court from May to August of this year. I am advised that the inquiry has conducted more than 100 private hearings and has issued more than 100 summonses to produce documents to various parties. After the hearings, the commission has a responsibility to examine thousands of pages of transcripts, documents and other evidence it has gathered during its investigations and those hearings.

Margaret Cunneen was due to report her findings by 5 April this year. In response to a request from the commissioner earlier this year, the Government agreed to extend the reporting date to 30 September. While we all want the commission to report as soon as possible on these matters so that, hopefully, we can learn the lessons, we should all agree that it is more important that the relevant matters are properly and thoroughly investigated. No-one wants any shortcuts to be taken when it comes to inquiries involving matters as serious as these. Earlier this week, in response to a further request from Commissioner Cunneen, I agreed to recommend to Her Excellency the Governor that the commission's report be presented on 28 February 2014. This extension will ensure that the special commission of inquiry has sufficient time to review the significant quantity of evidence it has now obtained and to prepare its report on its investigations and those inquiries.

I advise the House that the New South Wales Government is working cooperatively with the national Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse established by the former Prime Minister on 11 January. The special commission of inquiry has made arrangements for referring matters to and sharing information it has received with the national royal commission. I have instructed all government departments to fully cooperate with the national royal commission. I encourage anyone with relevant information to contact the national royal commission so that their evidence can be considered during its work. The Government is monitoring the proceedings with interest and will consider the findings and recommendations when they are released. The Government is committed to protecting children from sexual abuse; to providing services to victims of such abuse; and to ensuring that anyone who is made aware of child sexual abuse allegations does the appropriate thing, the right thing, and takes the matter to the police.

DEPARTMENT OF FAMILY AND COMMUNITY SERVICES CASEWORKER VACANCIES

Mr MICHAEL DALEY: My question is directed to the Minister for Family and Community Services. On February 28 this year the Minister answered a question in this House about the number of caseworkers. The following week, in a letter dated 4 March 2013, the Minister's department wrote to her and advised that caseworker numbers had fallen. The Minister responded to that letter on 7 March saying that it was her intention to advise the Parliament of this new information. Why did the Minister not return to the House and correct her earlier statement when she knew it was incorrect?

The SPEAKER: Order! Before the Minister begins her answer, I warn members that lengthy questions are not permitted. The question was far too long. I refer members to the precedents governing the length of questions. I call the member for Keira to order. If the member continues to behave in an unparliamentary manner he will be removed from the Chamber. Questions should be simple, to the point and brief. The question was not, but I will allow it on this occasion.

Ms PRU GOWARD: My department advised me in March that the headcount number was 2,182. But I formed the view that the data being supplied was not reliable because headcount numbers are not reliable. As my letter from March to the then director general states:

For well over twelve months, the Department has failed to respond effectively to the repeated and exasperated investigation and instruction of me and my office for quality, consistent reporting of caseworker data.

That is why in March I instructed the director general to fill all budgeted caseworker positions. That is why in that letter I instructed that all budgeted caseworker positions would be filled. That is why I instructed the department to publish online information about frontline community services and non-government organisation caseworkers, including their measurement. That is what I expected then and that is what I expect now.

WESTERN DIVISION FARMERS SUPPORT INITIATIVES

Mr JOHN WILLIAMS: My question is addressed to the Deputy Premier, Minister for Trade and Investment, and Minister for Regional Infrastructure and Services. How is the Government supporting farmers in western New South Wales?

Mr ANDREW STONER: I thank the member for Murray-Darling for his question. As he and other members on this side of the House at least understand all too well, our farmers operate under the constant threat of drought, bushfires, floods and international price shifts—all of which can leave them in a position of severe financial uncertainty. Even worse, they are often besieged by The Greens masquerading as friends of the farmer, despite their many anti-rural and anti-regional policies. But I digress.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will come to order.

Mr ANDREW STONER: While we can never fully insulate farmers from all of those risks, particularly the financial ones, we can provide them with a degree of financial security by allowing them to access new revenue streams. That is why I am pleased to announce that leaseholders in the Western Division of New South Wales will now have the opportunity to apply for carbon-farming offsets from the Commonwealth. Those opposite may not know that the Western Lands Division makes up 42 per cent of the land area of New South Wales and the vast majority of this—around 31 million hectares—is under perpetual leasehold.

Over the past year we have received a number of inquiries from Western Lands Division leaseholders about carbon sequestration proposals. But until recently the risks and opportunities were uncertain. I can now confirm that Western Lands Division leaseholders exclusively hold the rights to carbon sequestration on their land. This means that leaseholders are not disadvantaged compared to freehold landowners in other parts of the State. They can submit applications to the Commonwealth Clean Energy Regulator under the Carbon Farming Initiative. By applying for carbon offsets, farmers in far western New South Wales will now have the opportunity to access new sources of revenue, and this will remain the case regardless of which party wins the Federal election on 7 September.

Another fact that is probably news to those opposite is that lessees in the Western Division benefit from the wild dog fence, which is our answer to the Great Wall of China. This fence extends for 600 kilometres along the New South Wales border between Queensland and South Australia. This fence protects both pastoral and native animals from wild dogs, including dingoes.

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

Mr ANDREW STONER: Those opposite find all of this funny. It just reflects the fact that they are just a rump of a party confined to the city these days. The Western Lands Commissioner, the Wild Dog Destruction Board and their staff are tasked with ensuring that that fence remains in a dog-proof condition. Heavy rain in New South Wales and Queensland in late 2009 and early 2010 resulted in large sections of the dog fence being inundated by slow-moving overland floodwater. Further rains in 2012 have left 38 kilometres of the fence submerged for three years. Works to replace these sections have commenced.

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

Mr ANDREW STONER: We have another loud and inane interjection from the Leader of the Opposition. He is living proof of the old saying that empty vessels make the most noise.

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

Mr ANDREW STONER: I will not do him over, because we like having the Leader of the Opposition exactly where he is—in the position that Eddie Obeid paved the way for him to take. We do not need to do too much to keep him there because he is keeping himself there. In fact, the recent submission to the Electoral Boundaries Commissioner put in by that work experience kid—or is he now a senator—effectively gets rid of the member for Toongabbie. We know that the Leader of the Opposition is behind that particular piece of work. So we can only imagine what he has planned for the mediocre member for Maroubra, the minder of middle managers. [*Extension of time granted.*]

I digress. However, I return now to the wild dog fence. We should enjoy having the member for Toongabbie here while we have him—he will not be here for long. In 2012 the floods left 38 kilometres of the fence submerged. Work to replace these sections has commenced and the first 23 kilometres will be completed within the next four weeks. Despite sections of the fence needing replacement, it has remained dog proof due to the dedication of the staff who worked tirelessly to repair it over the past summer as floodwaters gradually receded. That was not an easy task. For a period of time the staff started at 3.00 a.m. each day and worked in mud that came up past their knees at times.

We know that the Western Division of New South Wales can be a harsh environment and the life of an employee of the Wild Dog Destruction Board is not one suited to many people. Staff reside in cottages along the fence, which are provided by the board. They live an isolated lifestyle, and the nearest urban centres are up to five hours drive away. However, I understand that the staff take great comfort from the fact that those urban centres are closer than the nearest branch of Country Labor, which was last seen meeting in a phone box in Cessnock. Cabinet, led by the Premier, will soon meet in Broken Hill where we will have the opportunity to hear how the Government can continue to support farmers and communities in western New South Wales.

DEPARTMENT OF FAMILY AND COMMUNITY SERVICES CASEWORKER VACANCIES

Mrs BARBARA PERRY: My question is directed to the Minister for Family and Community Services. Given that the Minister's letter of 7 March confirms that she knew caseworker numbers had dropped, why did the Minister continue to mislead the public and claim that caseworker numbers had not fallen in New South Wales—a statement the Minister acknowledges in the letter is completely incorrect?

Ms PRU GOWARD: The number as at the end of December, which was the number I was provided with, was a headcount of 2,182.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister does not need assistance from the member for Canterbury. Opposition members and the Leader of the House will cease interjecting.

Ms PRU GOWARD: As a headcount number 2,182 is well over the 2,000 figure that I am regularly advised the department has. As I have already told the House, I came to the conclusion that the data was unreliable and that we needed a better measure of data and of caseworkers. That is why I instructed the director general—

Mr John Robertson: Point of order: My point of order relates to relevance under Standing Order 129. The question is about the letter and the date. The Minister acknowledges in the letter that she knew the numbers were down. Why did the Minister not correct the record?

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

Ms PRU GOWARD: I will repeat for the benefit of the House that my department advised me that the headcount number was 2,182, which is well above 2,000. Although that had been the figure used by the previous Government, I formed the view because it was a headcount—

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

Ms PRU GOWARD: I formed the view that headcount numbers were not reliable. That is why I directed the director general to improve the reporting systems and make them public. I quote for the benefit of the House for a final time, for well over 12 months the department has failed to respond effectively to the repeated and—

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order:—

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister is being relevant to the question asked. What is the member's point of order?

Mr Michael Daley: We are asking about full-time equivalent positions, not the headcount number.

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

Mr Michael Daley: My point of order is under Standing Order 129. The Minister is answering the wrong question.

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

Ms PRU GOWARD: As I said, I expressed the view in that letter that the department had failed to respond effectively to the repeated and exasperated investigation and instruction from me and my office for quality, consistent reporting of caseworker data. That is why I instructed the director general to fill all budgeted caseworker positions and to publish online information about front-line community services and non-government organisation caseworkers. That is what I expected. When the dashboard is delivered, that is what we will see.

YARALLA ESTATE

Mr JOHN SIDOTI: My question is addressed to the Minister for Health, and Minister for Medical Research. What are the Government's plans for Dame Eadith Walker Estate in Concord?

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: I thank the member for his question and for his longstanding interest in this issue, which is of great importance to his community. I am pleased to inform the House that today the Sydney Local Health District has announced that 13 hectares of paddocks on the Yaralla Estate at Concord will be converted to public parkland for the enjoyment of residents of the inner west and beyond. In other words, it will be something along the lines of Centennial Park for the inner west. Well done, Mr Sidoti, the member for Drummoyne.

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

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: You would think they would be interested, Madam Speaker.

The SPEAKER: Order! Opposition members are clearly not interested in the Minister's answer. Members who continue to interject will be removed from the Chamber.

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: This will increase access to the estate for the wider community, rather than the previous limited use of the paddocks by a small private group for horse agistment. The Local Health District decision is consistent with the Walker Trust Act 1938, which stipulates the land can be used for the purposes of public open space. I understand the district will establish a community advisory committee, which will include key stakeholders and residents, to advise on how best to use the parkland, such as possibly establishing community gardens and walking tracks. I know the member for Drummoyne will take an active role in that discussion.

I am sure the local community joins the member for Drummoyne and me in welcoming the district's decision to open up this magnificent waterfront estate to the public. This land had been tied up for limited horse agistment by a private few—who had links to the Labor Party, I might add—for 16 years. Opening up an additional 13 hectares will mean that this 32-hectare estate will provide a tranquil oasis in the inner west of Sydney to be enjoyed by locals for years to come. In keeping with the Walker Trust Act 1938, the Yaralla Estate will continue to be a base for health services in HIV-related dementia and aged care.

The Dame Eadith Walker Estate, also known as the Yaralla Estate, is located next to Concord Hospital and is administered by the Sydney Local Health District in accordance with the Walker Trust Act 1938. There had been complaints regarding the care of horses on the estate, including complaints that two horses were found on the helipad at Concord Hospital and another in a resident's backyard. They broke down the fence and escaped the paddock because of over-agistment and wreckage of the grassland.

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

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: The escaped horses posed a serious risk and the Sydney Local Health District commissioned an external audit of the estate paddock area. An independent audit of the site found the land and fencing to be in such a poor condition that the safety of the public and the horses agisted on the site was at risk. That land is no longer available for agistment and considerable money from the trust is being used to remediate the site where the grassland was ruined because of over-agistment. All my colleagues on this side from country areas, who are the true representatives of the country, will know that you can seriously damage land by over-agistment of horses—and that is what happened for 16 years under Labor. This is the reason, I understand, for the local health district's decision to take a new direction with the Yaralla Estate that will benefit all residents rather than only a select few.

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

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: The Yaralla Estate at Concord is one of Sydney's most beautiful open spaces and it is wonderful that the Sydney Local Health District is opening up this area for the enjoyment of the wider public.

DEPARTMENT OF FAMILY AND COMMUNITY SERVICES CASEWORKER VACANCIES

Mr NATHAN REES: My question is directed to the Minister for Family and Community Services. Given that the Minister's letter of 7 March states that there has been a drop of 66—

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Baulkham Hills will cease interjecting.

Mr NATHAN REES: Given that the Minister's 7 March letter states that there has been a drop of 66 in full-time equivalent positions, and given that she failed to correct the record after being made aware that she had misled this Parliament, can the Minister explain why she should not be tendering her resignation to the Premier today?

Ms PRU GOWARD: I have answered this on a number of occasions. There were, by headcount, 2,182 caseworkers in March this year. I considered that the data was unreliable and it was time to develop some new measures. To the Opposition's undying shame, it left office without any of this cleared up, without any definitions, without any measures—

Ms Linda Burney: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister has just commenced her answer. What is the member's point of order?

Ms Linda Burney: It is under Standing Order 129. The question is: Are you going to resign?

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Canterbury will resume her seat. The Minister is being relevant to the question asked. There is no point of order.

Ms PRU GOWARD: To the Opposition's undying shame, despite the fact that it pumped in an additional \$1.2 billion from 2002, despite the Wood commission of inquiry and despite the extra money from Keep Them Safe, it left government seeing fewer children. What a terrible indictment.

Dr Andrew McDonald: Point of order: It is under Standing Order 129. It is about the failure to correct the record. As the Minister indicated in the letter—

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

Ms PRU GOWARD: I have indicated that I did not consider the data reliable. When the Auditor-General reported that there were 497 vacancies among budgeted caseworker positions at 30 June 2010—

Ms Linda Burney: You've said it four times—

The SPEAKER: Order! I call the member for Canterbury to order for the second time. If she continues to interject she will be removed from the Chamber.

Ms PRU GOWARD: Nobody linked it with a drop in the number of assessments that were happening. Anonymous staff members did not go to the media. There were no strikes or walk-outs—and maybe there should have been. Yet there was a vacancy rate of 20 per cent as reported by the Auditor-General. In the same year—

Mrs Barbara Perry: You haven't been doing assessments.

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

Ms PRU GOWARD: —the former failed shadow—

Mrs Barbara Perry: You've been saving money.

The SPEAKER: Order! I call the member for Auburn to order for the first time.

Ms PRU GOWARD: In that same year, 2010, 139 children known to the department died. Every one of those deaths was a tragedy. One of the children was Kiesha Weippeart. There was no campaign then linking these deaths, these tragedies, with assessments or caseworker numbers. When we were in opposition we did not draw these connections. The complexities of these deaths are too well understood for cheap political pointscoring. I remind the Opposition—

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Canterbury will remove herself from the Chamber until the conclusion of question time.

[Pursuant to sessional order the member for Canterbury left the Chamber at 2.54 p.m.]

Ms PRU GOWARD: I remind the Opposition that the protection of vulnerable children and the importance of seeing more children more often should be above the nasty, petty, personal politics they have played.

WARATAH TRAINS

Mr STUART AYRES: My question is directed to the Minister for Transport. What progress has the Government made on the rollout of the new Waratah trains?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I thank the member for the question—I congratulate him on becoming the Parliamentary Secretary for Transport and Roads—and for his interest in all matters relating to public transport. I was very pleased this morning to join the Premier and the new Chief Executive Officer of Sydney Trains, Howard Collins, to welcome the fiftieth Waratah train into service. That is in stark contrast to the Opposition's record. As early as 2006 the former Minister for Transport, John Watkins said: "These state-of-the-art carriages will start rolling out into service as early as 2008." They left office in 2011 and there was still not a single carriage, let alone a single train, on the network.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will cease conducting conversations across the Chamber. The Leader of the Opposition will come to order.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I know that the Leader of the Opposition is particularly sensitive on this point. In June 2010 he said in the other place, on the record, when he was the Minister for Transport that these carriages would "start to be delivered later this year". That is what he said. By the time he finished his tenure and we came into government not only had Labor failed to deliver a single carriage but also he left the project on the brink of collapse. Fortunately when we came into government we successfully stepped in to restructure the project's finances.

The SPEAKER: Order! If the Leader of the Opposition continues to interject he will be removed from the Chamber.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I know that the Leader of the Opposition is very sensitive about this, but he should listen to the answer. I thank the Treasurer for his assistance in this regard. With the creditors banging on the door, he helped to save New South Wales from being without these trains for many years. New South Wales Treasury estimates that, without the new agreement signed by this Government, the project would have faced up to \$250 million in break costs and up to \$1 billion in replacement funding. This would have been a direct hit to the State's balance sheet and would have redirected vital funds from other key projects. I know they want to forget this point, but Labor also failed to plan for the Waratahs. The member for Penrith and other members from Western Sydney care about this—

Dr Geoff Lee: Parramatta cares.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: And the member for Parramatta—we caught a Waratah train with the member for Parramatta and the member for Granville. It was this side of the House that carried out the necessary power supply upgrades and the construction of substations to make sure the Waratahs could be used on the Western Line. Those on the other side of the House did not even do that. When the Opposition left office, the Waratah trains would never have been able to go on the Western Line because it did not provide the necessary infrastructure. In fact it was this side of the House that built new substations at Yagoona, Warwick Farm, Toongabbie and Campbelltown to enable the Waratahs to use the Western Line. As at today, I understand, about six Waratah trains are already using the Western Line. The trains are now available for service on the Airport and East Hills, South, Northern, Olympic Park, Bankstown, Inner West, Western and North Shore lines.

This is a great win for our customers. Customers are giving us feedback about how much they love to use these trains. The Waratahs have many features that improve safety, reliability and comfort. Most importantly, they are accessible by many customers who for too long have faced cold winter journeys and hot summer journeys because of a lack of air conditioning. When we came to government only about 70 per cent of the fleet was air conditioned; now 85 per cent of trains are air conditioned. I am pleased to say that by the end of next year, if all goes to plan, 95 per cent of all of our trains will be air conditioned, no matter where people catch them from. I am also confident that by the end of next year all 78 Waratah trains will be delivered. As well as delivering modern carriages we have also improved safety and reliability. The fleet has improved closed-circuit television coverage. There are 98 internal and external cameras on each train. There are passenger help points, hearing-aid loops and comfortable onboard facilities.

The Waratah fleet enhancement comes on top of all the other reforms the Government is undertaking to fix our trains. The program has resulted in an additional 170 weekly rail services and the appointment of a very experienced world-class rail operator, Howard Collins, who already is making a difference as the chief executive officer of Sydney Trains. We are rolling out the Opal electronic ticketing system on trains and improved accessibility to technology for customers, among other things. Customers love the Waratah trains. I am pleased with the project's rollout so far. I am especially pleased that customers on the Western Line are able to use the Waratahs because of the upgrades that the Government has undertaken.

CENTRAL TO EVELEIGH RAIL CORRIDOR PROJECT

Mr ALEX GREENWICH: My question is directed to the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure. What steps will the Government take to ensure that the Central to Eveleigh corridor renewal project provides public open space, child care, high schools and primary schools, and safe cycling paths for new and existing adjacent residents and workers?

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: I thank the member for Sydney for his question and commend him for his interest in the Central to Eveleigh corridor renewal project. This is a vital area because, in a sense, it forms the southern boundary to the city. It is time the Government took on this challenge and led the way. The former Labor Government announced a number of projects for that area that really did not get off the ground.

Mr Ray Williams: Typical.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: Very typical. The problem is that those opportunities presented at a time when the State needed opportunities. If Labor had delivered on the various promises it made some years ago, the projects would have been well advanced by now. As the member for Sydney will recall, there was the North Eveleigh Concept Plan and the Redfern-Waterloo Master Plan.

[Interruption]

The SPEAKER: Order! I remind members that interjections are disorderly at all times. The Minister has the call.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: The North Everleigh Concept Plan was one of those famous part 3A projects. Do we remember part 3A? If Eddie Obeid was around, it would be rock'n'roll. There would be a coalmine there and there would be money out of it heading to Labor. The bottom line is that, contrary to what the Labor Party has to say, those projects were absolutely correctly focused on that area, but Labor failed to examine the opportunities and engage the private sector. It was very much a Government-led proposal. Community groups in the area and the member for Sydney should well understand that the issues that were highlighted during consideration of the North Everleigh Concept Plan and the Redfern-Waterloo Master Plan will be very much on the agenda as we move forward.

We are keen to see development in the area. We are keen to examine the economic opportunities involved in residential and commercial developments that will create jobs for residents in the area. In relation to the other issues raised by the member for Sydney, such as bike paths, community spaces and educational facilities, they are well and truly in the mix. It is a matter of what we as a Government can deliver and what we can afford as a community. I recollect that in the North Everleigh Concept Plan there was a proposal for some consideration to be given to constructing commercial and educational facilities. It was unclear precisely how it would be done, but it was certainly mentioned. The most recent announcement by the Government indicated that there is also capacity to consider tertiary-level educational facilities.

As the planning Minister, I can say that if we get residential and employment opportunities in that area and create new communities, particularly across the rail line, there is every reason to include examination of the possibility of new educational facilities. Obviously that has consequences in terms of capital and recurrent expenditure for my colleague the Minister for Education to consider, but it is critical. Of course, there are innovative methods that I am sure the Minister for Education knows about whereby schools can be developed in the higher-density areas of major cities. It is interesting that in Vancouver, British Columbia, they found that the communities welcomed intensification of density, particularly around the port areas. They found that young families moved in and, despite expectations that they would move later to the outer suburbs, they stayed. They raised their children in accommodation that was right in the thick of things with necessary infrastructure. The British Columbia Government and Vancouver City Hall are examining how to provide additional educational facilities as well as the public parks and open spaces already provided. That is the type of thing that we can do.

