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# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Wednesday 28 August 2013

## ABSENCE OF THE SPEAKER

**The Clerk** announced the absence of the Speaker.

**The Deputy-Speaker (The Hon. Thomas George)**, in the absence of the Speaker, took the chair at 10.00 a.m.

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

## BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

### Notices of Motions

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

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

**The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser):** I acknowledge in the gallery Mr Duncan Beresford Peacocke and his sister, Mrs Jane Beresford Lynch nee Peacocke, son and daughter of the late Gerald Beresford Ponsonby Peacocke, a former member for Dubbo. I also extend the condolences of the House to his family who are unable to be here today and who are spread across the State and the world: wife, Nancy Mabel Peacocke, and children Samuel Beresford Peacocke, Catherine Beresford Peacocke, Benjamin Beresford Peacocke and Angus Beresford Peacocke.

**Mr ANDREW STONER** (Oxley—Deputy Premier, Minister for Trade and Investment, and Minister for Regional Infrastructure and Services) [10.08 a.m.]: I move:

That this House extends to the family the deep sympathy of members of the Legislative Assembly in the loss sustained by the death, on 23 May 2013, of the Honourable Gerald Beresford Ponsonby Peacocke, a former Minister of the Crown.

As Parliamentary Leader of the New South Wales Nationals, I wish to speak of Gerald Beresford Ponsonby Peacocke, a great Country Party and National Party warrior. As Deputy Premier in a reformist Government, I will also speak of a policy innovator whose contribution in a variety of roles over his many years of public life made a significant difference to many of his fellow citizens. Most importantly, as a husband and father, I offer my deepest condolences to his wife, Nancy; his children and their families—Sam and Helen, Catherine, Duncan, Ben, Angus and Alex, Jane and Stephen; his 11 grandchildren; his great granddaughter, Tabitha; and his brothers and sister, Peter, Margaret and Gareth, and Sylvia. I acknowledge the presence in the gallery of Duncan and Jane.

Gerry, as he was known to all of his friends, was born in Warren on 2 June 1931 and died not that far down the road in Dubbo almost 80 years later. In those intervening years he travelled around the world many times, but I think it is true to say that, for Gerry, nowhere compared to the Central West and Western Plains of New South Wales. Indeed, that terrific region of our State was at the heart of his public service. I outline the many elected positions he held in that area as proof of that: deputy mayor of Bathurst City Council 1965; alderman of Dubbo City Council from 1970 to 1976; mayor of Dubbo City Council in 1999; and, of course, the member for Dubbo for 17 years, five months and 15 days from 19 September 1981 to 5 March 1999. My colleague Troy Grant, Gerry's Nationals successor in the great seat of Dubbo, will speak shortly about some of his many achievements for his electorate. Colleagues from both sides of the House no doubt will recall some of the many amusing moments of Gerry's life in this place, from the smoke-filled Feather Dusters Club where he muttered dark truths to stories of his estate in Upper Slaughter, somewhere in the Cotswolds I understand. Indeed, Gerry is sorely missed by members past and present.

I will now spend some time reflecting on his period of service as Minister for Business and Consumer Affairs from 1988 and also as Minister for Local Government, and Minister for Co-operatives from 1991. Gerry

came to government with the energy that comes from far too long in opposition—and I am sure that all members on this side of the House know exactly what I am talking about. As shadow Minister for Small Business in the lead-up to the 1988 election, he committed the Liberals and The Nationals to a rigorous program of deregulation and red tape cutting. He passionately believed that the secret to economic and social growth, particularly in regional New South Wales which was at the heart of his passion and his policy, was a vibrant small business sector. In this regard he shared something of the reformist zeal of, for example, Margaret Thatcher. On coming to government, he moved quickly in a number of areas—single business licensing, deregulation and co-regulation. James McCall, a one-time policy adviser to Gerry who has just stepped down as chief executive officer of the Motor Traders Association and is also in the gallery today, told me this:

Gerry Peacock was, above all, a man of integrity—his honesty, hard work and commitment to his constituents, his Party and the people of New South Wales were an outstanding example of the best qualities of a servant of the people and ones that should be emulated by every decent member of Parliament.

Gerry had a very fine intellect that was masked by a bravado—one that endeared him to all who knew him well.

Gerry had a passion for fostering community self-help and saw the Co-operative movement as the best means for individuals coming together to provide services to their occupational group or community.

One hallmark achievement was the establishment of a community co-operative hospital at Yeoval in his electorate.

Gerry facilitated the development and growth of this hospital as a community owned and managed institution that grew and became the State's most outstanding example of what can be achieved by a community if its members work together.

As Minister for Local Government, and Minister for Co-operatives, Gerry combined that reformist zeal with his significant experience in local government in the Central West—at Bathurst City Council and subsequently Dubbo—to tackle the beast of the Local Government Act. As my colleague the current Minister for Local Government and the member for Ballina, who will speak to this motion shortly, reflected upon learning of Gerry's death:

Gerry not only represented the people of Dubbo with distinction but was a significant reformist who introduced the current Local Government Act 1993 which had not been updated since 1919.