Involving the private sector is of course crucial. What we saw from the former Labor Government was that, unless those opposite were doing a deal for themselves, not much happened. This Government is eager to have the private sector involved. We know from the Sydney International Convention Centre's exhibition space redevelopment that getting the private sector involved and laying down some clear parameters about open space and opportunities for its use by the public are critical. After securing those parameters, let us listen to what the private sector can do. The Government and the private sector are very keen to provide a new opportunity to develop the southern part of the city, get rid of that Berlin Wall effect of the railway and consider the possibility of construction across the rail line. The Government will work with the Lord Mayor of Sydney. I have met with the Lord Mayor, Clover Moore, and the council's director of development, Graham Jahn. We are constantly communicating in relation to these issues. I give the member for Sydney an undertaking that we will continue to do so and discuss the issues raised by him.

SECURING OUR VETERANS' FUTURE INITIATIVE

Mr TIM OWEN: My question is addressed to the Minister for Citizenship and Communities, and Minister for Aboriginal Affairs. Will he inform the House what the Government is doing to assist younger veterans?

Mr VICTOR DOMINELLO: I thank the member for Newcastle for his question and I acknowledge his service to our country as an air commodore in the Royal Australian Air Force. In June this year I hosted a younger veterans' forum at the North Bondi RSL, which was chaired by James Brown, who is the military fellow at the Lowy Institute for International Policy. The forum brought together key veteran stakeholder leaders to discuss the challenges and opportunities facing younger veterans who have returned recently from overseas deployment. One of the critical issues raised was the difficulties that many younger veterans face when transitioning to civilian life. For many of our returned service men and women, the military has been their first and only employer, so they find it challenging to find and apply for a job when they leave military service. While we hope that the next chapter in their lives will be defined by hope and opportunity, too often it is defined by uncertainty and challenge.

With that in mind, I am pleased to announce that today I launched the New South Wales Government's project, Securing Our Veterans' Future, which is a joint project between the New South Wales Government, ClubsNSW and the RSL and Services Clubs Association. The project will assist former Australian Defence Force personnel to transition more easily into civilian life and into employment. This initiative is open to those who have recently left the military and is aimed at those who served in the Australian Defence Force from 1999 onwards. Importantly, the program also is open to the spouses of Australian Defence Force members or younger veterans, who also face the problem of securing employment. It is the first Government-led employment project aimed at younger veterans in Australia. Importantly, it has the backing of the Australian Defence Force.

The Australian Defence Force head of people capability, Major General Gerard Fogarty, said that Securing Our Veterans' Future is a great example of government and business working together to help support military personnel as they leave the Navy, Army or Air Force. With the assistance of ClubsNSW and the RSL and Services Clubs Association, Securing Our Veterans' Future will help to place younger veterans in jobs within the registered clubs industry. Returned veterans leave with unique skills and qualities that are all valuable assets to employers. The clubs industry provides a range of jobs for returned service personnel and veterans in, for example, management, administration, hospitality and catering. I acknowledge the presence in the gallery of Anthony Ball, who is the chief executive officer of ClubsNSW and who attended the launch yesterday.

Mr Tim Owen: He is a good man.

Mr VICTOR DOMINELLO: Yes, he is a good man. ClubsNSW employs almost 42,000 people across the State. Anthony said:

Many of the skills and qualities ingrained in military personnel, such as leadership, loyalty, teamwork and integrity, are also highly valued by registered, not-for-profit clubs.

Other key partners and supporters of this new policy include the Australian Defence Force, the NSW Business Chamber and veterans' support organisations such as Soldier On, Trans-Civ, Defence in Business, Defence Families of Australia and RSL NSW. These organisations will promote the project among younger veterans. Support from the community has been outstanding for this initiative. I am pleased to say the State's peak business organisation, the NSW Business Chamber, also will promote the initiative to its 10,000-plus members. I encourage those members to embrace this opportunity and back our skilled returned service men and women.

I thank Anthony Ball, the chief executive officer of ClubsNSW and Graeme Carroll, the chief executive officer of the RSL and Services Clubs Association of NSW, for their leadership in seeing this initiative realised. I also thank the member for Vaucluse for her support in launching this significant initiative. Our shared long-term vision with the veteran community is to have all industries involved and signed up to Securing Our Veterans' Future. This coming decade will see more young Australian veterans in our community than at any time since the end of the Vietnam War. As our troops return it is important to show that the community is listening to the needs of veterans and helping them to connect with the society that they have served. This initiative is an example of how we can ensure that their sacrifices will be honoured and remembered with dignity and respect.

Question time concluded at 3.10 p.m.

JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON ELECTORAL MATTERS

Chair

The SPEAKER: Pursuant to Standing Order 282(1), I advise the House that on 19 August 2013 Gareth James Ward was elected Chair of the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters.

PETITIONS

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

Coal Seam Gas Mining

Petition requesting a ban on coal seam gas mining in drinking water catchment areas in New South Wales, received from **Mr Jai Rowell**.

Discussion on petition set down as an order of the day for a future day.

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

Sydney Electorate Public High School

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

Walsh Bay Precinct Public Transport

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

Pet Shops

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

Pig-dog Hunting Ban

Petition requesting the banning of pig-dog hunting in New South Wales, received from **Mr Alex Greenwich**.

Duck Hunting

Petition requesting retention of the longstanding ban on duck hunting, 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**.

Commonwealth Clean Energy Supplement

Petition requesting that social housing tenants receive the full benefit of the Commonwealth Clean Energy Supplement to offset increased living expenses, 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**.

Martial Arts

Petition requesting that the Government transfer regulation of martial arts to the Federal Government, received from **Ms Carmel Tebbutt**.

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

Labelling of Free-range Eggs

Petition supporting a legislated definition of free-range eggs and calling on the Government to require eggs that do not meet this definition to be clearly labelled as "barn" or "cage" eggs and to create penalties for the false labelling or advertising of eggs, received from **Mr Jamie Parker**.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members who wish to have private conversations should do so outside the Chamber.

LIQUOR AMENDMENT (KINGS CROSS PLAN OF MANAGEMENT) BILL 2013

Bill introduced on motion by Mr George Souris, read a first time and printed.

Second Reading

Mr GEORGE SOURIS (Upper Hunter—Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Hospitality and Racing, and Minister for the Arts) [3.13.p.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

Over the past 12 months the Government has taken decisive action to clean up Kings Cross and make it a safer place for its residents and for the visitors to this internationally recognised entertainment precinct. In September 2012 the Government released the Kings Cross Plan of Management, which provided a comprehensive set of measures to reduce alcohol-related violence and improve the safety and amenity of Kings Cross. Under the plan the Kings Cross precinct has been consolidated and expanded to capture more than 130 venues, including licensed premises in parts of nearby Potts Point and Darlinghurst. As a result, these venues are now subject to regulatory controls applying to the precinct. The liquor freeze applying to Kings Cross has been extended until December 2015. This means that no new high-impact licensed premises, such as hotels and nightclubs, can be established in Kings Cross during that period. Under the Plan of Management, licensees and staff of Kings Cross licensed premises are required to complete responsible service of alcohol training to ensure that they have recent and contemporary knowledge of the responsible service laws and hold a competency card.

Since December 2012 special conditions imposed by regulation have applied to Kings Cross licensed premises. These conditions include a requirement either to cease alcohol sales for an hour before closing for late-trading venues or to operate a time-out for one hour for 24-hour trading venues. The conditions also include drink restrictions and closed-circuit television [CCTV] requirements. Responsible service of alcohol marshals will be engaged after midnight on weekends. The whole-of-government approach includes: the provision of an extra 370 police officers since December 2011; the commencement of the trial of sobering-up centres so that intoxicated people who refuse police requests to move on will have to sleep off their big night in a cell; providing police with stronger move-on powers and introducing a new offence of intoxicated and disorderly so that police can defuse volatile situations before they escalate; implementing the three strikes scheme; targeting irresponsible venues; introducing new late-night transport options through new licence conditions for licensed premises; drink restrictions; new security measures in Kings Cross; and, finally, passing new laws to allow drug detection dogs to be used in the Kings Cross area, without police first needing to obtain a warrant.

I am pleased to report that since the start of the regulation in December 2012, in the period to 31 March 2013, there has been a 33 per cent reduction in violent incidents in licensed premises compared with the previous year. The Government's plan of management has also resulted in amendments to the Liquor Act to establish a new small bar licence, which has been available since 1 July 2013. The small bar licence, which is available in Kings Cross and elsewhere across the State, recognises the need for smaller, more intimate venues and addresses concerns about bars growing in size over time and thereby contributing to harm in high-density precincts such as Kings Cross. Small bar licence applications in the City of Sydney are also being considered as part of the trial of the new Environment and Venue Assessment Tool [EVAT], which considers a number of venue risk factors, including locality, capacity and licence type.

The Government recognises that there is more work to be done to further improve the safety of Kings Cross. The Liquor Amendment (Kings Cross Plan of Management) Bill 2013 is the second major tranche of the Government's plan of management to reduce alcohol-related violence in Kings Cross. The bill contains two significant measures to help further the precinct's safety and enable action to be taken against troublemakers. First, the bill will enable precinct-wide temporary banning orders to be issued by police for up to 48 hours. A temporary banning order can be issued to a person who refuses to comply with a move-on direction given by police or to a person who is drunk, violent or disorderly and refuses to leave licensed premises or the vicinity of licensed premises or attempts to re-enter licensed premises within 24 hours of being asked to leave. A temporary banning order for up to 48 hours can apply to one or more licensed premises in the Kings Cross precinct. Importantly, a temporary banning order can only be issued by a police officer above the rank of sergeant who is satisfied that the person's continued conduct is likely to cause a public nuisance or a risk to public safety.

The bill will also enable the Independent Liquor and Gaming Authority to issue a long-term precinct-wide banning order that will prohibit the subject of that order from entering or attempting to enter

high-risk licensed premises in the Kings Cross precinct for up to 12 months. A long-term banning order can only be issued by the Independent Liquor and Gaming Authority when it is satisfied that the person has been charged with or found guilty of a serious criminal offence involving alcohol-related violence or the person has been issued with three temporary banning orders in the previous 12 months. These new banning orders will complement and strengthen the existing banning provisions available to all licensees under the liquor laws. They send a clear message to troublemakers visiting Kings Cross that if they make trouble they face a ban from entering all high-risk licensed venues in the precinct for up to 12 months. These bans will provide police with new tools to help improve the safety of the Kings Cross precinct and ensure that serious troublemakers do not cause ongoing problems for the operators of licensed venues.

The bill sends a message to troublemakers that violent and disruptive behaviour can have significant consequences. Maximum penalties of \$5,500 or a \$550 penalty notice will apply where a person subject to a temporary banning order enters or attempts to enter any Kings Cross licensed premises. A maximum penalty of \$5,500 or a \$2,200 penalty notice will also apply where a person enters or attempts to re-enter a high-risk licensed venue while subject to a long-term banning order. To ensure natural justice principles are maintained, the bill will enable a person who is the subject of a long-term banning order to seek a review of the authority's decision by the Administrative Decisions Tribunal.

I refer now to those provisions in the bill that prescribe the operation of a central identification scanning system and the requirement for all high-risk venues in the Kings Cross precinct to operate a linked identification scanner to prevent persons issued with a banning order from entering licensed premises. This is an appropriate and necessary measure to complement the banning order provisions and to help licensees and staff ensure that those who have been issued with a banning order can be stopped at the door and not jeopardise the safety of patrons and staff inside licensed premises. The bill allows the operation of a central identification scanning system and associated identification scanners in high-risk premises in the Kings Cross precinct to be trialled over 12 months. The bill defines high-risk venues as those that sell liquor for consumption on the premises, have approval to trade after midnight and, as determined by the Director General of NSW Trade and Investment, have a patron capacity of more than 120 patrons.

The bill also contains a regulation-making power to enable a venue to be exempted from the identification scanning requirements as a high-risk venue where it is considered in certain circumstances. Any consideration of a venue being exempt from the identification scanning requirements will be examined closely and take into consideration factors such as the risk to public safety, the primary purpose of the venue and its compliance history. The Director General of NSW Trade and Investment may, with the agreement of the Commissioner of Police, also designate a venue as high risk if satisfied that there is a significant degree of alcohol-related violence or other antisocial behaviour associated with the premises. Linked identification scanners will enable licensees to record the identity of all patrons and enable those persons the subject of a temporary or long-term banning order to be identified and prevented from entering the premises.

The use of identification scanners, which will be linked to a central scanning system, has been identified by industry through the Kings Cross accord as an important strategy to reinforce the need for greater personal responsibility when socialising late at night in the precinct. It follows a trial of identification scanners in Newcastle, where a small group of licensees established the Newcastle Entertainment Precinct and invested in identification scanning technology to implement a shared scanning and banning system with good results. The system will enable high-risk venues to be automatically notified if a patron has been banned from other high-risk venues in Kings Cross or is subject to a short-term or long-term banning order. A person who uses a false identification document when entering a high-risk venue can be issued with a \$5,500 fine or a \$550 penalty notice. Appropriately, participating high-risk licensed venues will meet the cost of installing identification scanners on their premises.

The bill recognises also that there may be instances where either the central identification scanner system or patron identification scanners in licensed venues may break down. It is not intended in these circumstances that a venue would have to close its doors and not allow people to enter because their identification cannot be scanned. In these circumstances, the bill requires police be notified immediately and that a contingency protocol approved by the Director General of NSW Trade and Investment be complied with. The Government recognises that mandating the use of identification scanning equipment in licensed venues may cause concern for some people. That is why the bill contains a number of safeguards to ensure the integrity of the precinct's identification scanning system, with stringent controls on the use of personal data captured by the system and in the operation of scanners used in venues.

The Director General of NSW Trade and Investment will be responsible for approving the operator of the identification scanner system. In doing so, he may seek the concurrence of the Commissioner of Police and will ensure that the operator is suitable to operate the system. In addition to imposing conditions on the approved operator relating to the disposal and retention of data held on the scanning system, the director general also can revoke an approval to operate an identification scanning system at any time. Further, to ensure there is no conflict of interest or potential for data to be shared between the approved scanning system operator and licensees, an entity that is a close associate of a licensee or has an interest in licensed premises cannot be approved to operate the system. The director general's approval will be subject to a range of statutory and other conditions to safeguard any information held on the system. This includes a requirement that any data held on the system must not be transferred to any place outside Australia, other than New Zealand, and must comply with Federal privacy laws. In addition, data can only be held for up to 30 days, except for information relating to a person who is the subject of a long-term banning order, or at the request of the Commissioner of Police.

State government agencies accessing the identification scanner data, including the NSW Police Force and the Office of Liquor, Gaming and Racing, will be subject to the New South Wales Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998. Licensees also must implement a privacy management plan and a privacy policy, which must first be approved by the Kings Cross accord and the relevant industry association. As a further safeguard, the bill will require all licensees and staff operating identification scanners to undergo privacy training, which will be endorsed on their responsible service of alcohol competency card. This training will focus on privacy and related requirements contained in this bill, as well as Federal privacy principles. This privacy training is expected to be available online from the Office of Liquor, Gaming and Racing's website to help reduce time and travel costs to those needing to complete the training.

A new competency card will be issued by the Office of Liquor, Gaming and Racing following completion of privacy training that contains an endorsement that the privacy training has been completed. The bill will also allow the Director General of NSW Trade and Investment to impose a \$30 fee prior to issuing a new competency card with a privacy endorsement. This fee will help to offset some of the costs incurred by the Office of Liquor, Gaming and Racing in processing and issuing a new competency card. The bill also allows a certificate to be issued where privacy training has been completed, which will allow people to operate identification scanners in Kings Cross licensed premises for up to 28 days until they receive a new competency card containing a privacy training endorsement. The bill will enable the Independent Liquor and Gaming Authority upon application by police or the director general to suspend, revoke or disqualify a person for up to 12 months from holding a responsible service of alcohol competency card.

This action can be taken where the authority considers the person has contravened their privacy obligations or otherwise misused data collected in operating a patron identification scanner. The authority can also make an order if it is satisfied that a person has contravened obligations that relate to the responsible service of alcohol, such as serving liquor to intoxicated persons or minors. This is a significant but necessary deterrent to ensure that patrons' private information is not abused or misused by staff of licensed premises in any way or provided to a third party. The bill recognises the significant consequences of revoking a person's responsible service of alcohol competency card—which is, effectively, a licence to work in the New South Wales liquor industry—by allowing a person to seek a review by the Administrative Decisions Tribunal of a decision made by the authority. Sanctions will apply to the unlawful use of a competency card to ensure the integrity of the privacy provisions in this bill.

Penalties of up to \$5,500 apply where a person works in New South Wales licensed premises with a suspended competency card or where they have been disqualified from holding a competency card, and penalties of up to \$2,200 also will apply where a competency card is not surrendered to the authority. As a protection for licensees in circumstances where a person does not surrender their card, the bill provides that licensees and employers do not commit an offence if they employ a person who holds a recognised competency card that appears to be current and the licensee is satisfied that the card is current. This bill represents the first time that the use of identification scanning equipment in New South Wales licensed venues has been mandated. Therefore, it is important that the operation of the identification scanner provisions be reviewed as soon as practicable. That is why the bill requires the identification scanner provisions to be reviewed after 12 months to determine whether the policy objectives of the scheme remain valid. This will provide an opportunity to consider whether the privacy safeguards applying to the Kings Cross identification scanner system and patron identification scanners in licensed premises are adequate and, where necessary, consider further reforms to ensure people's personal information collected in licensed venues is not being compromised.

In addition to the banning order and identification scanner provisions, the bill also introduces a range of measures aimed at improving performance by licensed venues within the Kings Cross precinct. These include

requiring approved managers in high-risk Kings Cross venues to be appointed at certain times when the licensee is absent to assist in the proper supervision and management of licensed premises. These approved manager provisions will be subject to a regulation being made later this year. The bill also provides that a notice is to be displayed by licensed venues to help inform patrons and the local community about the venue's liquor trading hours. This sign will be developed in collaboration with the City of Sydney to ensure that the relevant liquor and development consent trading information is included in this public notice.

The bill specifies when the collection of alcohol sales data from Kings Cross venues where liquor is consumed on the premises will commence, and that this will be on a quarterly basis. This data will help shape compliance efforts by police and the Office of Liquor, Gaming and Racing inspectors, as well as future policy decisions by the Government. The Office of Liquor, Gaming and Racing will liaise with the Kings Cross accord and affected Kings Cross licensees prior to the first data return falling due in terms of the format and nature of the data to be provided. The bill also provides certainty for the holders of a general bar liquor licence that a community impact statement is not required where they wish to convert their business into a small bar by 31 December 2013 by applying for a new small bar licence, so long as development consent has been obtained to sell liquor at times proposed in the small bar licence application.

This bill is yet another example of the Government taking decisive action to tackle alcohol-related crime and antisocial behaviour in Kings Cross. The actions being taken to improve Kings Cross, including measures contained in this bill, are being complemented by statewide measures to reduce alcohol-related violence. This includes the three strikes disciplinary scheme in which more than 50 venues across the State have incurred strikes. At least two of those venues have incurred two strikes and are potentially just one strike away from losing their right to sell liquor. The Government's trial of three sobering-up centres has also commenced, including the operation of a mandatory sobering-up centre in Sydney's central business district. This will enable drunken troublemakers who ignore move-on orders from police in Kings Cross and elsewhere to spend the rest of their night in this facility. The Government will continue to monitor the effectiveness of its reforms for Kings Cross. If necessary, further measures will be considered by the Government to minimise alcohol-related violence and antisocial behaviour in the Kings Cross precinct. I commend the bill to the House.

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

TOTALIZATOR AMENDMENT (EXCLUSIVITY) BILL 2013

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 21 August 2013.

Mr ANDREW ROHAN (Smithfield) [3.34 p.m.]: I speak in support of the Totalizator Amendment (Exclusivity) Bill 2013 and commend the Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Hospitality and Racing, and Minister for the Arts for introducing it. I note that the Minister is seated at the table. The racing industry is a major contributor to the State's economy. It contributes an estimated \$1 billion annually and supports about 50,000 full-time and part-time jobs. The Government benefits from wagering taxation of approximately \$157 million every year, which is a significant amount that supports the racing industry. TAB Limited currently holds a 99-year licence, which was issued in 1998, to conduct offcourse and oncourse totalisator betting in New South Wales. New South Wales racing clubs also hold a 99-year licence for the conduct of oncourse totalisator betting, with the TAB undertaking this by agreement on behalf of the racing clubs. These licences included a 15-year exclusivity period, which expired on 22 June 2013.

Under the Totalizator Act 1997, TAB Limited contributes \$250 million to the State's racing industry each year as a requirement to enter into the commercial agreement with the Government as a prerequisite to it being granted its 99-year licence. This was necessary to ensure a strong and stable wagering service to offer totalisator and fixed odds on racing and sporting events. The revenue stream derived from this wagering turnover has been the main source for the New South Wales racing industry and its participants. TAB provides its services via approximately 2,130 agencies, comprising TAB retail outlets, clubs and hotels, and oncourse and electronic devices. In New South Wales there are 192 registered racing clubs—namely, 136 thoroughbred, 31 harness and 25 greyhound clubs. In 2012-13 the three racing codes conducted a total of 2,565 race meetings—namely, 771 thoroughbred, 501 harness and 1,293 greyhound race meetings.

If the New South Wales Exclusivity Deed comes into force, this bill proposes an in-principle agreement between the New South Wales Government and Tabcorp to extend the TAB's totalisator licence exclusivity for a

further 20 years until June 2033. Leading to this agreement the Government engaged PricewaterhouseCoopers to examine options for the future provision of totalisator betting within the State. Following consideration of the advice, and taking into account consideration of the object of the continued effective and productive operation of the State's racing industry, the Government opted to enter into negotiations with Tabcorp for the extension of the TAB's totalisator licence exclusivity. These negotiations were undertaken by PricewaterhouseCoopers under the guidance of an inter-agency steering committee. The steering committee was chaired by the Office of Liquor, Gaming and Racing, and comprised representatives of that agency, Treasury, Department of the Premier and Cabinet and the Crown Solicitor's office, and was assisted by an independent probity adviser. Throughout the process PricewaterhouseCoopers provided ongoing legal assistance and the Crown Solicitor's office also helped guide the Government's consideration of this significant matter.

In June 2013, the Government announced that it had reached an in-principle agreement with Tabcorp to pay \$75 million to extend the exclusivity licence for oncourse and offcourse totalisator activities, including through club and pub outlets, and their existing fixed-odds activities across the State for a further 20 years until June 2033. The \$75 million payment for Tabcorp will consist of an initial payment of \$50 million, with the balance to be paid over 10 years from 2024. By introducing this bill, the Government is endorsing the significance of this industry to the State's economy and at the same time ensuring its long-term viability. Horseracing is one of the leading sporting events in this State, indeed in the nation. It captures the imagination of the community and provides entertainment and employment opportunities for many. It is an important part of the social and economic fabric of many communities across New South Wales, particularly rural and regional communities. As the Minister mentioned in his second reading speech, New South Wales has magnificent racing venues such as Rosehill Gardens Racecourse, Royal Randwick Racecourse and many others. The Government is providing \$150 million towards the upgrade of Royal Randwick Racecourse to make it a world-class facility.

New South Wales is proud to have horse trainers such as living legend Bart Cummings, whose training achievements are unlikely to be matched, as well as Gai Waterhouse and Chris Waller. We have champion racehorses such as Black Caviar, an Australian thoroughbred racehorse undefeated in 25 races—a record not equalled for over 100 years. Black Caviar was officially ranked number one in the world in May 2013. We also have some of the leading jockeys in the industry, such as Hugh Bowman and Nash Rawiller. A couple of months ago I attended a fundraising event at Rosehill Gardens organised by the Cerebral Palsy Alliance. The hall was full of people, approximately 800 attendees, all having fun. They also watched several horse races. It was magnificent to see so many people at this event. Our racecourse venues can be used to hold these events for charitable purposes. The bill is essential for the long-term viability of the racing industry in this State. This industry provides not only economic benefits but also joy and entertainment for racing enthusiasts. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr STUART AYRES (Penrith—Parliamentary Secretary) [3.44 p.m.]: I congratulate Acting-Speaker Ward on his appointment as chair of the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters. The primary function of the Totalisator Amendment (Exclusivity) Bill 2013, as outlined in the overview, is to extend the exclusivity period that applies in relation to the granting of totalisator licences to TAB Limited and racing clubs under the Act for an additional 20 years, if the New South Wales Exclusivity Deed comes into force. This agreement includes an exclusivity period with the TAB of 99 years. That exclusivity period ended in June 2013, and we are extending it by a further 20 years. Prior to this date, the Government engaged PricewaterhouseCoopers to examine options around the future provision of totalisator betting within the State. Following consideration and advice from PricewaterhouseCoopers, the Government determined that industry stability and the Government were best served by entering into negotiations with Tabcorp for an extension of the TAB totalisator licence.

The TAB is a wholly owned subsidiary of Tabcorp Holdings Limited. The TAB network exists across the State. The TAB has over 2,000 agencies, consisting of TAB retail outlets, outlets at clubs and hotels as well as oncourse, phone and internet services. The TAB also has a racing distribution agreement. It is an important element of the viability of racing in New South Wales and enables the optimal development of operation and marketing of the New South Wales racing industry and race meetings. On 20 June this year the Government announced it had reached an in-principle agreement for Tabcorp to pay New South Wales an additional \$75 million to extend the exclusive licence for oncourse and offcourse totalisator activities through club and pub outlets and its existing fixed odds activities across the State for a further 20 years until June 2033.

This exclusivity agreement is particularly important to underpin the viability of racing in this State. Many members have spoken in this debate about the racing industry in their particular electorates. Local race clubs are particularly important to regional and rural communities. I have previously spoken in the House about the importance of these clubs to our communities. Across all three codes of racing—harness racing, greyhound

racing and thoroughbred racing—local race clubs play a particularly important role. The racing industry underpins a very strong economic base for the State. Over 190 licensed racecourses are located throughout the State, including 125 thoroughbred racecourses and 31 harness racecourses, including Menangle Park Paceway in the electorate of Wollondilly. That is an important race club that supports the harness racing industry, and it is doing a fantastic job. I encourage people from across Sydney to get down to the south-west to watch harness racing events at Menangle, such as the Miracle Mile and the Inter Dominion.

The thoroughbred racing industry has played an important and longstanding role in Sydney. It has been part of our make-up since Governor Macquarie first conducted a race meeting at Hyde Park and has continued through to the establishment of racecourses such as Rosehill Gardens and Royal Randwick. I acknowledge the contribution of this Government as well as the work of the previous Government to ensuring that Royal Randwick takes its place as one of the leading racecourses in the world. I had the opportunity to see the new grandstand at Royal Randwick at some opening events held earlier this year. The new grandstand definitely enhances Royal Randwick Racecourse. I commend the team at the Australian Turf Club, under the leadership of John Cornish and Darren Pearce, for the work they have done at Randwick. I am looking forward to seeing it in its full glory during the Spring Carnival.

Every year over 2,560 race meetings are conducted throughout New South Wales across all three racing codes. The totalisator exclusivity arrangement will ensure that the industry has a secure source of revenue over the next 20 years. That gives the industry a strong degree of stability and allows us to make critical decisions on the planning of racing events. The Minister has utilised racing events as part of a stronger tourism strategy, and Destination NSW has jumped on board to drive that strategy. I have no doubt that as we start to see changes next year the Autumn Carnival will grow and stand on its own as an attraction for people across the globe to come to Sydney to participate in our racing events.

New South Wales also has other events at that time of the year, such as the Royal Easter Show, and William Inglis conducts one of the world's most eminent yearling sales. I have seen some extraordinary numbers come out of that event. For example, the sales have attracted more than 8,000 people and generated in excess of 3,000 overnight stays in Sydney. The sales could be linked to broaden the marketing campaign for the Autumn Carnival. We also have the Golden Slipper, the Doncaster and the Sydney Cup races. If we are able to capture more of the international market through some interesting programming, Sydney will play a role in growing the racing industry. All of this will only happen if the industry has financial security. The industry has been through some challenges in the past but it has won a High Court case to ensure that people who utilise its product through race fields legislation pay an appropriate fee. The decision by this Government under the leadership of Minister Souris also means that the exclusivity arrangements are in place to ensure that money continues to flow to those clubs and racing entities. And they are not just in the city. There are fantastic racing locations all over the State such as Archer Racecourse at Nowra on the South Coast, Mr Acting-Speaker.

I will now talk about racing in my electorate, which does not happen too often outside harness racing at the Penrith Paceway. But some interesting horseracing events will soon take place in our part of the world. In the late 1800s former Melbourne Cup winners Grand Flaneur and Chester were bred at a historic property called Fernhill located in the electorate of Mulgoa and it was with great delight that I read in my local newspaper this week that the Melbourne Cup will come back to Fernhill as part of the Melbourne Cup tour. Penrith will be one of three stops in New South Wales where the cup will be available for people to look at. It is probably the most iconic trophy in Australian sport and it is wonderful that the public will have the opportunity to see the cup. I know that many people in the Penrith community are on board and supporting that initiative. The owners of Fernhill are going a little bit further and have made an arrangement with Racing NSW to conduct a picnic race meeting on 9 November at the Fernhill historic track. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

I believe the Fernhill picnic meeting will grow into one of Sydney's signature race days. It will be a wonderful opportunity for people across Western Sydney and the rest of the State to come to Penrith and participate in a country-style race meeting at a unique venue with a grand old building overlooking the racetrack. I have no doubt that with the Melbourne Cup coming to Penrith in early October there will be plenty of opportunity to promote that picnic meeting. The totalisator exclusivity arrangement will go a long way to ensuring that smaller clubs will receive their fair share of funding. It means that small TAB outlets that often run only one or two meetings a year will be able to survive on the revenue raised by the TAB on all the race meetings that take place. It is particularly important that we ensure that source of funding is available. It will also ensure that the codes other than racing are supported. It is important that the inter-code agreement stays in place to ensure that harness racing and greyhound racing have access to a pool of funds for their long-term viability. I am sure we will see further work in both of those codes to improve racing opportunities.

As we come towards the Spring Carnival in Sydney and Melbourne another raft of horses will come from overseas, which is a sign of the times. Much of the history of racing in this State has been about competing against other clubs in New South Wales, but if the New South Wales racing industry is going to grow into a world-class industry in its own right it needs to include international horses as part of its competition. The industry must create opportunities for people to see something they have not seen before. That will be the real strength in the New South Wales racing industry. The real opportunity lies in strengthening our carnivals while making sure that enough revenue is generated across the sector to ensure that smaller clubs also are supported.

The provincial clubs are the tier in the middle of city and country racing. It would be remiss of me not to acknowledge the Hawkesbury Race Club, which is closest to my electorate and which holds its cup day today. In about 25 minutes time the cup race will be run. I put on record that I am a little concerned that Brian Fletcher moved the race meeting forward. It now conflicts with a parliamentary sitting day and I was not able to get leave to attend my local cup meeting. However, I am sure thousands of people are out at Hawkesbury today participating in a fantastic community event. The event is supported by many local organisations and demonstrates that the heart and soul of racing does not necessarily lie in corporate activities; it lies in communities across New South Wales. All that I have spoken about is only possible with good quality leadership. Equally important is a clear source of funding over the long term, and the Totalizator Amendment (Exclusivity) Bill will achieve that. I commend the bill the House.

Mr GREG APLIN (Albury) [3.56 p.m.]: For the benefit of the visitors in the public gallery, we are discussing the Totalizator Amendment (Exclusivity) Bill 2013 to amend the Totalizator Act 1997. The amendment will enable the Minister to accept the offer made by TAB Limited to enter into the New South Wales Exclusivity Deed and extend the exclusivity period that applies in relation to granting totalisator licences to TAB Limited and racing clubs under the Act for an additional 20-year period, if the New South Wales Exclusivity Deed comes into force. We need to understand some of the background of the racing industry to understand why we are discussing this bill today.

The New South Wales racing industry contributes an estimated \$1 billion to the State's economy annually and supports approximately 50,000 full-time and part-time jobs. In New South Wales there are 192 registered racing clubs of which 136 are thoroughbred racing clubs, 31 are harness racing clubs, and 25 are greyhound racing clubs. Most members have racing clubs in their electorates, as I do in the Albury electorate. All registered race clubs are the holders of a 99-year licence, issued in March 1998, to conduct an oncourse totalisator at their race meetings. There are more than 191 licensed racecourses throughout the State—125 thoroughbred, 31 harness and 35 greyhound racecourses.

The Albury Racing Club conducts 18 thoroughbred race meetings each year. The feature event is the Commercial Club Albury Gold Cup, which is run in March. For those who are interested in penning this event into their diaries, the 2014 race meeting will be conducted on Thursday 27 March and Friday 28 March. The Commercial Club Albury Gold Cup is one of the premier racing carnivals in country Australia. It won the prestigious Racing NSW award for the most popular country feature race meeting in 2003, 2004, 2006, 2008 and 2009. It is an established, superb race meeting that is recognised as an iconic event in the wonderful city of Albury. A total of \$675,800 in prize money is up for grabs, with trophies and bonuses on offer over those two days. The gold cup race carries \$170,000 in prize money.

As the Minister well knows, some 18,000 people flock to the Albury Carnival. Last year the Minister was our guest speaker at the race meeting, along with some of the heavyweights from the racing industry. It was wonderful to welcome the Minister to Albury in his capacity as the Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Hospitality and Racing, and Minister for the Arts and hear him talk about the future of racing in country New South Wales. He was not the first Minister to attend the Albury races and it is hoped he will not be the last. Destination NSW is involved in the promotion of racing and indeed contributed to marketing the Albury Gold Cup, because it brings so many people to town to participate not only in the race meeting but also in Fashions on the Field and enjoy the fine restaurants and entertainment available in the city of Albury.

Another star who has been appearing recently in another place was also at the Albury Gold Cup some years ago: none other than the Hon. Ian Macdonald, who is well known for liking a lunch—and a holiday at that. He announced on that occasion that half-day holidays would be granted for race meetings in country New South Wales. No doubt it was with the intention of being invited back to many more of those functions. Mirth aside, half-day holidays do often mark country race meetings and contribute greatly to the economies of the towns and cities where those race meetings are conducted. In 2012-13 there were 2,565 race meetings conducted in New South Wales: 771 thoroughbred races, 501 harness races and 1,293 greyhound races. Racing events are a leading

sports event that captures the community, providing entertainment and employment opportunities. They are very important to the social and economic fabric of many communities in regional New South Wales and in city areas.

The primary source of revenue for the New South Wales racing industry and its participants is the commercial arrangements with the TAB for a revenue stream derived from wagering turnover. Under the Totalizator Act 1997 the TAB was required to enter into a commercial arrangement with the New South Wales racing industry as a prerequisite to being granted its 99-year licence to conduct offcourse and oncourse totalisators. The New South Wales racing industry receives approximately \$250 million per annum from this source. The TAB is a wholly owned subsidiary of Tabcorp Holdings Limited and has a network of approximately 2,130 agencies consisting, as I am sure people in the gallery realise, of TAB retail outlets and outlets in clubs and hotels, as well as oncourse, phone and internet services. The TAB Racing Distribution Agreement is an important element of a viable funding model for the New South Wales racing industry. It enables optimal development, operation and marketing of the New South Wales racing industry and its race meetings.

The exclusivity period of the TAB's 99-year totalisator licences expired on 22 June 2013. Prior to that date the Government engaged PricewaterhouseCoopers to examine options for the future provision of totalisator betting in the State. Following consideration of the advice provided by PricewaterhouseCoopers, the Government determined that the industry, stability and the Government were best served by entering into negotiations with Tabcorp for the extension of the TAB's totalisator licence exclusivity. That is what this bill is all about. These negotiations were undertaken by PricewaterhouseCoopers under the guidance of an inter-agency steering committee. On 20 June this year the Government announced that it had reached an in-principle agreement with Tabcorp for the company to pay \$75 million to extend the TAB's exclusive licence for oncourse and offcourse totalisator activities, including through club and pub outlets, and existing fixed-odds activities across the State for a further 20 years, until June 2033. The \$75 million payment from Tabcorp will consist of an initial payment of \$50 million, with the balance to be paid over 10 years from 2024. That is why we are talking about extending this exclusivity period and it is why I support the Totalizator Amendment (Exclusivity) Bill 2013. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr GEORGE SOURIS (Upper Hunter—Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Hospitality and Racing, and Minister for the Arts) [4.03 p.m.], in reply: I thank the members who spoke in this debate on the Totalizator Amendment (Exclusivity) Bill 2013. It has been quite interesting that so many speakers—20—made a contribution: three from the Opposition and 17 from the Government. I especially thank the acting shadow Minister, the member for Liverpool; the members representing the electorates of Hawkesbury, Bathurst, Camden, Campbelltown, East Hills, Swansea, Rockdale, Albury, Cronulla, Tweed, Clarence, Myall Lakes, Drummoyne, Charlestown, Wyong and Smithfield from the Government side; and the members for Mount Druitt and Cessnock on the Opposition side for their very valuable contributions and insights. I am always pleased to hear such contributions. I learned that several members have quite a strong and intimate knowledge of the racing industry and participate in one way or another—even if they are only handing out prizes or participating by attending—and have an interest in racing. I value their contributions and thank them very much for their comments.

The Totalizator Amendment (Exclusivity) Bill 2013 will give effect to an in-principle agreement that the Government reached with Tabcorp to extend the TAB's totalisator licence exclusivity for a further 20 years. The racing industry generates significant employment throughout the State, and provides an important social and recreational outlet to both urban and regional communities. The number of speakers on this bill is evidence of the importance of the industry, and demonstrates the impact racing and race clubs have on local communities across the State. This initiative demonstrates the Government's commitment to supporting the viability of the racing industry. The extension of the exclusivity arrangements underpins the estimated \$1 billion annual contribution to the State's economy and the 50,000 jobs the industry supports, many of which are in regional areas. As the racing community prepares for the upcoming spring carnival, this will bring surety and provide a much-needed boost to the industry.

The Opposition raised three points to which I would like to respond. The Opposition asked a question regarding the public release of the work done by PricewaterhouseCoopers. The report, as one would expect, contains highly confidential commercial information. It would be inappropriate to release such a document publicly. However, it has been arranged that the shadow Minister in another place will receive a briefing on these matters. I hope that that will be sufficient for the shadow Minister to form a view. The Opposition also raised the issue of retrospective legislation. It is common for legislation to be introduced to give effect to an

arrangement or undertaking by the State after it has been announced. In this case it should be remembered that the TAB already holds a 99-year licence to conduct oncourse and offcourse totalisators in New South Wales, which was issued in March 1998.

The expiration of the 15-year exclusivity period attached to that licence in June this year does not change the fact that the TAB was and is the operator of offcourse and oncourse totalisators in this State. The legislation before the House gives effect to the commercial arrangements reached between Tabcorp and the Government for the extension of the TAB's licence exclusivity for a further 20 years. It does not alter the existing arrangements for the provision of offcourse and oncourse totalisator activities. The Crown Solicitor's advice was relied upon throughout the process, and the tabling of the NSW Exclusivity Deed with the bill provides transparency as to the agreement. The final issue raised by the Opposition relates to compensation for a possible adverse regulatory event. A feature of the terms of the NSW Exclusivity Deed is that the State is required to make a refund payment to the TAB in the event of an adverse regulatory event. A sliding scale of refund payment amounts, depending on when the adverse regulatory event occurs during the extended period of exclusivity, is set out in schedule 3 of the deed that I tabled when the bill was introduced.

An adverse regulatory event occurs when the State introduces and Parliament chooses to enact legislation or the Minister makes an order, imposes a condition or takes any other action under any New South Wales wagering legislation, other than disciplinary action under the Act, that would enable the grant of or provide to a person other than the TAB any licence, authorisation, approval or permission to conduct any or all parts of an offcourse or oncourse totalisator or any activity that is similar to an offcourse or oncourse totalisator; or that results in the cancellation, suspension or reduction of the term of the exclusivity period or prevents or restricts the TAB from receiving the benefit of the scheme. The existing arrangements whereby the Minister may approve or authorise licensed bookmakers to take bets oncourse or offcourse other than in a public place, including fixed odds and declared events betting, are not adverse regulatory events under the terms of the deed. Any change to bet types permitted in New South Wales by the Minister, which applies equally to all bookmakers and other wagering operators providing bookmaking or wagering services in New South Wales, is not deemed to be an adverse regulatory event; nor is call-of-the-card betting.

Importantly no refund payment is required of the State if the TAB's new exclusivity arrangements are affected by the repeal or amendment of a provision of New South Wales wagering legislation as a result of a decision of a court of final appeal's finding that the New South Wales provision, or an equivalent provision in another jurisdiction, is invalid or unenforceable because it contravenes section 92 of the Constitution Act of the Commonwealth of Australia. In other words, a successful challenge to wagering laws on constitutional grounds, which requires New South Wales legislation to be changed and results in the TAB's exclusivity arrangements being adversely affected, does not trigger any compensation payments.

The drafting of the terms of the New South Wales Exclusivity Deed occurred under the direction of an inter-agency steering committee comprising representatives of the Office of Liquor, Gaming and Racing, the Treasury, the Department of Premier and Cabinet and the Crown Solicitor's Office. Throughout the process PricewaterhouseCoopers provided ongoing legal assistance while the Crown Solicitor's Office played an active role in the process. I trust that my replies to the three matters raised by the Opposition constitute sufficient answer. In any case, as I mentioned, I give an undertaking that the shadow Minister in the other place will receive a further briefing relating to the PricewaterhouseCoopers report. Beyond that, I thank all 20 members who contributed to the debate. I commend the bill to the House.

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

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Third Reading

Motion by Mr George Souris agreed to:

That this bill be now read a third time.

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

BUDGET ESTIMATES AND RELATED PAPERS**Financial Year 2013-14****Debate resumed from 21 August 2013.**

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie) [4.12 p.m.]: I am pleased to comment on the third budget of the O'Farrell-Stoner Government—a budget that continues to build for the future of New South Wales and continues to build on what we have achieved in the past two years. This year's State budget has delivered some major projects for the Port Macquarie electorate as part of a plan to increase investment in infrastructure and of course to invest in the growing needs of our local community. Despite the current economic climate, the New South Wales Government again has delivered a strong but tough budget honouring our promise to support regional New South Wales. On 26 March 2011 the people of New South Wales made it very clear that they wanted change. They left us in no doubt that change must be delivered by the new Government immediately. They wanted us to correct the course of our State's economy and steer the ship of state in the right direction to make sure New South Wales returned to its status as the number one place in which to do business and the State that was once the powerhouse of the Australian economy.

There is now no doubt that we are achieving that goal, thanks to the hard work of the Treasurer and the Ministers in the Liberal-Nationals Government. The most recent report by the ANZ notes that New South Wales growth performance has improved and that in fact our economic potential is "more upbeat than in recent years". We know that under Labor's reign growth in this State consistently lagged behind other mainland States and particularly, but not surprisingly, Western Australia and Queensland, which were reaping the benefits of the mining boom. The strong and effective management of budgets over the past two and a half years by this Government means that New South Wales has created more jobs over the past two years than any other State and now has the second-lowest unemployment rate in the nation, behind only Western Australia.

The people of New South Wales can now look forward to the return of our State as the driver of the national economy. We are now experiencing growing consumer confidence, although undoubtedly that will increase further with the long-awaited and predicted change of government federally and the return to common sense policy and decision-making. As the Treasurer highlighted in his most recent economic update for New South Wales, this consumer optimism "stems from ... diversified industry structure, the recovery in the housing sector, a close correlation with a recovering US economy and the Government's large infrastructure program." New South Wales small-to-medium enterprises recorded the second-highest confidence of all the States for the second quarter in a row. Despite a fall in business confidence in the past quarter, New South Wales is well above the national average.

Every one of our Ministers has taken the right steps to secure the future of our State by streamlining bureaucracy and delivering better services to the front line. There have been some difficult decisions to make, and we make no apology for making them because, without having the courage to make change, the future economy of New South Wales would continue to flounder as it did under Labor for 16 years. The O'Farrell-Stoner Government recognises the urgent need to build infrastructure across the State, particularly in regional areas where there has been a lack of investment for far too long. The Port Macquarie electorate, like other areas across the State, has experienced a slump in housing starts. That has had obvious impacts on the local economy, which has seen many of our skilled workers exit the local area in favour of mining jobs both in other parts of New South Wales and of course interstate.

Therefore it is welcome news that last year's strong budget focus on expediting housing and other development activity in New South Wales—indeed Port Macquarie was one of the key beneficiaries in this space—is now paying off. The number of new houses built in New South Wales in the past 12 months is the highest in eight years as New South Wales leads the way on increasing new housing, according to data released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. The recent budget announcement to extend the New South Wales Government's generous first home buyer scheme is helping the next generation of families. This has been underpinned locally with \$3 million from the New South Wales Government to boost housing construction with a water reservoir being built for the Thrumster release area and the Sancrox employment area, thereby accelerating the release of 4,500 new properties in the Port Macquarie region. Last month the Port Macquarie-Hastings Council awarded the tender for the commencement of earthworks associated with this key infrastructure project.

The announcement to stimulate the Port Macquarie housing and construction sector has been matched with additional incentives for new home buyers with a grant of up to \$15,000. This is a great inducement and it

will reinvigorate our local housing market as well as have a positive impact on the broader local economy. The Minister for Roads and Ports, the Hon. Duncan Gay, has visited the Port Macquarie electorate on several occasions since the 2011 election. I know I speak for other Nationals members when I say we will always throw out the welcome mat for him in our regional seats. There is no doubt that the state of our roads is one of the major concerns of locals, but the good news is that the State Government also has given it a high priority. Again, Port Macquarie is realising the benefits. This year's budget allocated more than \$53 million for roads, including \$11.5 million to complete the construction of a dual carriageway upgrade of the Pacific Highway between Herons Creek and Stills Road as well as \$35 million to award the construction contract and to continue planning for the upgrade of the Pacific Highway between the Oxley Highway and Kundabung.

The disappointment is the lack of commitment from the Federal Government, which continues to play political games on this issue. Unlike Federal Labor, the Liberals and The Nationals at both a State and Federal level have put the money on the table, ensuring that the highway upgrade will be completed sooner rather than later. While Federal Labor has walked away from the previous 80:20 funding split that was in place with its Labor mates under the former State Government, the Federal Coalition has made a genuine commitment to this vital infrastructure project. Hopefully, we will soon see a change in Federal Government and a return to realistic and achievable State-Federal funding arrangements that will deliver real results for those who live on the North Coast. One dangerous stretch of road that is in urgent need of improvement is the Oxley Highway between the Pacific Highway and Wauchope. Sadly, this stretch has claimed the lives of a number of people over past years. In a bid to make safety improvements on the Oxley Highway, \$2.8 million is being spent on overtaking lanes. We did not do what the previous Labor Government did: We consulted with our community to seek their views on where the money would be best spent. Yes, we communicated with hundreds of local residents who commute on this road every day, and the upgrade reflected their comment and their views.

I cannot leave the Roads portfolio without a special mention of the tremendous support Minister Duncan Gay has shown the people of Camden Haven by allocating an additional \$2 million to Port Macquarie-Hastings Council for the construction of Stingray Creek Bridge at North Haven. This brings the State Government's commitment to 50 per cent of the total cost of up to approximately \$16 million for the new bridge. Hopefully we will soon see construction commence. I know this is a day that this community has waited for patiently and that this work will be welcomed by locals and visitors alike. I will continue with the issue of roads because, as I said, it is considered a real priority by the residents of the Port Macquarie electorate. Prior to the 2011 State election the former general manager of Port Macquarie-Hastings Council wrote to the then Opposition Leader, Barry O'Farrell, highlighting the need to upgrade one of the main arterial roads into Port Macquarie, that is, Ocean Drive. Each weekday morning this is a bottleneck for motorists, causing considerable delays. The council advised in its correspondence that it needed \$10 million to upgrade the road to meet existing and future demand. I am pleased to say the Coalition promised the much-needed funding. This year's budget allocated \$2.7 million to allow council to get on with detailed design works. I look forward to the day we see construction to improve this arterial road.

As a former nurse I know that one of the most anticipated projects now well underway is the expansion of Port Macquarie Base Hospital. This year's budget allocated \$59.5 million towards the upgrade, which will cost in total \$110 million, \$96 million of which was provided by the Federal Government. Communities across the Hastings, Macleay and Camden Haven districts, the dedicated doctors, nurses and health professionals, support staff and administrators, the volunteers, and all those in between, are most deserving of this significant and worthwhile project. The project will deliver a first-class healthcare facility; and the people of this region deserve nothing less. It has been a long campaign for this major upgrade and now there is so much to look forward to as the predicted April 2014 completion date nears. The hospital will have a bigger emergency department, additional medical and surgical inpatient beds, reconfigured and expanded operating theatres, a new critical care unit and a cardiac catheterisation laboratory. The redevelopment will address future demand for clinical services, improve access to surgery and emergency department services, improve overall functionality and efficiency of service delivery, provide substantial ongoing employment opportunities, generating more than 300 full-time positions, and inject more than \$40 million in wages and supplies into the local community annually.

The 2013 budget also allocated \$1.8 million towards a \$3.9 million new fire station for Port Macquarie. Last year's budget got the ball rolling with a \$1.6 million funding boost for that project. The new station will be built on land in Central Road in Port Macquarie located near the new State Emergency Service and ambulance stations. The Minister for Police, the Hon. Mike Gallacher from the other place, also visited Port Macquarie during the past year to announce \$2.5 million for a new Police Citizen Youth Club [PCYC]. This is a major win for our local community, which has been lobbying for years for additional facilities for our youth. Despite its

popularity among our young people, our former PCYC closed its doors around four years ago—sad news for the hundreds of members and sad news for the community. The new PCYC to be located at the basketball stadium will fill a serious void. I am pleased to advise that a development application for the new facility will be lodged with Port Macquarie-Hastings Council later this month. This community through various organisations has been working for many years to address the lack of youth facilities in our area and I know that, along with the younger population, they will be excited to see construction underway in the months ahead.

No-one will be surprised that as a member who represents a coastal electorate, I take the issue of coastal erosion very seriously, particularly as Lake Cathie where I live is listed as one of the coastal erosion hot spots, with homes and local infrastructure under threat. Port Macquarie-Hastings Council recently approved a revetment wall to be constructed to reduce the impact of coastal erosion adjacent to Illaroo Road at Lake Cathie. Tenders have now been let for the design phase of that project following a \$200,000 allocation of funding from the Minister for the Environment, Robyn Parker. This issue comes with an expensive price tag—an estimated \$3 million—a cost that I believe should be shared by all three levels of government. I thank the Minister for visiting Lake Cathie last year and seeing firsthand the impact of the erosion. I know that local residents appreciated the opportunity to discuss their concerns with her personally.

The 2013 budget also saw an allocation of \$1.8 million for the construction of two five-bedroom disability group homes to be built in Gray and Morton streets in Port Macquarie. I have a personal interest in the disability sector and have appreciated the opportunity to work closely with service providers and stakeholder groups in improving disability services locally, and I am pleased that the Minister has invested in improvements to these facilities. I thank the former Minister for Disability Services, Andrew Constance, for his work in this portfolio and wish the new Minister, John Ajaka, all the best in his new role. Increasing social housing accommodation was also addressed in the budget through Family and Community Services with almost \$3.2 million allocated for 15 social housing units to be built in Heather Street and Woodgrove Close. These facilities will go a long way to helping to reduce the social housing problems associated with a coastal town like Port Macquarie. The current waiting list for social housing is around 14 years; I am pleased that Minister Goward is not only recognising this growing need but also addressing it through funding and new assets on the ground.

Members in this House will know I am lucky enough also to represent the people who reside on the idyllic Lord Howe Island. In a major boost for Lord Howe Island, whose economy is reliant on the tourism sector, funding has been allocated for the resealing of the airport runway, which is the main travel portal for the island community and visitors alike. Treasury will be providing 50 per cent of the funding for the runway reseal project of \$4 million over two years, with additional funding being sought from the Commonwealth and other sources. The runway is a critical link for the island, Port Macquarie and Sydney as well as for the rest of the world and receives around 16,000 passengers a year. The runway surface has reached the end of its economic life. The runway was first sealed in 1974 and resealed in 1996. The latest resealing will ensure the continued operation of suitable passenger aircraft to Lord Howe Island into the future. In 2012, the Lord Howe Island Board prepared a detailed case for the resealing of the runway and installation of improved drainage. I am pleased that funding has been made available for the upgrade of this essential island infrastructure and congratulate the Lord Howe Island Board on its successful application.

My entrance into public life began as a lobbyist as I petitioned along with the Lake Cathie community for over a decade for a local public school. Well, to say I have left the best to last this afternoon would only be slightly tongue in cheek. While it did not appear in the budget with a dollar figure, I was very pleased to see the announcement that a new public school will indeed be built and will be open on day one in term one 2015. Land for the new school has not only been identified; it is in the process of being purchased, design work is well underway and I have no doubt that the community will be very impressed with this long-awaited facility. This is something that despite previous members saying they supported it, they simply could not or would not deliver for our community. I also note that the last public school built in the area—Camden Haven High School—was also a commitment by a Liberals and Nationals Government.

I go back to the point I made at the commencement of this speech: that is that, despite the current economic climate, the O'Farrell-Stoner Government delivered a strong but tough budget in 2013 that saw \$150 million allocated to the Port Macquarie electorate. This Government continues to deliver on its pre-election commitments—which is a vast difference from what we have seen from Labor governments both Federal and State in recent years. Whilst I have discussed the many key infrastructure projects being delivered to the electorate as outlined in the 2013-14 State budget, there is more work to be done. I look forward to

making, and I can assure the community I will continue to make, strong representation on their behalf to ensure that funding continues to flow to drive our local economy for the benefit of all who have the privilege of living in the beautiful Port Macquarie electorate.

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

GAME AND FERAL ANIMAL CONTROL

Discussion on Petition Signed by 10,000 or More Persons

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Melanie Gibbons): Order! Government business having concluded, the House will now consider the petition signed by 10,000 or more persons. Before calling the member for Sydney, I wish to welcome members of the public who are in the gallery today. It is a relatively new procedure in the Legislative Assembly to discuss the subject of a petition with 10,000 or more signatures. This is an opportunity for members of the public to hear such matters discussed in Parliament; and I appreciate that you have a strong interest in the subject matter. I am aware that there are strongly held opposing views on the matter to be discussed today. One tenet of parliamentary discussion is to allow those opposing views to be freely expressed, without interference. I therefore ask that those in the gallery refrain from clapping or distracting debate in any way, including verbally or visually.

I ask the gentleman in the gallery not to proceed with putting on the vest, pursuant to my request that the debate not be distracted either verbally or visually. If you would resume your seat, that would be appreciated. Should there be any disruption of the orderly proceedings of the House from the members of the public, please understand that I will have no hesitation in suspending the sitting and clearing everyone from the gallery or asking that people be removed. I thank you for your understanding. I call the member for Sydney.

Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) [4.31 p.m.]: I also welcome everyone to the public gallery to see the people's Parliament and democracy in action. This petition was signed by nearly 12,000 New South Wales residents, calling on the Government to overturn legislation regarding recreational hunting in national parks. It represents one of the strongest community campaigns in recent years. The petition was created by the National Parks Association of New South Wales and its aims are supported by the major environment groups and animal protection groups. I would like to highlight the work of Kevin Evans and Justin McKee—who are in the gallery—and also thank the staff of the Minister for the Environment for the work they have done.

There is widespread condemnation of recreational hunting in national parks. National parks are set aside for the long-term protection of our diminishing biodiversity. Parks offer peace and quiet, fresh air, visual beauty and the opportunity to learn about native flora and fauna. People of all ages, including families and visitors from across the country and the globe, come to enjoy the unique national parks that New South Wales has to offer. They are seen as safe places and it is mindboggling that the Government has entertained the idea of allowing recreational hunters to bring guns, bows and arrows, and black powder weapons into these natural escape havens to kill animals on their own terms.

There is no question that this activity places park visitors and staff at risk of harm. Internal Government reports rate the threat of death or injury as high, and confrontation incidents as high to medium. Sufficient supervision of thousands of hunters roaming about large tracts of land, as was initially proposed, will never be possible. The aim of hunters is not the protection of our biodiversity or the peaceful enjoyment of national parks; it is to ensure the long-term sustainability of the sport of hunting. Recreational hunters enjoy killing animals for sport. There are known cases of recreational hunters releasing introduced species into the wild in order to maintain game population for future hunting.

There is no evidence that recreational hunting is an effective way to manage introduced species. Recreational hunting is an ad hoc method of pest control. It does not involve the extensive consideration of proper, scientific, introduced species management plans. Eradication of populations across a widespread area is not possible through uncontrolled, unplanned, random killing. Internal Government reports reveal that amateurs hunting in national parks would put native animals at risk of being maimed or accidentally killed. There are already many known cases of this happening in State forests. I welcome the Government's recent changes to limit the program to a three-year trial in 12 national parks within which all pest control programs, including hunting, will be controlled, managed and under terms set by the National Parks and Wildlife Service. Recreational hunters should not protest. They will be able to apply to join National Parks and Wildlife Service professionals on dedicated hunting operations.

We now need a review of the Game Control Act to reflect the newly imposed restrictions so that they remain in the future and also apply to State forests. Concern exists about the way target animals are treated in pest control programs. Introduced species do not feel less pain because they have been labelled pests. Hunters do not always kill with a single shot. Some animals escape and suffer a slow and painful death, and others are shot repeatedly. Hunting is cruel. I am also concerned about other forms of pest control, including the use of Pindone and 1080, which cause immense suffering to animals. The funds the Government will invest in hunting programs in our national parks should be used to develop a compassionate solution to introduced species. Investment should be directed to developing humane pest management programs, such as fertility control and trap, de-sex and return. These strategies work. They are humane and should be implemented. We need to base pest management decisions on peer-reviewed, measurable science. There is no point engaging programs that have no effect on feral animal populations over time.

Members who support recreational hunting often cite the numbers of feral pigs, foxes, deer and goats destroyed by hunters but such figures are meaningless. If there is no difference in overall population over time, the program is mere cruelty and cannot be justified. The changes to the Game Control Act must ensure that amateur hunters and anyone under 18 cannot be granted permission to hunt on public lands in this State. With the Game Council now dissolved, funds previously dedicated to its involvement with controlling introduced species should be transferred to the National Parks and Wildlife Service to manage national parks and wilderness areas and for the wider protection of native flora and fauna. Funds allocated to the NSW Police Force to crack down on illegal hunting activity should remain for that purpose and be included in future budgets. Prior to the last election the Government promised not to support recreational hunting in national parks and this cruel, ineffective and unpopular policy should never be proposed again. I congratulate everyone involved in this campaign on their strong and concerted efforts that have led to the Government changing and improving its approach to feral animal control.

Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON (Burrinjuck—Minister for Primary Industries, and Minister for Small Business) [4.36 p.m.]: The New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Government is acutely aware of the need for effective pest animal control on public lands in New South Wales. The overall direct economic impact of pest animals in New South Wales has been conservatively estimated at \$740 million annually. To tackle this problem at its core, we need better coordination of government agencies and the use of all available resources, including professional and volunteer pest management service providers. The volunteer hunting program that started operating in State forests in March 2006 achieved significant outcomes. There are almost 20,000 game hunting licence holders, who collectively have spent more than 84,500 days contributing to pest management in up to 400 of our State forests. They have removed almost 95,000 game and feral animals, such as feral pigs and goats, wild dogs, foxes and rabbits. That effort amounted to a major reduction in the impact on biodiversity, a major reduction in the consumption by introduced species of native fauna and flora, and a major reduction in the population of feral animals impacting on farmers and landholders who adjoin State forests.

The Minister for the Environment has announced a program for the introduction of supplementary pest control in the State's national parks. The program was developed following a rigorous risk assessment process and expert advice. The National Parks and Wildlife Service [NPWS] will regulate and manage the supplementary pest control program. New measures will ensure that volunteers are held to a standard equivalent to the one that applies to National Parks and Wildlife Service staff and contractors, who already undertake pest control operations on the park estate at significant cost. The supplementary pest control program will be similar in principle to hazard reduction operations, which use volunteers with a high level of training and competency. The Rural Fire Service—with its volunteers—is renowned as an effective, proactive and skilled organisation that delivers a highly valued service to the community and to the landscape. A number of controls, coupled with planning and direction by National Parks and Wildlife Service staff, will enable effective management of pest animals in national parks, with safety paramount in the design of the program.

The pest control program will augment existing pest control programs operating throughout the State under the direction of experienced National Parks and Wildlife Service staff. Feral animals are already culled in national parks using trapping, baiting and shooting. I feel sure that the proponents of the petition would not dispute that feral animal control is necessary in national parks. This new program will simply give the National Parks and Wildlife Service additional volunteer resources to ensure that we are doing all we can to remove pest animals from our landscape. The Government must achieve the optimal use of all available resources to control feral animals. A range of risk-management measures is in place: no volunteer can carry a firearm in a national park unless they are participating in a planned pest control program, scheduled and managed by the National Parks and Wildlife Service; no person under 18 is allowed to participate in the program; and only firearms

equivalent to those used in National Parks and Wildlife Service operations will be permitted. The use of bows and arrows, and black powder muskets is forbidden. Initially, only 12 parks or reserves will be part of the program.

A review and report back to government will be undertaken before any further rollout of the program. The program may be made available in up to 75 of the State's national parks or reserves, which is less than 10 per cent of the total number of parks in New South Wales. The majority of the parks involved in the trial are in the State's west and the program will not occur in any wilderness, World Heritage or metropolitan area. As with existing pest control operations, these activities will be planned and announced at least four weeks in advance. Any area where a pest control operation is to be undertaken will be closed to visitors during the period of the operation, with appropriate signage and road closures in place. The program will not occur during school holidays. It is expected to commence in some parks from October this year. These measures—and those to be introduced after the review of the current risk assessment for all State Forests and two Crown Lands areas—will provide a more coordinated approach for the management of pest animals in New South Wales.

Ms CARMEL TEBBUTT (Marrickville) [4.41 p.m.]: I support this petition, and I congratulate the member for Sydney on bringing this important issue to the attention of the House today. I acknowledge all those people who have been involved in collecting signatures and all the people who are in the public gallery today. The O'Farrell Government's decision to allow hunting in national parks has caused enormous concern right across New South Wales, as is clearly demonstrated by this petition that is signed by 12,000 people. This is a huge issue in my electorate of Marrickville. Many constituents have phoned me, emailed me or met with me to express their concern and their anger that the O'Farrell Government could walk away from the very clear commitment that it made to the people of New South Wales that there would be no hunting in national parks in this State. In fact, such was the strength of feeling in my electorate that many people turned up on a very cold May evening to a public meeting that I held to protest against this decision.

New South Wales has a national park estate that is the envy of the rest of Australia. Indeed, it is the envy of the rest of the world. We have more than 850 national parks and reserves, comprising 6.8 million hectares, covering a vast array of landscapes and protecting our precious native flora and fauna. These areas exist for the purpose of nature conservation, and to provide opportunities for appropriate recreational activities. They are unique and special areas and are valued enormously by the people of New South Wales. The Government's decision to allow hunting in national parks is one that I deplore on environmental grounds, on scientific grounds and, most importantly, on safety grounds.

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

Ms CARMEL TEBBUTT: Government members can interject but we all know that there is one reason—and one reason only—the Government has allowed hunting in national parks. It is because those opposite did a deal with the Shooters and Fishers Party so that the Government could pass its electricity privatisation bill. The Premier has made it absolutely clear; he has no shame about that. But we also know that any initiative that is a result of a political deal rather than proper evidence-based policymaking is bound to be flawed—and this initiative is no different. The Government has had to twist into contortions in order to satisfy the deal it made with the Shooters and Fishers Party. A review of the Game Council NSW earlier this year led to its abolition. This was the body that pushed for amateur hunting to occur in our national parks. It was the body that was supposed to oversee amateur hunting in our national parks. Despite this body being abolished, the Government is proceeding with this very flawed policy. This policy is going to have a huge detrimental impact on our national parks. People will be afraid to visit our national parks. They will be scared for their safety. The Government must listen to the people of New South Wales and reverse this terrible decision.

Mr TROY GRANT (Dubbo—Parliamentary Secretary) [4.44 p.m.]: In speaking to the petition before the House, I inform those in the gallery that I spent 22 years in the police force before entering this place. In that occupation I dealt with facts and evidence, which is crucial to establishing what is occurring as opposed to what is alleged to be occurring across our community. On that premise, let us be quite clear: The shooting of pest animals already occurs in national parks. It occurred under the guidance of the Labor Party. The National Parks and Wildlife Service officers already use firearms to control pest species in a coordinated and well-planned program. They do it safely and with the sole intention of reducing the great harm that pest animals do to our national parks and reserves and adjoining land by destroying native habitats, flora and fauna.

The new supplementary pest control program is an extension of this. The Minister for the Environment recently announced the details of the new program in New South Wales national parks, giving the National

Parks and Wildlife Service access to additional volunteer resources to assist in conducting pest control programs. I repeat: These programs already exist. These volunteers will be required to have high-level training and undergo competency testing in safe firearms handling and shooting proficiency—I underwent similar training in my policing career so I understand it well—which will be equivalent to the training undertaken by current National Parks and Wildlife Service staff. The pest control program will simply help the National Parks and Wildlife Service extend its existing pest control within national parks and reserves. There will be other cooperative programs with neighbours to protect native species and agriculture from the terrible impacts of pest animals. The member for Sydney talks about that issue but he does not provide the facts.

The National Parks and Wildlife Service will continue to initiate, plan and direct all pest control activities within these parks. It will ensure that the programs are safe and that they achieve the aim of reducing the pest animal burden on our lands—and it is a significant burden. The program is part of the Government's plan to ensure the effective and sound management of pest animals in New South Wales—and we are starting to reach crisis point in that regard. The Minister for Primary Industries, who spoke a short while ago, announced recently that the Government would adopt the key recommendations of the "Governance Review of the Game Council of NSW" report by Mr Steve Dunn. The Government has suspended hunting in all 400 State forests and two Crown land areas pending the transfer of functions and the outcome of the review of the current risk assessment, which is being conducted as a result of the Dunn report. The experience to date of licensed, responsible hunting on declared public lands shows that the vast majority of hunters have complied with the law when hunting. The Government expects that good behaviour to continue. [*Time expired.*]

Mr JAMIE PARKER (Balmain) [4.47 p.m.], by leave: I support the thousands of people who signed the petition opposing hunting in national parks and the many spirited grassroots campaigners who made their voices heard on this issue. Make no mistake, it was this activism and campaigning that helped us achieve a significant victory in this campaign. The O'Farrell Government was embarrassed—it was convinced by the evidence—into abolishing the pro-gun, pro-hunting Game Council NSW, suspending amateur hunting in State forests and ending the idea of unrestricted amateur hunting in national parks. That decision followed a decade-long campaign by many including environment groups, animal welfare organisations and local campaigners who have signed this petition. It was a deal—which we campaigned against—with the gun lobby and the former Labor Government, which opened up State forests for amateur recreational hunting.

This Government proposes to take it further in another deal to extend hunting to national parks. The Government's own risk assessment said that hunting in national parks would bring significant risk of injury and death. The Dunn report into the governance of the Game Council NSW supported what the Greens and other campaigners have been saying: The Game Council NSW was basically a public relations machine for hunters and shooters, and was failing in its obligations as a publicly funded body to be transparent, accountable and effective. The abolition of the Game Council NSW is therefore a significant step, but this policy still needs new work when it comes to viewing feral pest control as a rigorous scientific and humane program. I am sure that all members in this House agree that pests are a major issue, which needs to be dealt with. I highlight the important work of people like Justin McKee and Kevin Evans from the National Parks Association, who have helped make this day a success.

A continuing conflict of interest exists between amateur hunters who want to ensure a good crop of animals—they want feral animals—and public sector land managers. I acknowledge the positive changes that the Government has made to this policy since this petition was signed. It now requires that shooters demonstrate exactly the same level of skill and training that the National Parks and Wildlife Service rangers have, and only operate as part of targeted and evidence-based pest control programs. That is the point we have consistently argued: We need targeted and evidence-based pest control programs. Letting weekend warriors shoot up national parks is not a pest control program. The Government has taken steps to address this, and I acknowledge that. Unlike what some in the Game Council NSW and the Shooters and Fishers Party wanted, there will be no unsupervised hunting, no children allowed to hunt, and no hunting with bows, knives or dogs. This is an important step, but it still views killing as sport.

There are gun lobbyists who want to open national parks to unsupervised recreational hunters. We Greens will be maintaining pressure on the Government to completely ban unsupervised amateur hunting on public land in New South Wales and redirect what was the budget of the Game Council NSW to professional pest control programs and further research into humane pest control. The Government will soon begin trials, and we will be keeping a very close eye on that. I acknowledge the steps the Government has taken. I congratulate all of those people who have signed this petition. It was the effort of many people who are sitting in the gallery today that helped make legislation that is better for the environment and which helps control pest animals. They also helped ensure that the legislation reflects the true will of the people in our community.

Mr JOHN WILLIAMS (Murray-Darling) [4.50 p.m.], by leave: This is truly democracy at work. There are 10,000 signatures. I ask the 10,000 people who have signed this petition: Have you been to the national parks in question? Have you looked at the conditions? Have you seen the feral animals that are in those national parks? Have you spoken to adjoining property holders? Have you seen the impact of feral animals on some of the farming regions? Do you know first-hand how the program will work?

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Melanie Gibbons): Order! The member for Murray-Darling does not need the assistance of Government members.

Mr JOHN WILLIAMS: I appreciate the honesty of the member for Balmain: he cleared up the myth and innuendo attached to the Government's decision to allow shooters in national parks. He said that the Government has taken responsible direction because shooters will be supervised. I have not heard of an incident of someone being maimed, injured or killed in a State forest because of shooters. New South Wales has 180,000 registered shooters. I spend a deal of time with members of the Shooters and Fishers Party in my electorate; they are not rednecks. They are responsible people. They respect the right to have a firearm and they also respect the laws. Many people, including me, would not participate in that hobby but, fortunately, shooters can engage in their recreation. Knowing how the National Parks and Wildlife Service administers its business, I assure the House that shooters will not be able to run wild and do as the member for Sydney said. Currently, shooting is permitted in national parks. Shooters are contracted by the National Parks and Wildlife Service to shoot feral animals, which they do from within helicopters, not from the ground. Animals they shoot do not die instantly, as we would like; they are maimed and left to die. That is what happens now. It is not part of a scare campaign. Go and see what is happening in the national parks before making a decision from a concrete jungle.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Melanie Gibbons): Order! I thank those in the public gallery for listening to the debate in silence.

Discussion concluded.

COMMUNITY RECOGNITION STATEMENTS

HIS HOLINESS MAR ADDAI II

Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool) [4.52 p.m.]: I draw to the attention of the House and acknowledge the presence of His Holiness Mar Addai, the Second Patriarch of the Ancient Church of the East in Australia, and particularly the welcoming ceremony for him on the day he arrived in Australia on July 3 from Iraq. The welcoming ceremony was held at the Saint Zaia Cathedral, located within my electorate in the suburb of Middleton Grange, an institution in which I have been involved since its establishment and, indeed, its development consent from Liverpool City Council. The ceremony featured many members of the Assyrian community, such as Nissan Yacda, and the community's religious leaders. It was a pleasure to be invited to the event.

INTERNATIONAL TAEKWONDO HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE FAY SHACKLOCK

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) [4.52 p.m.]: I inform the House that Fay Shacklock of Forster will become the first person to be inducted into the International Taekwondo Hall of Fame in the Humanitarian category in recognition of her decades of involvement in the sport. Fay is the holder of a sixth dan black belt and has not been beaten in more than two decades in the power breaking competition. However, it is not the strength of her ability in taekwondo that earned Fay her award but, rather, what she does helping underachievers become the best they can. Fay began taekwondo in 1980 when, as a sole parent, she looked for a sport in which she could participate with her children. Fay became the first female power breaking national champion in 1991, and in 1998 won the first Asia Pan-Pacific Masters female title. Fay also was the first ever female vice-president of Taekwondo Australia and the first female national executive council member. In 2012, Fay became the first non-Korean woman to reach sixth dan international master level.

ACON ANTI-VIOLENCE PROJECT

Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) [4.53 p.m.]: I acknowledge the fantastic work of the ACON Anti-Violence Project, including the Safe Place Program. The Safe Place Program began in 1991 as a grassroots response to homophobic violence and abuse in the inner city where lesbians and gay men congregated and

socialised, complementing the volunteer street patrol and whistle project. Funds from the New South Wales Attorney General's Department allowed the lesbian and gay Anti-Violence Project to employ staff and develop education campaigns. Safe Place refuges provide a safe place for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex [LGBTI] community members who have experienced street violence. All Safe Places display a Safe Place charter which promotes equality and acceptance, with a commitment to protect victims and get help. Over 80 venues throughout New South Wales have joined the program, committing to end violence and discrimination against the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex community. My Paddington office has signed up as a Safe Place and I encourage other members of Parliament, and all businesses, service providers and organisations to join. I commend the Safe Place program to the House.

ORDER OF AUSTRALIA MEDAL RECIPIENT ENID KIRTON

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla) [4.54 p.m.]: I congratulate Mrs Enid Kirton of Caringbah, who received a Medal of the Order of Australia [OAM] in the 2013 Queen's Birthday Honours List "for services to the community of the Sutherland Shire". Mrs Kirton's contribution to life and culture in the shire spans decades, and the development of local visual and performing arts owes a great deal to her determination and dedication. Mrs Kirton was a founding member of the Bjelke-Petersen School of Physical Culture Caringbah in 1956, a member of the Cronulla School of Arts since 1964 and has been active in the Caringbah Uniting Church Council. She is also a life member of the Port Hacking Potters Group and says she is most proud of her role as a member of the Sutherland Shire Council's Hazelhurst sub-committee, which helped to establish Hazelhurst Regional Gallery and Arts Centre, a fantastic resource for southern Sydney that showcases over 15 national and international travelling exhibitions annually.

NEWCASTLE DISTRICT CRICKET LIFE MEMBER GREG GEISE

Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend) [4.55 p.m.]: I recognise Greg Geise, who was awarded a life membership at the Newcastle District Cricket Association's annual general meeting this year in recognition of his lifelong dedication to cricket. At age seven Greg started playing cricket for Wallsend's under-10 team. He continued playing mostly in Wallsend but also in Waverly and he played in the New South Wales Sheffield Shield team and the Australian under-19 team. He continued to play cricket for the next 43 years. He has reached almost every milestone in the sport, both as coach and player. He has given back to the community, sharing his expertise with the Hunter Academy of Sport and as a coach for the Newcastle senior representative side and the New South Wales country representative side. We thank him and wish him all the best for the future.

ARCTIC STAR MEDAL RECIPIENT PETER RUDD

BLOOD DONOR RONALD WALKER

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie) [4.56 p.m.]: I congratulate two local residents. After nearly 70 years, 88-year-old Laurieton resident Peter Rudd finally received his Arctic Star Medal from the British Government for his service in Royal Navy convoys to Russia during World War II. These convoys were organised to support Russia in its defence against Nazi Germany and were the subject of heavy losses and countless deaths. This was partly the cause of the past omission of the medals, and Peter is grateful to former convoy chief, Commander Eddie Grenfell, for never ceasing his pressure on the British Government to award the medals to those who served. Peter served as an Able Seaman AA3 Gunner and is part of six generations of his family to serve in the Royal Navy dating back to Trafalgar.

I congratulate also Ronald Walker, who has donated blood through the Australian Red Cross for more than four decades. Mr Walker started giving blood in Sydney when just 18 years of age and has since made an incredible 524 donations. A spokesperson for the Australian Red Cross recently stated that Mr Walker's milestone number of donations has helped save the lives of 1,500 Australians in need. I congratulate both men on their inspiring and selfless feats helping others.

BALLROOM DANCER DES HARPER

Mr RICHARD AMERY (Mount Druitt) [4.57 p.m.]: I ask the Parliament to note a good news story in my electorate. Mr Des Harper, 82 years old and a resident of Rooty Hill, is reported this week to have taken home gold trophies and a silver bar in Latin and ballroom dancing at a recent medal testing event in nearby Penrith. The awards follow 15 routines with his dance partner and teacher, Janelle Guff, who teaches from the

St Marys Dance Centre. Mr Harper took up dancing just 18 months ago, as he explained, to fill in his life after his wife died. He dances five times per week. His ambition is to dance the paso doble in front of a big crowd with his teacher, Janelle. We congratulate Des Harper who through his success has given inspiration to people of his age. As the local newspaper said, you are never too old. Well done Des.

RURAL SCIENCE STUDENT TIFFANY HUNT

Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands) [4.58 p.m.]: I acknowledge and congratulate University of New England rural science student Tiffany Hunt, who at present is in Calgary, Canada, representing Australia at the Global Youth Ag Summit. Tiffany, one of four students chosen to attend the conference, submitted a 2,000-word essay dealing with the challenges and opportunities of feeding a hungry planet. As a delegate at the conference, her goal is to share ideas about agriculture with other young people, business leaders and scientists, and return with an action plan for Australia outlining strategies on how to address food security now and in the future, and present it to policymakers. Tiffany, 22, is in her final year of rural science and comes from a farming family near Coolatai, a great community in the Northern Tablelands electorate. I congratulate Tiffany on her selection and wish her well at the conference and in her future studies.

EID AL-FITR DINNER

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) [4.58 p.m.]: SBS and the Affinity Intercultural Foundation hosted the Eid Al-Fitr dinner on Thursday 15 August 2013. The dinner seeks to improve understanding between Australians of diverse religious and cultural backgrounds. The Eid Al-Fitr dinner is held at the conclusion of Ramadan to celebrate diversity as the great strength of our multicultural community. Eid Al-Fitr brings people together to remind them of their shared values and vision. The dinner also aims to highlight the vision of a fairer society for all. SBS football presenter Mr David Basheer was the master of ceremony; Mr Ibrahim Karaisli provided the Quranic recitation; Mr Levent Artan kept everyone entertained with his musical performance; and, finally, Professor Gillian Triggs, President of the Australian Human Rights Commission, provided the keynote address. A personal reflection was given by former Soccerroo of Turkish Muslim heritage Mr Aytek Gene. Congratulations to Mr Peter Khalil and to Mr Ahmet Keskin from the Affinity Intercultural Foundation.

ORANGE SENIOR FIREFIGHTER STEVE CALLAGHAN

Mr ANDREW GEE (Orange) [4.59 p.m.]: I draw the attention of the House to the efforts of Orange senior firefighter Steve Callaghan who went to New Zealand as part of the elite urban search and rescue team of Fire and Rescue NSW in the aftermath of the Christchurch earthquake. For 10 days Steve searched through rubble, listening for signs of life and hoping to find victims alive. During this period he had to enter unstable buildings looking for survivors—a dangerous situation for rescuers and victims alike. He had to crawl through severely damaged, compressed and teetering buildings. While there were occasions that will leave him with lasting sad memories, he will no doubt dwell on the joy of being one of the rescuers that helped to free the last person to be pulled alive from the Pyne Gould Corporation building. Steve's efforts were recently recognised when he was presented with the 2011 Canterbury Earthquake Citation for his work during this disaster. I place on the record the wonderful work that Steve did in Christchurch. I know that the City of Orange is very proud of his work and bravery.

CROATIAN NATIONAL DAY

Mr NICK LALICH (Cabramatta) [5.00 p.m.]: I inform the House that I attended the celebration of the National Day of the Republic of Croatia on 29 June 2013 at the King Tomsilav Croatian Club. In attendance were members of both State and Federal parliaments, the Consulate General of the Republic of Croatia, Ms Mirijana Ana Maria Piskulic, the Ambassador of the Republic of Croatia in Australia and New Zealand, His Excellency Vicencije Biuk, and other dignitaries. This occasion, marked on 25 June, celebrates the independence and creation of the nation of Croatia 22 years ago. The event also recognised the accession of Croatia into the European Union on 1 July 2013. I thank all the volunteers and workers who helped in organising the event, in particular the live band Sto Na Sat, the Croatian Australian Community Council, King Tomsilav Club and the United Croatian Clubs of NSW for supporting the festivities.

NSW HUMAN RIGHTS AWARD RECIPIENT ANDREW PENFOLD

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson) [5.01 p.m.]: I congratulate the founder of the Australian Indigenous Education Foundation, Mr Andrew Penfold, on being the inaugural winner of the NSW Human

Rights Award. Mr Penfold has raised \$80 million over the past 10 years to give more than 500 Aboriginal students an opportunity to attend leading boarding schools. During a ceremony at Parliament House today, attended by Holocaust survivor Ervin Forrester, the Premier presented Mr Penfold with a NSW Human Rights Award medal. The award was established in memory of Swedish diplomat Raoul Wallenberg, who single-handedly saved tens of thousands of lives during the Holocaust, and it recognises an individual's efforts in the human rights arena. I note that the award was the result of a suggestion from the Jewish Ministerial Consultative Committee, which is chaired by the member for Vacluse and me.

MANDAEAN NEW YEAR

Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool) [5.02 p.m.]: Tonight I recognise the contribution of the Mandaean community in south-western Sydney. This community's activities were recently highlighted by the celebration of Mandaean New Year on Friday July 26 at a function organised by the Mandaean Australian Community Cultural Club Inc. The president of the club is Dr Amad Mtashar, who is quite well known in Liverpool. In common with many communities in my region of Sydney, Mandaean make a positive contribution to our area and are a good example of multicultural Sydney. Granted their place of origin, there are, of course, many concerns for the future and safety of families and friends and other community members in Iraq or in refugee camps in other countries.

TRIBUTE TO JOHN McDONALD

Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS (Clarence) [5.03 p.m.]: Tonight I congratulate Mr John McDonald of Casino on being recognised by Cricket Australia for his outstanding contribution to cricket within the region. Mr McDonald has been involved with cricket for more than six decades, which is a remarkable achievement in itself. I wish Mr McDonald many more years enjoying cricket, even though he may not be enjoying the current Ashes series.

WEST WALLSEND SWIMMING CLUB

Ms SONIA HORNERY (Wallsend) [5.03 p.m.]: The great spirit of sporting excellence is alive and well in Wallsend. Members of the West Wallsend Swimming Club have excelled in recent months, winning a wealth of medals at local, State and national events under the dedicated guidance of head coach Kenjo Yagami. At the Australian Age Swimming Championships in April the team achieved spectacular results against the cream of Australia's youth swimming talent. Matthew Pender won a gold medal in the 16 years 200 metre backstroke and a bronze medal in the 100 metre backstroke. We congratulate the members of the swimming club on their fantastic results and wish them all the best of luck for the future.

MURRAY-RIVERINA BUSINESS AWARDS

Mr GREG APLIN (Albury) [5.04 p.m.]: I congratulate Melissa Sweetland, Customer Services, Sales and Marketing Manager, of the Hume Building Society, Albury, on being named the Business Leader winner at the Murray-Riverina Business Awards. Melissa is responsible for Hume, hosting the MoneySmart Teaching program for primary schoolchildren in Albury, and for the building society's involvement in the Albury-Wodonga sustainability market, Music by Moonlight and the Hume annual ladies luncheon. The Hume Building Society also won the categories of Employer of Choice and Excellence in Sustainability in which they were recognised for initiatives such as installing solar panels at their head office and using motion-sensor lighting and carbon-neutral products. Congratulations also go to Cohen Vanderlinde, an employee of silo manufacturer Kotzur of Walla Walla, who won the Young Business Executive of the Year for the company's accounting operations and for his instrumental work in supporting Kotzur's 30 per cent rise in turnover through several system improvements.

MULTICULTURAL EID FESTIVAL AND FAIR

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) [5.05 p.m.]: The twenty-ninth Multicultural Eid Festival and Fair [MEFF] was held at the Fairfield Showground on Sunday 18 August 2013. The Multicultural Eid Festival and Fair is one of the largest held in Fairfield, with more than 30,000 people attending the event every year. There were over 150 community stalls ranging from Kaftan Designs, the Art of Hijab, Tooba Fashions, Zenat Art and the AFC Asian Cup 2015 stall, to name a few. Stage performances came from the Turkish folk dance group Turkish Theatrical Dance, African Drama, Arabic Nasheed, Ecuadorian-Latino folk dance and Latin folk music. The Multicultural Eid Festival and Fair is the first, largest and longest running Eid festival in Australia. The aim

of the festival is to provide an atmosphere of peace, unity and entertainment for the diverse community whilst celebrating Eid. Congratulations go to the Multicultural Eid Festival and Fair organising committee, especially Mrs Mehar Ahmad, committee president and first woman president of the association.

KIAMA ELECTORATE COMMUNITY EVENTS

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) [5.06 p.m.]: I ask the House to acknowledge the success of the Chris O'Brien Lifehouse Gala Dinner and Auction held at Kiama Pavilion on Saturday 20 April and to congratulate the organisers, Heather McAlpine, Bronwyn Eastment and Janelye Richardson, on their tireless efforts to make the evening a great success. All the funds raised went to the Chris O'Brien Lifehouse, which is due to open in September 2013 and will transform cancer treatment for Australians. I ask the House to acknowledge the official opening of the Mount Terry Primary School Outdoor Kitchen on 6 May 2013 and to note the hard work and dedication of Mrs Jean Boyd and Mr Stuart Hall in making this excellent project a reality for all of the students to enjoy. I also ask the House to acknowledge the extraordinary success of the 2013 Arts in the Valley Festival held in Kangaroo Valley from 3 to 5 May and to note the hard work and dedication of the president, John Wright, and the artistic director, Belinda Webster, OAM, to bring the festival together so magnificently.

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF JEWISH WOMEN OF AUSTRALIA

Ms GABRIELLE UPTON (Vaucluse—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.07 p.m.], by leave: I ask this House to note that the National Council of Jewish Women of Australia, NSW Division, has celebrated its ninetieth anniversary. The National Council of Jewish Women of Australia has a proud tradition of constant activism on a range of women's issues that affect both the Jewish and non-Jewish community. I ask the House to commend the special anniversary history exhibition and oral history project, which highlight the important work of the National Council of Jewish Women of Australia, and to congratulate New South Wales president Victoria Nadel and fellow directors on this important milestone. Their strong leadership follows in the tradition of the women who preceded them.

SALVADOR ALLENDE ANNIVERSARY

Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool) [5.08 p.m.], by leave: Tonight I advise the House of an event held on Saturday 29 June at the Colo Colo Club in Fairfield to celebrate the 105th anniversary of the birth of Salvador Allende. The event was organised by groups within the Chilean community, including the Salvador Allende Monument Committee. Salvador Allende died in the fascist coup of Pinochet in 1973 having been Unidad Popular President of Chile since 1970 and a long-term member and leader of the Chilean Socialist Party. He and his Unidad Popular project remain an inspiration to many Chileans, to Australians of Chilean background and to progressive people throughout the world.

IRAQI AUSTRALIAN UNIVERSITY GRADUATES FORUM

Mr ANDREW ROHAN (Smithfield) [5.08 p.m.], by leave: I congratulate the Academic Committee of the Iraqi Australian Graduates Forum on its inaugural medical conference for health professionals, which was held at the Mounties Club on Sunday 18 August. The conference included the presentation of important research papers by a number of specialist medical doctors in the fields of medicine and medical science. I thank the organising committee for its gracious invitation to be part of that special event. I particularly commend Dr Ahmad Alrubaiee, Dr Bushra Aloubaide and Dr Mariam Joseph for their contributions to the conference. I also thank all the doctors and members of the forum who provide their services to improve the health and welfare of our communities across the State. Finally, I wish the forum success in its endeavours and many more successful conferences in the future.

AUSTRALIAN INTERNATIONAL FUTSAL TEAM MEMBER JASON LITTLE

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) [5.09 p.m.], by leave: I inform the House of the selection of 13-year-old Jason Little from Forster in the Australian International Futsal team, which is touring the United Kingdom in October this year. Futsal is a fast-paced round ball game played on a small court by teams of five players. Jason is a year 8 student who has played soccer since he was five years old and has been playing at a representative level with the Tuncurry Tigers Academy Squad. Jason quickly adapted to Futsal and was selected to be part of the Northern NSW Country side, which competed at the national championships in Sydney in January. Jason has a natural talent for ball sports and he recently competed in the touch football State Cup at Port Macquarie. Jason wants to increase his skills to compete against other top-level Futsal players. The trip to the United Kingdom will be his first overseas.

TRIBUTE TO KALLA OAKES

Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend) [5.10 p.m.], by leave: Tonight I recognise the wonderful community spirit of Kalla Oakes, who has given selflessly to the Newcastle community for more than 20 years. Kalla has worked with the House with No Steps, mentoring people with disabilities. She has also worked at Hunter TAFE for 20 years, with 15 of those years spent at the Career Skills Education Pathways section. At Career Skills, Kalla has helped generations of challenged students develop abilities which help them to find meaningful employment and develop a greater engagement with the community. We thank Kalla for her tireless work and all that she has given back to the people of the Hunter. We congratulate her and wish her all the best for the future.

ORDER OF AUSTRALIA MEDAL RECIPIENT HEATHER McKEAN, OAM

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla) [5.11 p.m.], by leave: I highlight the contribution of Ms Heather Colleen McKean, who received the Order of Australia Medal in the Queen's Birthday honours list for service to the performing arts as a country music entertainer and promoter. Ms McKean has been a country music entertainer and promoter since the 1940s. She originally performed with her sister, Joy, as a duo called the McKean Sisters. She was president of Country Music Australia from 1983 to 1984; first Australian female artist to appear at Grand Ole Opry, Nashville, Tennessee, United States of America, appearing on more than 20 occasions, which is a record for an Australian artist; co-producer of the Reg Lindsay Country Homestead, Brisbane, from 1964 to 1972 and Reg Lindsay Country Hour in Adelaide from 1972 to 1976; co-host of the *Melody Trail with the McKean Sisters* on 2KY from 1949 to 1956; president of the Slim Dusty Fan Club for many years; and judged at the Tamworth Country Music Awards for several years. In 2012, the McKean Sisters Theatre in the Tamworth Town Hall was named in honour of Ms McKean and her sister, Joy. The McKean Sisters were inducted into the Australian Broadcasters Hall of Fame in 2002 and the Australasian Country Music Roll of Renown in 1983.

TRIATHLETE LAURA HARRIS

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie) [5.12 p.m.], by leave: I congratulate Laura Harris. Laura is a remarkable young sportswoman from King Creek. She is achieving great things in ironman events. She came first in the 18-to-24 age group at the 2013 ironman championship held at Port Macquarie. This was her first attempt at this distance. She qualified for the world ironman championship in Kona, Hawaii, where she will compete in October. She also achieved second and third places in Port Macquarie and Canberra for the 2012 half ironman championship in the 18-to-24 age group. She also qualified for the world half ironman championship in Las Vegas. She was a dual bronze medallist at the 2012 Australian University Games in cycling and athletics, as well as team captain for the 2012 University of Newcastle Australian University Games. Her other achievements include the University Sporting Blue award for 2012; she was named University of Newcastle 2011 Sports person of the Year; she has been an Australian representative in triathlons; and she was selected on the NSW Endurance Development Squad. Her amazing community spirit was displayed in her ride in the KIDS Foundation charity bike ride, covering 1,200 kilometres from Ballarat to Port Macquarie in one week, and raised \$6,000 for charity. She is making a huge mark in her sport internationally whilst completing her studies. We wish her well with her future success.

ITALIAN SOCIAL WELFARE ORGANISATION

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) [5.13 p.m.], by leave: The Italian Social Welfare Organisation of Wollongong [ItSoWel] held its annual fundraising ball on Friday 28 June 2013. ItSoWel has been providing services to the Italo-Australian community in the Illawarra region for more than 25 years. ItSoWel delivers a range of culturally and linguistically appropriate services which assist the community to increase their quality of life. ItSoWel has a long and proud history of promoting the Italian culture, language and heritage in the Illawarra region. ItSoWel provides social interaction, allowing for greater interaction and increased feelings of connection with the local community. The frail, aged and people with a disability and their carers have benefitted from ItSoWel's commitment to delivering these services. I congratulate the management committee, staff and volunteers on their commitment towards the Italo-Australian community and offer special thanks to Giovanna Cardamone, the executive officer, for her leadership and passion.

SCIENCE AWARDS FINALIST BRIAN DENNISON

Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands) [5.14 p.m.], by leave: I acknowledge and congratulate Brian Dennison, an Armidale scientist who has been named as one of five finalists in the Deadly

Award for Scientist or Science Project of the Year. After seeing the light and moving from Moree to Armidale, Mr Dennison has worked at the CSIRO's Chiswick research station for 33 years. He started out as a farmhand assisting scientists and is now a technical assistant, specialising in parasitology in sheep. One of his current projects focuses on breech strike prevention, which is inquiring into breeding sheep that do not need to be mulesed. Mr Dennison is also mentoring the next generation and is a workplace trainer of two young Aboriginal men who have recently started work at the CSIRO after being involved in the BackTrack program in Armidale. I extend my congratulations to Brian on his selection as a finalist in the Deadlys and wish him all the best with his research project and mentoring program.

Community recognition statements concluded.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

CASULA FUNCTION CENTRE

Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool) [5.15 p.m.]: Tonight I draw to the attention of the House issues raised with me by constituents of mine concerning the shopping centre at 493-509 Hume Highway, Casula, at the intersection of the Hume Highway and Demeyrick Avenue. This smallish shopping centre has existed at this location for many years. At a council meeting on 23 February 2009, the Liverpool council approved a development application—DA 1341/2008—for the use of existing premises known as lot 13 as a function centre. This is a first floor unit on top of existing shops. Naturally, the development application was subject to conditions and they were conveyed to the applicant by way of a notice of determination dated 25 February. Those conditions restricted the hours of operation on Monday to Thursday from 6.00 p.m. to 11.00 p.m. and on Friday to Saturday from 6.00 p.m. to midnight. Other shopkeepers and the body corporate of the shopping centre had no difficulties with this; there seemed to be no likely conflict, as the hours of operation approved for the function centre were outside the usual operating hours of the shop.

Almost without exception, the shopping centre is accessed by people in cars. There is no realistic on-street parking, especially on the Hume Highway or on Demeyrick Avenue. Parking spaces are provided in the parking area at the shopping centre, but if customers are unable to park in the parking area they go elsewhere. Many shopkeepers have complained that what is called the function centre is operating well outside its approved hours and attracting many patrons. This means the centre's parking area is swamped by people attending the function centre and leaves limited parking for the customers of the other shops. The financial viability of the shops is being seriously threatened because the centre is being operated outside of its development consent.

I have received complaints that the centre is being used from 9.00 a.m. to 3.00 p.m. every day with generally 40 to 50 cars using the car park. I wrote to Liverpool council about the issue on 10 July, and Laurie Ferguson, the Federal member for Parliament for Werriwa, wrote a letter on 8 July. The member for Macquarie Fields also wrote a letter to council. I received an acknowledgement from council dated in July. I have not received a substantive response and neither have the other members of Parliament. Shop owners say multiple complaints have been ignored and not responded to. There is a record of complaints from the shop owners to council from April this year. What has council been doing and what is it trying to hide by failing to respond?

The actions of council staff have been interesting. On 19 July several council staff attended the premises and shopkeepers regarded their behaviour as harassment. One shopkeeper allegedly was shoulder charged by a council officer, which that shop owner reported to Liverpool police station. Another shop owner complained to Councillor Hadchiti about the behaviour of the council staff and advised he would report the matter to police. When the victim of the alleged assault went to the police station he was met by that councillor—the police and council share the same building—who wanted to speak to him. The victim declined and proceeded to give a statement to the police. Upon leaving the police station, the victim found the councillor outside the police station. The councillor took the shopkeeper into the council building, ostensibly for a cup of coffee, but in fact it was for a 1½ hour meeting with the mayor, deputy mayor, general manager and that councillor. Among other things, the council group was horrified that the shopkeepers had come to me, the member for Liverpool, for assistance. The councillor I have mentioned told the shopkeeper that he would sack the council employee concerned.

It becomes even more complicated. The council employee concerned had previously issued fines against someone who is now a senior council officer when that officer had been a candidate in the State election.

There is now a suggestion that someone at council issued an interim occupation certificate dated 20 July 2012 and a construction certificate dated 21 September 2010 to the operators of the function centre. These two documents supposedly stated that the hours of operation were 8.00 a.m. to 3.00 a.m. seven days a week. That is entirely unjustified by the development consent and should have been legally ineffective. If those documents had been issued, then serious questions need to be answered about how they came into existence. There are also some very serious questions as to why councillors have been sitting on this problem since April this year.

I am told by the shopping centre's body corporate that the function centre was bought four to five years ago but that the title was not transferred and stamp duty was not paid until this year. Shopkeepers tell me that from their observations the centre is being used as a place for religious worship and education. This raises the issue of whether the use is within the terms of the development consent, regardless of the hours. The real issue is the hours of operation. People frequenting the function centre claim that contacts at Liverpool council will look after them, and that was put to council as long ago as April by the strata title manager of the shopping centre. The entity running the centre seems to be Global Sports and Function Centre Ltd, a company limited by guarantee, which appears to be associated with or run by the Global Islamic Youth Centre of Liverpool. That group accepted an invitation to a fundraiser to benefit one of the candidates for Liverpool in the 2007 State election. The candidate who invited that group to his fundraiser is currently the Mayor of Liverpool.

ANGLICARE STREET OUTREACH TEAM

Dr GEOFF LEE (Parramatta) [5.19 p.m.]: Tonight I raise the Parramatta community's response to what began as the threatened loss of our youth outreach services in Parramatta mall. For many years the Anglicare street outreach team has played a significant role in engaging with disadvantaged and homeless young people between the ages of 12 and 25 years who, for a variety of reasons, congregate in the mall area. These reasons are complex and include leaving home because of violence and abuse, personal or parental problems, problems with drugs and alcohol, relationship breakdown, and mental illness. Early intervention in assisting these young people is imperative. It provides the opportunity for dialogue and support, enabling situations to be contained and positive outcomes to be achieved. No-one wants to see young people enter the vicious cycle of homelessness.

For more than 20 years Anglicare has been doing a fantastic job in assisting with positive intervention. It has provided advocacy, professional referrals, mentoring and support, food parcels and fares, and brokerage funds. This early intervention often has an enormously positive effect on young people. They have also been assisted through emergency and long-term accommodation solutions, program participation, including life and living skills which lead to independent living, support with education and employment programs, and family reconciliation. In the past year Anglicare's street outreach assisted 535 young people, with 23 per cent of these youths from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds.

Anglicare has been shouldering a heavy load. While it has received some State government funding, the majority of the funds have come from Anglicare itself. A few months ago Anglicare made the difficult decision to close the street outreach program, resulting in two employees being offered redundancy and two being internally relocated at the end of September. So concerned was the Parramatta community that meetings were held to discuss the issue and find a way forward. I am enormously proud of the way the not-for-profit sector—Parramatta Mission and Western Housing for Youth—and various government departments, such as NSW Housing, Centrelink, Police, Health, Parramatta City Council and Community Services, all came together to work on this issue.

I thank particularly Reverend Keith Hamilton, the group chief executive officer of Parramatta Mission, and Tanya Gadiel, the chief executive officer of Community Services at Parramatta Mission, for facilitating this group. Members will be aware that Tanya Gadiel was my predecessor as the member for Parramatta. She is doing a stellar job in looking after community services for Parramatta Mission. She has taken the job to heart like a duck to water, paddling very fast but looking cool and calm on the surface. She is doing a fantastic job, working hard for Parramatta Mission. Last Thursday was our second meeting attended by me and the Lord Mayor of Parramatta, Councillor John Chedid. We were all heartened by the news that the street outreach program received a reprieve in the form of a one-year grant that will enable Anglicare to continue the program until the end of the financial year.

I thank the Federal Government for that one-year reprieve. However, the threat of closure remains after June 2014. The meeting resolved to move forward by establishing a working group to form a youth coalition based on the successful model of collaboration utilised by the Parramatta Men's Homelessness Coalition. This is

a welcome step forward as the model ensures that government departments and the not-for-profit sector actively engage to ensure the best possible outcomes for people who are homeless or at risk. In conclusion, members will be aware that I have spoken on many occasions about Parramatta being the capital of Western Sydney. It is not only the capital of Western Sydney but the centre of transport, education, law and justice, retailing and entertainment in Western Sydney. In that way, Parramatta attracts many people from a variety of suburbs throughout western and greater Western Sydney. They hang out in Parramatta; perhaps they are attracted by the bright lights. It is wonderful to see the community getting together, under the leadership of Reverend Keith Hamilton and the chief executive officer of Parramatta Mission, and solving the problem. It has been done with the cooperation and collaboration of the not-for-profit sector organisations I have mentioned, as well as the New South Wales and Federal governments.

PACIFIC HIGHWAY UPGRADE

Mr DONALD PAGE (Ballina—Minister for Local Government, and Minister for the North Coast) [5.24 p.m.]: I bring to the attention of the House the work being done on the upgrade of the Pacific Highway in my electorate of Ballina, in particular the Tintenbar to Ewingsdale section of the highway. Several weeks ago I had the honour of hosting the Deputy Premier, and Minister for Regional Infrastructure and Services, Andrew Stoner, in the Ballina electorate. We took the opportunity to inspect the work being done on the Tintenbar to Ewingsdale section of the Pacific Highway upgrade so that we could see first-hand the progress being made on the project. I thank the staff from Baulderstone and Roads and Maritime Services for taking the time to show us around and explain some of the intricacies of the project. When completed, the project will link up with the recently completed Ballina bypass at Tintenbar and extend to the Ewingsdale interchange near Byron Bay.

This will mean that the road from Ballina all the way to Brisbane will be at least a four-lane, divided carriageway. This will significantly improve safety for motorists and reduce congestion, travelling times and greenhouse gas emissions. Together with the Ballina bypass, the Tintenbar to Ewingsdale section will significantly reduce congestion around Ballina, especially in busy periods like Easter and the Christmas-New Year holidays. On average, 12,000 vehicles travel on the section of the highway between Ewingsdale and Tintenbar every day, including approximately 2,300 freight vehicles. Since 2002 there have been more than 200 accidents on this length of road. The upgraded highway, when it is opened next year, should see a significant reduction in these statistics.

The cost of the project is \$862 million, and this is funded by the New South Wales and Federal governments. Major construction of the road began in mid-2012 and, despite a lot of wet weather, work is progressing well. The road is scheduled to be completed in the second half of 2014. Baulderstone and Roads and Maritime Services representatives say the road project will be delivered on time and on budget. This is great news for locals and visitors and, of course, the New South Wales and Federal governments. The Deputy Premier and I inspected the work being done on the two tunnels, which at the time were only about 30 metres long. When finished, each tunnel will be more than 700 metres long. Workers only started blasting for the tunnels in May this year, and I understand that the project managers are pleased with the progress so far. More tunnelling as well as drilling and blasting work will continue for several months, as the route for the new road pushes through hard basalt rock approximately 46 metres below the surface.

Interestingly, 530,000 cubic metres of material have been removed during bulk earthworks, but a staggering 2.57 million cubic metres remain. The majority of bridge piles have been installed, with only 90 remaining, but workers will need to lay 27,000 metres of pavement drainage. As I said, when the road is finished it will be much safer and travel times will be reduced. The 17 kilometre upgrade will provide several interchanges so drivers will be able to safely enter and exit the highway. The existing Pacific Highway, which is likely to become known as the Hinterland Way, also will be able to be used as an alternative route for motorists travelling between Tintenbar and Ewingsdale and, of course, will take motorists from Ewingsdale through to Bangalow on their way to Lismore.

Importantly, on the dual carriageway there is room for the road to be widened in future to cater for increases in traffic. Once completed, there will be a 12 metre wide median and an 11.5 metre wide carriageway to allow for an additional lane in each direction. There have also been significant economic benefits for the electorate because of this project. Up to 700 people are being employed during peak construction times, and that is not taking into account the indirect contribution this project is making to our local economy. The Tintenbar to Ewingsdale upgrade of the Pacific Highway comes straight after the completion of the Ballina bypass, which also provided many jobs for the region. When the Tintenbar to Ewingsdale stretch of the highway is completed more than \$1.4 billion will have been spent on roadworks undertaken in the Ballina electorate in the last six years.

In addition to the safety benefits for motorists, these projects have been important to the regional economy, particularly at a time when small businesses have been doing it tough in the current economic climate. The upgrade of the Pacific Highway is an important issue to me and to my constituents. I can honestly say that the upgrade of the Pacific Highway has been a major part of my political life. As far back as my maiden speech in 1988 I spoke about the need to upgrade the Pacific Highway, and I have been on the case ever since. When the Tintenbar to Ewingsdale section of the Pacific Highway is opened next year it will be—to use an appropriate term in the circumstances—a milestone for communities in the Ballina electorate. The highway from Ballina to the Queensland border and beyond to Brisbane will all be dual carriageway, which not only will be a great pleasure to drive on but will also save many lives. I am proud to have played a constructive role in such a significant achievement in our region.

PITTWATER ELECTORATE INTERNATIONAL AID PROJECTS

Mr ROB STOKES (Pittwater—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.29 p.m.]: I inform the House of two important international development projects being led and sustained by many committed and compassionate citizens in my community of Pittwater. First, I acknowledge the Pittwater Friends of Soibada, which is a district in the highlands of Timor Leste. It has long been an important centre for education and religion for the East Timorese people, and an area that suffered greatly during the Indonesian occupation. One local Pittwater resident, and Pittwater Woman of the Year for 2010, Tamara Sloper-Harding, was a naval officer stationed in Soibada during the Interfet campaign. She has since developed a strong mission to help support the ambitions of the local people to improve the health, education, welfare and opportunities of their community. This vision has become manifest as the Pittwater Friends of Soibada—a group of local businesses, community organisations, schools and churches—which, together with Pittwater Council has concluded a friendship agreement with the people of Soibada and its constituent villages. This agreement envisions the creation of a strong friendship between the communities of Pittwater and Soibada to help the people of Soibada improve their health, education and wellbeing and to support projects in Soibada that will contribute to the community's long-term independence and sustainability.

Last month I was privileged to join a team from the Pittwater Friends of Soibada visiting Timor Leste in order to fulfil commitments made by the friends to the suco, or sub-village, of Tasi Fatin within Soibada. I became very aware that the most important element of any friendship agreement with communities in developing nations is to follow up on commitments. Wherever I went in Timor Leste there was ample evidence of abandoned aid projects started by well-meaning foreigners where the aid group had failed to maintain a relationship and had simply provided a piece of equipment or installed a pump or a toilet and then disappeared, with no follow-up or dialogue to support the locals. This points to what is most impressive about the Pittwater Friends of Soibada. The clear focus of the group is to engage with the local community, find out what they want, determine what can be provided and then actually deliver on these commitments.

In the case of Tasi Fatin, the local chief of suco, Mr Joao King Ling da Conceicao, had requested assistance with several projects. He wanted blankets and jumpers to counter the cool mountain winters. These were duly provided by the Soibada Knitters Group, which meets every Wednesday in the church hall at Maria Regina Church in Avalon to knit. The village requested information on beekeeping and custard apple growing. Beekeeping equipment, including suits and smokers, was set up and instruction was given, while members of the Australian Custard Apple Growers Association met with Chief John to identify a suitable location in the village for a plantation to be developed. Rob Romer of Bilgola Plateau installed a TankPro water sanitising unit in the school's large tank that supplies the whole village. Peta Wise, a registered nurse from Avalon Beach, conducted baby health checks.

Ian Laidlaw of the Hair by Scally's salon in Avalon ran haircutting workshops and Ellen Hill of Newport showed the women how to make plastic bottle tops into beautiful beads that they will be able to sell. Jill Gavin, an experienced school teacher from Mona Vale, provided early readers in Tetum for schoolchildren and has remained in Soibada to teach English for the next few weeks. A Songs for Soibada concert at the Mater Maria School in Warriewood raised money to enable 15 villagers from Tasi Fatin to attend the Hamutuk Ita Ajuda Malu Health nutrition and gardening courses in Dili. On their return they will be assisted to construct the community garden in the village and will be provided with ongoing mentoring. Each of these activities fulfilled commitments made by the Pittwater Friends of Soibada to the people of Tasi Fatin. Pittwater Mayor Jacqui Townsend led the Pittwater delegation.

Together with Klaus Sandals from Avalon, the Secretary of Pittwater Friends of Soibada, I made myself useful by playing soccer with the village children. Despite Klaus's amazing stamina, my complete lack of

talent ensured we were badly beaten. Together with all the Pittwater Friends of Soibada, I am grateful for the hospitality provided by the people of Soibada and for the wonderful patronage provided by Father Tiago Soares da Costa, the local Parish priest, who serves his community with such wisdom and humility. While the people of Soibada may lack material possessions, they possess a strength of community and faith that seemed to me to be far more important. I came away from Timor Leste grateful for what I had learned about the centrality of community and family and looking forward to returning one day to a beautiful land and people to whom Australia owes a great historical debt.

I also acknowledge the efforts of the Pittwater Famine Village, a coalition of businesses, schools and churches across Pittwater. As part of the World Vision 40 Hour Famine, they have already raised almost \$20,000 towards famine relief in developing nations, with a particular focus on the African nation of Malawi. I commend everyone who has sponsored participants and all those who have gone without in order to raise funds for those in need. I make special mention of Matt Elkan from Newport, a coffee addict who has gone without coffee for 40 days—a feat I fear I could not match—and Nathan Booker, who has raised almost \$4,000 individually. All these volunteers are examples of service and commitment to others. I am truly honoured to represent such a generous and compassionate community in this place.

Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Hawkesbury—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.34 p.m.]: I commend the member for Pittwater for bringing this information to the House. His contribution demonstrates the high quality of people we have in this country, people who are always prepared to give a hand to those less fortunate than themselves—not only to people in their own backyard but also to people overseas who truly need their assistance. I commend the member and those in his electorate. The member should brush up on his soccer skills so that in future he does not disappoint his country on the sporting field.

J J KELLY PARK GROUND LIGHTING

Ms NOREEN HAY (Wollongong) [5.35 p.m.]: I place on record my recent attendance at and official role in the switching on of the lights ceremony held at the home ground of the Illawarra Stingrays, J J Kelly Park in my electorate of Wollongong. The official launch was attended by many who are esteemed in the local football community, together with players of all levels and ages from the Illawarra Stingrays of the New South Wales Women's Premier League. I was very pleased to be able to secure \$35,000 in funding for the Illawarra United Representative Football Club for new lighting to be installed under the then Labor Government's 2010 Community Building Partnership program. Groups in my electorate were able to apply for grants totalling \$700,000—a far cry from the amount now provided. It is most disappointing that the O'Farrell Government continues to provide reduced funding. The total available to my community is only \$300,000, which results in many organisations missing out on great opportunities such as that afforded to the football community that utilises J J Kelly Park.

The Illawarra Stingrays will benefit from the new installation, as J J Kelly Park is their training and home ground. The club has been developed through a partnership between the Illawarra Junior Football Association and the Illawarra Women's Soccer Football Association to promote and develop elite female football in the area. Over recent years the Illawarra has witnessed strong growth in both women's and girl's football. Their success is in part due to the hardworking committee and, in particular, foundation member Sandy Depers, former club president Rob McKie, and current club president Mick Woods. Their commitment and dedication to the club has made it what it is today. The club's success could also be measured by results, and I can assure the House that the Stingrays have certainly delivered the goods.

Their titles include: 2012 Football New South Wales Women's Premier League grand finalists and club champions, 2012 Football New South Wales under-16 Premier League champions and grand final runners up, 2012 Football New South Wales under-14 grand final winners, 2011 Football New South Wales Women's Premier League champions and grand final winners, 2010 Football New South Wales Women's Premier League champions and grand final winners, 2009 Football New South Wales Women's Premier League champions and grand final winners, 2008 first and reserve grade Arrive Alive Super League grand final winners, 2006 Arrive Alive first and reserve grade grand finalists and Turf Girl Cup Winners. I am very proud to place on record in this place that the Illawarra Stingrays as a club was undefeated last week. The team currently sits in first place on the Women's Premier League ladder, with just one round remaining in the regular season. They have just secured a home ground final. I am sure the new lights at the J J Kelly Park could not have come at a better time.

The club has produced and signed world-class players. Caitlin Cooper was called up to the Matildas in June 2012. Heather Garriock and Michelle Carney, both accomplished international footballers, signed with the

Stingrays. It would be remiss of me to not mention the hardworking coaches of these most talented players: first grade coach Steve Srbinovski, reserve grade coach Graham Shaw, U16s coaches Sarah Gollop and Graham Shaw, U14s coach Anastasia Srbinovski and U12s coach Brad Cocker. The teams are all in fine form, which is testament to not only their skills but also the direction provided by the coaches. I have no doubt that the Stingrays will dominate the finals again this year. I look forward to the team bringing the New South Wales Women's Premier League title back to Wollongong, where it belongs. Women's soccer is growing greatly in popularity. I am a soccer fan. My team takes to the field in blue and white not in red. Most members know that I am a staunch Chelsea supporter in European soccer. I have witnessed the great advancement of women's soccer and by having a team in my electorate it has shown clearly that we have champions leading the way. I encourage as many young women as possible to take up women's soccer as a sport. I congratulate the Stingrays.

TAREE LIONS CLUB

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) [5.40 p.m.]: Recently I attended a dinner for the Taree Lions Club fifty-eighth annual changeover for the installation of the 2013-14 board. The outgoing chairman and president was Nathan Cooper, whom I congratulate on what the club has achieved in the past 12 months. Taree Lions Club raised just more than \$39,000, most of which was given to local charities. For example, \$3,000 was given to the Manning stroke unit. Funds also went towards the Manning women's refuge, the Camp Quality Ride, a school book prize, Manning connect, the bush fire appeal and many other local groups. It is great that a small club like Taree has raised so much money for local charities.

I congratulate the incoming board: President John Lenton, Secretary Peter McKellar, Treasurer Chris Warren, first Vice-President Danny Patch, second Vice-President Tony Cowan and third Vice-President Paul Murray. The directors are: Ray Barrie, Glenn Robinson, Robyn O'Toole, Geoff Thompson, Andrew Eggins, Joe Neufeld and Graham Vernon. Other officeholders are: tail twister Allen Lenton; lion tamer Neville Lawler; bulletin editor Brian McWhirter, OAM; membership chairman Allen Lenton; Constitution and by-laws Keith McMartin; immediate past President Nathan Cooper; clubs records Glenn Robinson; Assistant Secretary Narelle Penman; and Assistant Treasurer Sonny Rogers.

At the dinner I was also pleased to see some old friends: Sid Davey, club president in 1966 and 1993; Max French, club president in 1986 and still very much involved in the community; Tom Ellis, of Ellis and Butler Real Estate in Taree, also a past club president and great man to get advice from; and Geoff Thompson, club president in 1988 and still on the board in 2013. Taree Lions club has been in existence for 58 years. During this time it has more than punched above its weight. I am sure that Mr Deputy-Speaker, as the immediate past President of the New South Wales Parliamentary Lions Club and also having been involved in the very first Lions Club in Australia at Lismore, is very proud. I remember that last year at a dinner in Parliament House Mr Deputy-Speaker brought a foundation member of Lions who is still actively involved in Lions in his area.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): In Kyogle.

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD: He is 90 years of age. Next Thursday evening the New South Wales Parliamentary Lions Club will hold a gala charity evening. The special guest will be the first Australian International President of Lions International, Mr Barry Palmer. The funds raised on the night will go to a foundation that Mr Palmer set up to help women in Third World countries who need a leg up. They are given seed funding to start a business, whether it be a sewing machine to do peace work or the like. The New South Wales Parliamentary Lions Club cannot meet every week or fortnight like other Lions clubs, yet in only 11 years it has raised \$480,000, which is very good effort. In November the New South Wales Parliamentary Lions Club will hold a charity golf day. Funds raised on the day will go to the Sydney Children's Hospital Cancer Foundation. Members are encouraged to attend both events. We are looking for donations, whether it be a bottle of wine or whatever, for a raffle that will be held next Thursday night.

Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Hawkesbury—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.45 p.m.]: I commend the member for Myall Lakes for bringing to the attention of the House the wonderful work done by the Parliamentary Lions Club. I am proud to be a member of the Parliamentary Lions Club, just as you are, Mr Deputy-Speaker. You have been fundamental to the success of the Parliamentary Lions Club and I commend you for the role you have played. It is wonderful to hear about the great things done by Lions Clubs across this country, and to know that the Parliamentary Lions Club is extending that great work into the community.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): I also congratulate Taree Lions Club. It is great to hear that Tom Ellis, an old work colleague of mine in my previous career, is continuing with Lions International at Taree. Tom Ellis can take great credit for his encouragement of a young auctioneer named Mark Vaile who went on to be a Deputy Prime Minister of Australia.

KATOOMBA THEATRE COMPANY

Mrs ROZA SAGE (Blue Mountains) [5.46 p.m.]: I am also very proud to be a member of the Parliamentary Lions Club and I look forward to the dinner next Thursday night. I always relish the extended winter break between parliamentary sitting periods as it gives me the opportunity to move around my wonderful Blue Mountains electorate and commune with my constituents and the many fantastic organisations in the mountains.

Ms Robyn Parker: Great national parks.

Mrs ROZA SAGE: Great national parks, that is correct. As I have mentioned on many occasions, the Blue Mountains is rich in culture and rich in caring. It has been an extremely busy tourism time with the winter Yulefest season having a record-breaking year and with many community charity balls and dinners taking place. I inform the House of the inaugural fundraising dinner for the newly formed Katoomba Theatre Company, which was held in the Grand Dining Room of the iconic Carrington Hotel. The Katoomba Theatre Company comprises performing arts professionals dedicated to bringing quality theatre to the Blue Mountains community, and the dinner certainly showcased the talented performers who live in the Blue Mountains.

It was a great pleasure to have one of the patrons of the Katoomba Theatre Company, Ita Buttrose, as the guest of honour. The other patron, Bruce Beresford, sent a congratulatory message. The idea to form a professional company in the Blue Mountains was initiated by Belle and Larry Buttrose and, as their surname suggests, they are related—Larry is Ita's cousin. They were surprised by the lack of dedicated theatre venues in the Blue Mountains, particularly in Katoomba. Both Belle and Larry have extensive experience in the entertainment industry.

With the completion of the new Katoomba Cultural Centre, the Katoomba library has moved into the new space, leaving the old library space vacant. The centre received a \$200,000 government grant to move into the new space. Belle identified the old space as a potential venue suitable for multi-purpose use arguing that, "a theatre can be a hall, but a hall can't be a theatre." The Mayor of the Blue Mountains, Councillor Daniel Myles, supported the concept and later received unanimous support from councillors. Works are now currently underway for the refurbishment of the old library site. Katoomba Theatre Company hopes to present its first production in the new venue in 2014. The Blue Mountains community has embraced the company. Its inaugural sponsors are the Carrington Hotel through owners Michael Brischetto and Mark Jarvis, and Bendigo Bank.

On the night, the tourism and arts community were generous in their donations of prizes for the live and silent auctions. The dinner was an outstanding success and raised \$16,000 for the company. Company member Penelope Sai with piano accompanist Rowley Holmes performed the song *Ita* and, later in the night, *Big Spender*. The master of ceremonies was radio presenter Nick Bennett, and Auntie Sharon Halls of the Gundungurra Aboriginal Heritage Association gave the welcome to country. After the entree, Katoomba Theatre Company member Heather Lee, who had been part of the Australian Opera, sang Puccini's *O mio babbino caro*, known in English as *Oh My Beloved Father*, which is one of my favourite songs.

The highlight of the night was when Ita graciously consented to perform a sketch based on Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* with the Katoomba Theatre Company's Tiriél Mora, who is best known as the lawyer from *The Castle*, and Chris Gabardi. The skit was well received by the audience, as was the frank question and answer time with Ita during which she was asked about her career, her time at *CLEO* and the *Women's Weekly* magazine and other aspects of her rich life. She also generously donated a photograph of a young Jack Thompson, who used to live in the Blue Mountains, as the first Australian male centrefold in *CLEO* magazine. It was signed by both Jack and Ita.

During the night Belle Buttrose outlined the journey to establish Katoomba Theatre Company. She said that one of the aims of the Katoomba Theatre Company is to draw young people into the theatre. She announced that Blue Mountains-based director, actor and screenplay writer, Helmut Bakaitis, would run the company's youth theatre initiative in partnership with Katoomba High School. The founding committee comprised Joanne Samuel, Tiriél Mora, Beth Champion, Georgia Adamson, Andrew McDonnell and Belle and Larry Buttrose. All

the people in this outstanding group of people have extensive experience in the entertainment industry. The event was very successful and enjoyable. I congratulate everyone involved in the Katoomba Theatre Company on their foresight and determination.

SUTHERLAND SHIRE SEWERAGE UPGRADE

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla) [5.51 p.m.]: This week I joined the Minister for Finance and Services, Andrew Constance, and Sydney Water Managing Director Kevin Young at Kurnell to announce plans to improve the vacuum sewerage system performance in Kurnell, Sylvania Waters, Bonnet Bay and Bundeena. Residents in these low-lying areas experienced an unacceptable malfunction of the sewerage system following heavy rains over the weekend of 29 and 30 June. The main cause of system malfunction was the large ingress of stormwater mainly from low gullies and other points from surrounding properties.

Pleasingly, the response from the then acting Minister for Finance and Services, Andrew Constance, and Sydney Water was both rapid and thorough. Following that system failure, at my request Minister Constance immediately instructed Sydney Water to conduct a comprehensive review of how to improve the vacuum sewerage systems in Kurnell and other parts of the Shire, and to ensure their future viability during periods of heavy rain. I understand that Sydney Water has a three-stage strategy. The first stage is what is termed the "Recovery Plan". Sydney Water engaged WaterCon, a vacuum specialist, to undertake repairs and to optimise performance of the systems.

I am pleased to say that immediate corrective action by Sydney Water is already underway, focusing on the priority areas of Kurnell and Sylvania Waters. This corrective action involves, among other things: repairing vacuum pot breather lines where broken and using a more durable material; setting up a vacuum sewage pumping system to clean, dry and effect minor repairs to valves and controllers; and raising controllers that are known to be too deep in vacuum pots to facilitate easier and safer operator or maintainer access. The corrective action also involves: installing extra divisional valves on vacuum mains to effect better isolations of areas causing low vacuum; installing vacuum monitoring screens at the vacuum sewage pumping system that give a quick visual display of vacuum performance parameters; installing vacuum pressure gauges at strategic locations on vacuum mains to indicate pressure levels for quicker troubleshooting; and finetuning and effecting minor pot repairs. I understand that this corrective action will be completed next month.

On top of this, a range of priority improvements have been identified for Kurnell and are scheduled to be delivered by February 2014. An amount of \$3 million will be invested on new valves and new controllers that are externally mounted above flood level, as well as wireless telemetry to improve the system's reliability. These technological improvements are also being considered for Sylvania Waters and other areas. The second stage of Sydney Water's three-stage strategy is a reliability program to determine the best maintenance strategy for vacuum systems. This development is expected to be largely completed in December 2013.

The third stage of Sydney Water's strategy is its long-term strategy by June 2014. This is expected to identify ways to further increase system reliability and performance. Sydney Water proposes to review the use of vacuum systems as a future servicing strategy including current and future capability of vacuum systems to handle expansion and growth. It proposes to expand the stormwater source control strategy into other vacuum areas and assess the use of new technologies. These strategies will help Sydney Water chart a roadmap for future improved service delivery in these areas. The discomfort and frustration the system failure caused residents seven weeks ago was terrible and we do not want to see it happen again. I thank the residents for the patience they demonstrated during that particularly difficult first week in July and for their valuable feedback to my office over the past few weeks. I once again commend Minister Constance and Sydney Water staff for their timely action. I look forward to seeing these much-needed improvements delivered to the shire.

ROYAL NEWCASTLE AERO CLUB EIGHTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY

Ms ROBYN PARKER (Maitland—Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) [5.55 p.m.]: In an era when many of us regard air travel as the easiest way to get around our wonderful land and all over the world I pay tribute to a club in my electorate that has been part of Australia's aviation story for nine decades. On Sunday 4 August the Royal Newcastle Aero Club staged a spectacular display over the lower Hunter Valley, Lake Macquarie and Newcastle to mark the eighty-fifth anniversary of the club's formation. Even though the traditional stiff August westerly blasted down the Hunter Valley, flying conditions were otherwise perfect to honour the day in 1928 when former World War I aviators Captain H. S. Preston and Captain L. H. Irwin decided to form an aero club in Newcastle. The anniversary flyover included a formation of

a World War II Grumman Avenger shadowed by three Pitts Special biplanes as well as five Cessna aircraft flying in an arrowhead formation. It capped off a weekend of celebrations during which 150 people including club members and supporters past and present attended a function on the Saturday evening at East Maitland Bowling Club.

According to the well-recorded history on the aero club's website, it took only a couple of months to progress from captains Preston and Irwin having an idea to a public meeting unanimously deciding to take the necessary steps to form a branch of the Aero Club movement in Newcastle. The fledgling club established a landing strip at Broadmeadow and by 1934 the Aero Club of NSW was regularly sending an aeroplane and instructor to Newcastle for flying training. As the Newcastle Aero Club played its part in spreading the flying bug, a network of training centres was set up around the State and a large fleet of aircraft was assembled. The club's association with Maitland began in 1948 when members acquired land at Rutherford on Maitland's western outskirts and formed the Maitland Aero Club under the auspices of Newcastle. When Newcastle Aero Club reached its twenty-fifth anniversary in 1953 the Queen granted permission for the prefix "Royal" to be added to the club's name—a fitting achievement for an organisation recognised at that time as the largest aero club in the Southern Hemisphere.

Newcastle's urban growth and the arrival of a new technology known as television, which resulted in a proliferation of high antennas on the perimeter of the Broadmeadow airfield, saw the then Department of Civil Aviation give notice that it was time for the club to leave its foundation nest. The club committee decided that Maitland would be the new base for all flying operations. It would take two years to complete the transfer. The club's hangar and flight operations room were dismantled and relocated to the new home base, and the last flight departed Broadmeadow in 1963. Over the next 50 years the Royal Newcastle Aero Club would share its passion for aviation not just with those who wanted to learn to fly but also with those who maybe did not have the opportunity to follow their dream or simply just enjoyed looking skyward to see those magnificent men and women and their flying machines. It began in 1966 with the staging of the Australian Light Aircraft Royal Federation of Aero Clubs championships, which the host club won. A six-day aviation exposition entitled "Expo 68" celebrated the club's fortieth birthday. Thousands converged on the Rutherford aerodrome to see the air shows and ground exhibits.

The air shows have continued throughout the years, with the Tiger Moth biplane featuring prominently from its fortieth birthday event in 1971. We also have the great Tiger Moth air races during the Steamfest, which is held in Maitland each year, when a Tiger Moth races two trains and sometimes the Tiger Moth wins. During my time as the member for Maitland the Royal Newcastle Aero Club surprisingly has won the past two great air races. I am told that this year's winning pilot, Chief Flying Instructor Captain Phil Unicomb, thrilled the Steamfest crowd with a celebratory aerial display over the finish line at Maitland railway station. I was alighting from the train carriage at the time, but as the train was chugging up the line we could look out the window and see the plane up ahead.

The Royal Newcastle Aero Club has given so much to the Maitland community. It is a terrific club and I thank its members for their contribution to our community and for the role the club continues to play today. The Royal Newcastle Aero Club has a great little aerodrome at Rutherford and it is quite a common sight to see people jumping out of planes, including members of my family, though not me—nothing will change that. Although these celebrations were significant, the ongoing participation of the club is part of Maitland's history and culture. I look forward to being part of future celebrations of the Royal Newcastle Aero Club.

CRIME SENTENCING PROCEDURES

Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) [6.00 p.m.]: I have always thought that we in Australia and specifically New South Wales have one of the world's finest justice systems. I am reluctant to criticise judges and courts. They are under enough pressure from the brilliant and finely nuanced judicial minds on talkback radio and in tabloid newspapers who seem to believe that every sentence is too light. However, a recent decision in the Hunter revealed a significant problem. It seems our system still lacks a little bit of common sense.

The case involved a man who had pleaded guilty to breaking into a family home in the electorate of Cessnock, using the family's shower and eating their food. This was just over 12 months after he had been convicted of theft for breaking into a house, stealing a fridge, a microwave, cutlery, a lawn mower and a Foxtel box. For the most recent Cessnock break-in he was sentenced to 16 months jail, with a nine month non-parole period. He received an additional six months for breaching his good behaviour bond from the 2012 theft. He appealed to the District Court. The *Maitland Mercury* reported the appeal judge as noting that the appellant's

"previous record was for minor nuisance and driving matters but in recent years had escalated into more serious matters for weapons possession and assault". What was that fine judge to do? He decided to let him out. The appeal was upheld and he was placed on another good behaviour bond.

The family whose home was briefly colonised by this man is enraged and fearful in equal measure, and well they might be. Their house is situated on the beautiful Mount View hillside some distance from their nearest neighbour. It simply does not make sense to let this man out. He has committed repeated offences that are becoming more serious and violent, yet he was not given a jail sentence. To lock people up is not always the solution, but surely sometimes it has to be. The community must be kept safe. This man underwent a probation and parole program, but despite this he went on to commit a further offence.

It is extremely troubling that under the laws of this State the judge found this man was not a danger to the community and that he did not deserve punishment. I will happily provide the details of the case to the Attorney General as I believe this decision should be reviewed. I sincerely hope the Director of Public Prosecutions appeals the case. However, a broader issue is involved: Our approach to justice requires reflection. Whilst prison is always the last resort, we cannot place community safety at risk by pursuing some utopian notion of rehabilitation in every case. Put simply, there must be justice for the victim.

PARKINSON'S DISEASE

Mr KEVIN CONOLLY (Riverstone) [6.04 p.m.]: I bring to the attention of the House the good work of Parkinson's NSW in supporting those people who have to live with the scourge of Parkinson's disease. I mention specifically the Unity Walk and Run this Sunday. Last week I attended a public meeting hosted by the Parkinson's Support Group, Hawkesbury, one of many such groups dotted around the State dedicated to supporting those living with Parkinson's disease and their families. My colleague the member for Londonderry and the Federal member, Louise Markus, also attended. At the meeting a number of locals spoke candidly and bravely about how the disease has affected their lives.

Parkinson's NSW is a charity that is very important to me—a member of my extended family is one of those living with the disease. The Unity Walk and Run is an event that I participate in each year. Parkinson's NSW is a charity that provides education, support and information, among many other services, to those living with Parkinson's disease, or those with family members battling the illness. These services are circulated throughout New South Wales with the generous help and dedication of a few employees, but mainly volunteers and supporters of the charity.

Services that are offered by Parkinson's NSW include an information service hotline and one-on-one counselling services and support groups that are run throughout the State, all of which are free of charge. Parkinson's disease is a neurological disorder that primarily affects the movement and motor skills of the individual. Symptoms include slowness of movement, instability, muscle rigidity, shakiness and physical tremors. The debilitating nature of the physical effects brought about by Parkinson's disease also lead to psychological disorders including depression, anxiety, a loss of independence and social isolation stemming from physical immobility.

It is estimated that 80,000 people are living with Parkinson's disease in Australia and the effects of the illness take a great toll not only on the physical health and wellbeing of the individual, but also on the emotional wellbeing of the family and carers of those with the illness. Statistics show that approximately 30 people are diagnosed with Parkinson's disease every day, making it more widespread than common cancers such as prostate or ovarian cancer, or leukaemia. Tragically, those who have been diagnosed with Parkinson's disease statistically will live for approximately 12 years after their diagnosis. Despite this, it would be wrong to assume that it is only a disease of the elderly. A disturbing number of people—somewhere between 10 per cent and 20 per cent of all cases—are diagnosed before the age of 50, with many of those occurring before the age of 40.

As there is no known medical cause or cure for Parkinson's disease, the work carried out by Parkinson's NSW to raise awareness and funds, and make support services available is vital to providing appropriate care to sufferers and to ensuring that important research is carried out to shed more light on this illness. The need to research the causes of and potential cure for Parkinson's disease is underlined by the reality that the incidence of people being diagnosed with the disease is increasing at approximately 2 per cent to 3 per cent each year. The Parkinson's NSW Unity Walk and Run will be held this Sunday, 25 August, at Sydney Olympic Park. Initiatives such as the Parkinson's NSW Unity Walk and Run raise not only awareness in the community of the illness but also funds that go towards much-needed research into Parkinson's disease.

The Unity Walk and Run is in its sixth year and consists of a four-kilometre or an eight-kilometre run that is open to individuals of all ages and ability, or a four-kilometre walk for those who prefer not to run. Each of the participants is sponsored by donations in an effort to raise funds for Parkinson's NSW. Since the first event in 2008 more than \$1.2 million has been raised for the charity. I commend Parkinson's NSW for its efforts in raising funds and awareness of this debilitating illness and I encourage anyone who is able to join me in participating in the upcoming sixth anniversary Parkinson's NSW Unity Walk and Run to be at Sydney Olympic Park this coming Sunday morning.

COUNTRY HOPE, WAGGA WAGGA

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE (Wagga Wagga) [6.09 p.m.]: Last week I had the pleasure of joining the board and family and friends involved in Country Hope to celebrate its tenth anniversary and the opening of its new office. For those members who may not be aware, Country Hope was formed after the Wagga Wagga and Riverina communities realised that there were families in our community that needed support and that that support should be based firmly in rural and regional areas. Wagga Wagga was then chosen as the home of Country Hope, which supports more than 150 families who have children who are battling cancer and life-threatening illnesses. The entire region relies on the support provided by Country Hope.

I attended the function celebrating 10 wonderful years of Country Hope servicing the Riverina. I joined board members and patrons, Brian and Joy Kahlefeldt. A very good friend, Richard Allsopp, was made a patron during the celebrations. In the early days when Country Hope first began to support children with cancer and other illnesses it needed accommodation. Richard and Anna Allsopp generously donated the rent for the first cottage that Country Hope called home, and they went on to pay the rent for years. In fact, they are paying the mortgage on the new office, which has undergone \$200,000 worth of renovations. The new facility was opened by Richard Allsopp, the board, and Brian and Joy Kahlefeldt, who wrote the cheque that started Country Hope in the Riverina.

We were joined by board members from across the region, including deputy chair, Babs Donaldson, who operates out of Griffith. Babs is well known and she and her husband, Bill, have been devoted to Country Hope. Chairman John Studdert is a founding member of this wonderful organisation. Beyond Bank Australia made a donation to assist with renovations and I was delighted to be able to provide \$50,000 of funding through two Community Partnership Grant allocations from the State Government. Country Hope acquired another \$25,000 through further grants so that the renovations could be completed. Many people contributed to the renovations, including builders, companies that provided interior decorations, painting and plastering services, and the list goes on—such is the reputation of Country Hope and the work that it does. Establishing this organisation 10 years ago was not easy. However, Country Hope has been supported by a band of people who fundraise and by many sponsors. One of those sponsors is Regional Express airlines, which provides tickets for children and their parents to travel to Sydney or Melbourne to access treatment.

Approximately one in three people are affected by cancer in some way. That can cause a great deal of financial stress and presents many challenges for people in regional and rural areas. As important as are the wonderful organisations that do research, we cannot open up the fridge and eat a bowl of research: We need food in our fridge and petrol in our car. Quite often these families have to travel for treatment and they find it challenging to pay for fuel and basic services such as electricity and health cover. They often have no funds and Country Hope raises money for them. In coordination with caseworkers it ensures that funds are made available to put food in the fridge, to help pay for fuel and vehicle registration and those important things that all of us need to function. This has been a success story. Country Hope is supported by the patrons I have just mentioned, a dedicated board and, importantly, the community of the Riverina, which owns Country Hope in its entirety. The community has supported the organisation and made it what it is today. I congratulate those involved and wish them many more years of serving the community.

RETIREMENT OF ALBY SCHULTZ, FEDERAL MEMBER FOR HUME

Mr JAI ROWELL (Wollondilly) [6.14 p.m.]: I am pleased that the member for Wagga Wagga preceded me. I place on record my appreciation for the first week or two of guidance he has given me in my new role as Deputy Government Whip. I wish to acknowledge another man who has worked tirelessly representing his region over the past 25 years. Mr Alby Schultz, MP, has recently retired as the Federal member for Hume. He has held that position since 1998, serving as the local member for five consecutive terms, making him the longest-serving member for the Hume electorate since Federation.

Before entering politics, Alby began his career by following in the footsteps of his father, working in the meat processing industry. For 32 years Alby worked as a small business owner, an industry consultant, a quality assurance officer with the Australian Meat and Livestock Corporation, and as a part-time teacher at Cootamundra College of TAFE. Despite the successful career he had forged for himself, Alby made the decision to enter politics. He was driven by community discontent over the Labor Party's socialist ideologies and mismanagement of the State's resources. He had heard concern from his community regarding falling standards of education, the breakdown of law and order, and chaos in the health system. He was passionate about these and other issues.

With Wollondilly overlapping much of the Hume electorate, these concerns resonate because they were the same concerns that were raised with me during my election campaign. Being elected as the Federal member for Hume was not the beginning of Alby's dedicated service to his community. Alby is one of the few members who has served at every level of government over his career. His political career began as a councillor on Cootamundra Shire Council in 1983 and he served for eight years. Alby delivered his first speech in this House of the New South Wales Parliament on 30 August 1988 as the member for Burrinjuck. This marked an enormous achievement for the new member because the electorate of Burrinjuck had previously been held by the Labor Party for 47 years. Alby took on this position with enthusiasm by representing his electorate and participating in a number of committees covering areas such as law and justice, agricultural and rural affairs, and justice and emergency services, to name a few.

Having nominated to stand for election to the seat of Hume in the 1998 Federal election and winning, Alby was no longer the member for Burrinjuck. Since taking on this new role, Alby has become known for his dedication to standing up for the needs and interests of the electorate and has served with distinction over the past 15 years in Federal Parliament. Members may not know, but I had the pleasure of working for Alby during that time and was able to see firsthand how tirelessly and passionately he worked on a number of different issues that were important to the people of Hume. Two areas in which Alby was particularly influential were reforming the child support system and the wind turbine industry. Both of these issues were important to Alby because he saw how they were impacting on the personal and professional lives of the people he represented.

He was also a strong advocate for supporting the agricultural industries that were the lifeblood of so many of the constituents he was elected to represent. His enduring dedication to this fight is evident in his involvement in the Standing Committee on Primary Industries and Regional Services and, most notably, by his chairmanship from the end of 2004 of the Standing Committee on Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry. During this time Alby has been a mentor to me and I feel privileged to have had the opportunity to work alongside him for the benefit of our region. During my campaign for the electorate of Wollondilly prior to the last State election I was proud to have both Alby and Glo Schultz volunteer to work on booths and to support my campaign.

I sincerely hope to be able to follow in Alby's footsteps in this place and to have the honour of representing my community with the same longevity and community respect for which Alby is well known. I could go on speaking about his commitment to the people of Hume, including to the many organisations of which he is a member, patron or ambassador. However, a speech thanking Alby for his service to the community cannot be delivered without taking the time to recognise the important role that his wife, Gloria—or Glo—played throughout his career. His first campaign slogan was "Two for the price of one", and over more than 50 years of marriage Glo and Alby provided just that. The monumental role that Glo has played in supporting Alby in delivering for the community of Hume can never be understated. In fact, I should probably be congratulating Glo on her retirement too.

During some dark days in my life, it was Glo who spent a lot of time with me and who supported me. That will never be forgotten. Just last week I was lucky to spend some time with both Alby and Glo. As some may know already, Alby has not been very well lately. However, during his retirement I know that Alby will be channelling all his strength towards overcoming the current hurdles in front of him. Alby is as strong as a bloody old mallee bull. I wish him every success in his retirement. I know that he is certainly looking forward to spending quality time with his family. I wish him all the best in his future endeavours.

ST CHRISTOPHERS FOOTBALL CLUB

Mr GLENN BROOKES (East Hills) [6.19 p.m.]: I thank the Hon. Mike Baird, who is the New South Wales Treasurer, for visiting my electorate and demonstrating his commitment to the people of East Hills. Treasurer Baird met with committee members of the St Christopher's Football Club to discuss their needs and to

take a closer look at their funding application for the 2013 Community Building Partnership grants. The club has its home on the grounds at Marco Park, Panania, and already has raised an impressive \$50,000 for the project. Treasurer Baird commented at the level of commitment and the amount of sausage sizzles it has taken to raise the funds.

Members of the club could not believe they were offered the opportunity to talk directly with the New South Wales Treasurer only weeks after coming to me for help regarding their project. The Treasurer's visit to East Hills was the first visit in this year's round of grants and the people of East Hills are grateful for his consideration, not only of the project but also of the electorate as a whole. I can remember a time not too long ago when Ministers of the Crown would never visit our area. Now we have a Treasurer who is a man of the people. He committed to our area before we won government and he has upheld that commitment in his capacity as the New South Wales Treasurer. Members of the East Hills community refer to our Treasurer as "Mike" because they feel they know him and they can rely on him. Mike's ongoing commitment to East Hills is complemented by the other Ministers who, like Mike, take the time to visit locals and listen to their concerns.

ROCKDALE GUILD THEATRE

Mr JOHN FLOWERS (Rockdale) [6.22 p.m.]: I acknowledge the Guild Theatre—a community theatre group in my electorate of Rockdale. The Guild Theatre is well known in Rockdale and is regarded more widely as one of the best amateur theatre groups. Certainly it is one of the most enduring. The current site of the theatre has a long history. Originally, plans had been drawn up to erect a school of arts in Rockdale. The need for such an establishment had been discussed for a long time in the district. Approximately 140 schools of art were built or formed in Sydney during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and one of them was the Rockdale School of Arts.

The school of arts building in Rockdale was officially opened on 6 July 1912 by Lord Chelmsford, who was the Governor of New South Wales from 1909 to 1923. Various fundraising events were undertaken to boost funding for the school. For example, a carnival was held at the Brighton Racecourse at Lady Robinsons Beach, and the woodchop event, in particular, was said to be great entertainment. Registration for the event was restricted to residents along the Illawarra railway line. The Rockdale School of Arts is an institution that is a great example of how communities can progress socially and educationally. It has served its people and the district well. It has broadened the horizons of residents, enriched their lives and introduced many to new experiences.

The next chapter in the story came with the addition of the entertaining world of theatre. The Guild Theatre was officially opened on 5 March 1966 by the then Mayor of Rockdale, Alderman Gosling. Thereafter the transition from the Rockdale School of Arts to the Guild Theatre began. The first production, *Quality Street*, was launched some two weeks later on 18 March 1966. It was a considerable achievement, considering the Guild Theatre's community base. This historical snapshot demonstrates the importance that the people of Rockdale place on the arts and in turn the contribution that the Guild Theatre makes to the community. When the Guild Theatre was formed in 1952 it was convened by a small group consisting of members of the Rockdale Musical Society and directed by Miss Hazel Plant, who was a member of the British Drama League. The Guild Theatre is one of the few amateur theatres in Sydney that endeavours to cast its productions from within its membership. Auditions are held for each production. Over the years since the establishment of the theatre, a vast array of plays have been performed—drama including Shakespearean plays, comedy productions and musicals.

More recently there has been an emphasis on Australian plays, including the first play performed in Australia in the late 1700s, *The Recruiting Officer*. The Guild Theatre has a loyal following of patrons because it provides unique and cultured entertainment—something that everyone can enjoy regardless of background or belief. The Guild Theatre's environment is one where anyone can become involved, and that is one of its enduring strengths. It is important to recognise the contribution of the arts in such a vibrant and diverse community as Rockdale. In Rockdale we are lucky to have such a thriving arts community. I congratulate the Guild Theatre Group on the tremendous work that it has done over the years and for the enjoyment it continues to bring to the community. I wish the group every success for the future.

ALBURY AVIATION HISTORY

Mr GREG APLIN (Albury) [6.26 p.m.]: The *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* says there is an art to flying, or rather a knack: "The knack lies in learning how to throw yourself at the ground and miss." That is precisely what happened on a sheep and cattle property, Bungowannah Park near Albury, 100 years ago from

last July—and quite successful it was too. Caught up in the worldwide enthusiasm for flight at the start of the twentieth century, two Albury mechanics, Azor Robbins and Alex Porter, set about building an engine with the aim of achieving powered flight. Their accomplishment was to design and construct the first monoplane with a flat-four aero engine to fly in Australia. It is understood that the plane flew for 183 metres at 4.6 metres off the ground.

This remarkable feat of pioneering aviation takes its place in the esteemed company of other Albury aeronautical tales, such as the emergency landing of the *Uiver* in the 1934 London to Melbourne Air Race, to the Avro Anson incident of 1940, when Leonard Fuller safely crash-landed two planes that had collided and locked together mid-air over Brocklesby, just 50 kilometres north of Albury. Robbins and Porter were brave men. Their plane appears simple in contemporaneous photos, but every step must have involved challenging engineering problems. The monoplane is small by today's standards. It was designed as a tall pyramid of fine steel tubes, spars and bracing wires under tension, cradling the modest engine at the front and extending out the back through an open fuselage. The wings were fabric stretched over a lightweight frame, which gave them a scalloped appearance. The wooden propeller was taller than a man.

The pilot sat in a truly breathtaking position. Barely within the fuselage, the exposed pilot could rest his arms on top of the structure. There was no windscreen. Instead of a crash helmet, photographs suggest the pilot favoured a cloth beret. In November 2012, with the 100-year anniversary of the Robbins-Porter flight looming, I was pleased to advise my electorate that the New South Wales Government would provide funding of \$19,000 to build a replica of the Robbins-Porter monoplane. The funding came from the 2013 State Arts Funding Program. This new projects program sits within a New South Wales Government arts funding budget of more than \$56 million in 2013 and \$51 million for the year ahead. On Saturday 27 July I helped open the Robbins-Porter Anniversary exhibition at the award-winning Albury Library/Museum—a building that stands on the site of the original workshop where the plane had been built a century earlier.

Suspended from the ceiling of the Library Museum is a full-size replica plane built by members of the Albury and District Historical Society, along with the Manual Activity Centre—or Albury's Men's Shed—and upholsterer Paul Summerfield. Also on show is the original flat-four, horizontally opposed, air-cooled engine that powered the pioneering aircraft. This is a project that put arts funding into the hands of artists themselves. As I looked around the Albury exhibition I could see the handiwork of many local artists and cultural historians. The magnificent propeller was constructed by the team at Wodonga TAFE. Filmmaker James Gallimore made a short film about the flight and project, which was screening in the museum. The Cabinet of Discovery, with its aeronautical wonders, showcases the cabinetmaking skills of Scott Henkel. Dr Dirk Spennemann was the historical sleuth who researched the origins of the plane and its flight to ensure that the information and replica were accurate and authentic. And the Twin Cities Model Aero Club supported the project with publicity and workshops, as well as constructing a small working model of the monoplane. I thank all those people for their creative endeavours displayed in this wonderful exhibition.

Finally, this project had another aim: to engage men and boys in a rewarding and enjoyable construction activity where there can be mentoring and an intergenerational passing on of skills working with volunteers through the Albury's Men's Shed. In every sense, this has been a community project. It is not a passive exercise where we take what we are given and then stare at it behind glass, lacking a local connection. This is a fantastic example of what can happen when an essentially artistic endeavour chases out along diverse community pathways to involve lots of people with their own creative skills and resources. This community really owns this project and, I am sure, will benefit from its artistry, its historical authenticity and its development of local skills. It was fashion icon Coco Chanel who said:

If you were born without wings, do nothing to prevent them from growing.

Gathered at the Albury Library Museum in July we celebrated the lives and achievements of two pioneers who made their own wings and took flight from Bungowannah Park 100 years ago; but we also celebrated the wonderful creativity and artistry found within our community today. I encourage all aviation enthusiasts to get down to Albury for the exhibition, which is underway at the Albury Library Museum.

PREVENTIONXPRESS COMMUNITY HEALTH SCREENING PROGRAM

Dr ANDREW McDONALD (Macquarie Fields) [6.32 p.m.]: On 23 July I attended the launch of the Community Health Screening Program, conducted by PreventionXpress and held at the Fairfield City Council administration offices. I acknowledge the Federal Minister for Health and Medical Research, Tanya Plibersek,

who was present for the launch, for her funding and her support of this most brilliant initiative. The program will have 11 sites in Western and south-western Sydney, and will target and screen 5,000 people in multiple languages at Centrelink offices. This is an excellent screening program; it has been modelled on previous screening programs introduced by Bill Noonan, OAM, who used his extensive experience in the union movement to set up a confidential health questionnaire for drivers in the trucking industry.

Those who present for screening will have their height and weight measured. This gives a measurement of body mass index. Their blood pressure will be taken and their blood sugar measured. Following this they can use a touch-screen iPad to do a 32-question questionnaire, which takes about 10 minutes. This screening, which is confidential, is able to be used in various settings, such as workplaces and Centrelink offices. The confidential touch-screen method is more efficient than a person-to-person questionnaire as it removes screener bias; and it allows the person who wishes to be screened to enter the data at their own pace. In a previous workplace 5,800 men were screened; many were found to have a significant degree of problems. The Energy Australia workplace is 80 per cent male and has a very high risk of injury due to the danger of working with an invisible fatal problem—electricity. The workers screened under that program were found to have higher rates of obesity and fatigue, 4 per cent were found to have type 2 diabetes, while others were found to have excessive alcohol intake and high blood pressure. Those who complete the 32-question questionnaire are given information on their health using a traffic light system—red, orange and green.

We know that preventative health care can add 14 years to the lives of every person in New South Wales. Simple measures such as not smoking, regular exercise, watching weight, blood pressure, cholesterol and blood sugar will significantly improve the quality and length of people's lives. We also know that those who are unemployed have a significantly shorter life span than has the general population. That is why this screening program is essential. We also know that the average life expectancy is 84 years on the North Shore and 79 years in Western New South Wales; and much of this gap is attributable to lack of preventative health services. Minister Plibersek should be saluted for her vision in funding this program. I note that she is a former Minister responsible for Centrelink. The Federal Government has invested \$1 billion over the past nine years in preventative health.

The greatest challenges for the modern health system are those of non-communicable diseases, and this is a problem that no health system can afford to walk away from. Health workers use 20 per cent less resources than the general population, largely as a result of improved preventative health measures, but also because of the availability of health information that their insider knowledge gives them. This enables them to know what treatments are effective and what are not, and where is the best place to get treatment. It is time for the State Government to release this sort of information to the general population rather than treat information such as this as State secrets. As Bill Noonan, OAM, an admirable patron of this program, said:

Health is something that no union or person can walk away from.

Anxiety and depression are common in every workplace; and all workers need to be aware of the need to care for the mental health of their colleagues—none more so than in this Parliament. A screening of 5,000 people will find at least 200 with type 2 diabetes, many with raised blood pressure and a significant burden of mental illness. I commend the Minister for Health for funding this very important program, Fairfield City Council for sponsoring and supporting it, and, most importantly, Bill Noonan, OAM, and David Stanley, Chief Executive Officer of PreventionXpress, for their vision. This is a great program, and I look forward to its rollout in all Centrelink offices in this State.

SOCIAL HOUSING

Mr JAMIE PARKER (Balmain) [6.37 p.m.]: I speak tonight about the failure of social housing in New South Wales. As a result, we see neglect, chronic underfunding and poor planning by both the former Government and the need for the current Liberal Government to act. The Auditor-General recently released a report that outlined the utter breakdown of our State's social housing system. The report is a damning indictment on the former Government and also sets a strong challenge for the O'Farrell Government not to repeat the failure in the provision of public and affordable housing. The report also demonstrates that these problems have been developing for a number of years and were allowed to become systemic and entrenched due to the neglect and mismanagement of the former Labor Government. We Greens are calling for an inquiry into the housing affordability crisis and an immediate injection of funding following the Auditor-General's report, which highlighted the failure of the public housing system. This injection of funding into social housing not only will help improve the quality of the asset and the homes in which tenants live; it will also go towards solving the housing affordability crisis.

My electorate office is in the heart of Glebe's historic public housing estate, and much of my constituent work relates to social housing tenants. After years of neglect under the former Labor Government, the maintenance backlog continues to skyrocket and we are seeing precious public assets, people's homes, falling into disrepair. I see the results of this neglect every day, as my constituents come to my office in despair, having tried and failed to get results from a malfunctioning bureaucracy that has been under-resourced for far too long. What is the extent of that under-resourcing? It is an increasing maintenance backlog, as identified by the Auditor-General, of more than \$300 million. The backlog was similar under the former Labor Government, and the current Coalition has done little to address it.

My electorate office sees the results of this neglect every day. Social housing serves some of the most disadvantaged and vulnerable people in our community; many of them—the elderly, those with significant disabilities and mental health issues—are living in awful conditions. As I have mentioned, many homes are falling into disrepair, with common problems including broken guttering, which then leads to roof problems, then mould, and then structural problems with the house. These are problems that could have been solved with upfront maintenance investment. But, because of lack of funding, many of these problems are left for years and years. The Auditor-General's report also revealed that the current system meets less than half of the State's need for social housing and that the shortfall is increasing. The report highlighted that over the next four years the Land and Housing Corporation will be selling twice as many properties as it builds. This is despite an increasing demand for social housing.

In New South Wales more than 120,000 people are waiting for social housing. That is a shocking statistic and it is evidence of a system so broken that some people are waiting decades to be housed. What has the Government proposed in order to address these systemic problems? We have heard the Minister announce a bedroom tax—a tax on tenants who have spare bedrooms in their homes. These tenants do not necessarily want to live in larger houses but housing stock in smaller one-bedroom units is either unavailable or is only available in far-flung regions. Many of these tenants do not want to move far away from their support networks—the medical care and family support that many of them require. It is disgraceful that the Government has proposed such a punitive measure, which puts the pressure caused by the lack of investment and planning in public housing back onto the tenants. The proposed bedroom tax is based on the flawed notion that tenants are somehow responsible for the fact that they do not have suitable alternative housing. Punishing tenants by taxing them and privatising public assets in an unsustainable manner is no solution to the poor government planning that has resulted in the State's social housing problem.

The key to addressing affordable public housing is long-term strategic public investment by State and Federal governments. Members will recall what happened in 1995 when the Labor Government was in power and the amount of social housing as a proportion of all housing stock began to flatten and decline. That decline has continued and Labor has a lot to answer for. After so many years of neglect of social welfare and public services it is apparent that not only has it failed the most vulnerable people in our community but also it softened the ground for the Liberal-Nationals Government to introduce punitive measures on tenants. We are now seeing a fundamental structural change in the way government responds to social disadvantage. This is being played out across a range of different areas where tenants and other disadvantaged people using government services are required to pay for them.

In my electorate I see these measures impacting on my local community. I call on the Government to recognise the social and community benefits of providing a strong welfare system. Such a system will encourage people to get well, to get back to work and to integrate into the community, where they can become contributing members. However, it requires the Government to make an immediate injection of funds into social housing and the maintenance of housing stock. The Government must also institute an inquiry into the need for social housing and how the New South Wales Government can deliver it effectively.

Private members' statements concluded.

**The House adjourned, pursuant to standing and sessional orders, at 6.42 p.m. until
Tuesday 27 August 2013 at 12 noon**