It was a big job, as I am sure the current Minister is only too well aware. Unfortunately, Gerry's time in Cabinet came to a premature end in circumstances not of his choosing, and I have no doubt others will touch more on that aspect. But when the dust settled, I have no doubt that Gerry looked back on his ministerial career with tremendous pride. I know that many of the current members of The Nationals in the National Party room, which is a tradition in this place—the Country Party room or the National Party room—served alongside Gerry in this place and, when we get together after a Monday evening party meeting for a barbecue and an ale or two, the stories of Gerry are still legendary. Suffice it to say that whilst many would call me rather conservative on social issues, I think sometimes Gerry made me look a little bit like a pinko.

**Mr Barry O'Farrell:** Especially with that tie.

**Mr ANDREW STONER:** Yes, Gerry would not have liked it much. The stories still abound over an ale or a red wine in the National Party room. Gerry was an absolute gentleman, respected by all who knew him. We were saddened at his retirement from politics in 1999 and, such was the measure of the man in his own electorate, we went from a 20-odd per cent margin to a loss of that seat at that time. I am glad we have it back in the capable hands of Troy Grant and I know that Gerry worked to help achieve that outcome—to see the seat of Dubbo back with The Nationals. I conclude by saying that you can pay no higher compliment to a member of Parliament, a servant of the people, than to say he made a difference—a difference that counted, and still counts today. Vale Gerald Beresford Ponsonby Peacocke.

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL** (Ku-ring-gai—Premier, and Minister for Western Sydney) [10.17 a.m.]: I join in this condolence motion for Gerry Peacocke and extend my condolences to his family in the gallery as well as the wider family in the Central West and all his friends. There are many reasons why Gerry Peacocke and I should never have got on. First, he defeated a Liberal in order to win the seat of Dubbo. Whenever I run into John Mason these days in Newcastle I am reminded of the fact that just because you are a party leader does not mean you cannot lose your seat, as John Mason discovered in the 1981 election campaign. Secondly, Gerry pretended to be not that fond of Catholics. Gerry, of course, knew how to wind people up and at times would make the most outrageous anti-Catholic jokes, but you knew that they were good humoured and designed to elicit a reaction.

I had the great privilege of serving in one Parliament, between 1995 and 1999, with Gerry Peacocke. I had the even greater privilege on sitting days of sharing a meal—sometimes two meals—with Gerry Peacocke, with the then member for Wagga Wagga, Joe Schipp, and—just to show how long ago it was—with the then member for Tamworth, Tony Windsor. Whoever else was at the table, I have to say that those three individuals were the centre of attention. Regardless of what was happening in this Chamber—they were not always great days for the Liberal and National parties, having just moved into Opposition—the jokes and the friendship flowed in equal parts. I could almost recite the stories that Gerry would tell about his dog Henry, but I am not sure that they should be placed on the public record. I acknowledge that Gerry Peacocke, unlike many politicians, not only won a seat from an opponent but also chose his time of retirement, which is not always the way in which this place operates.

I acknowledge what the Deputy Premier said, which is that having been given the chance in the Greiner-Murray Government to be a Minister—both as Minister for Local Government and Minister for Business and Consumer Affairs—Gerry made his mark. It is a tribute to Gerry that the Motor Traders Association has sent a representative here today to pay tribute to him. Like the current Minister for Fair Trading, James McCall had a close working relationship with Gerry Peacocke when he was in a portfolio that affected the motor trades across New South Wales. I am not sure that Gerry needed as much steering as the current Minister, but the end result was precisely the same: ensuring that the regulations were liked and that business was able to thrive because of Gerry's inherent belief in the benefits of free enterprise.

I confess to Gerry's family that one day I got my own back at him. He was fantastic at winding people up and at setting people against each other off the back of a word or whatever, but it was all done by Gerry in good humour. In 1998 the then Irish President, Mary McAleese, visited this Parliament. Recognising that she was coming, I started to salt some ideas with Gerry Peacocke. Mary McAleese was the first person born in Northern Ireland to be President of the Irish Republic. I pointed that out to Gerry, but I may have left him under the misapprehension that she was also Anglican. I saw when I did not point out that Mary McAleese being born in Northern Ireland was actually Roman Catholic that his eyes lit up a bit.

So for the weeks leading up to her visit I continued to steer this because Gerry used to tell these outrageous stories to someone like me, a Roman Catholic of Irish background, that his family had settled Ireland after Cromwell had subjugated the Irish in that terrible conflict in the mid seventeenth century; that his family had been sent there to ensure that the ancestors of people like me were put in their proper place. I thought this was a good way to score one for the Irish and to score one for the Irish Catholics. After Mary McAleese addressed the joint sittings in the upper House there was a reception in the President's dining room leading into the President's office.

I happened to notice Gerry circling the room and getting closer and closer to Mary McAleese. No doubt he was going to tell her the path that his family made in the subjugation of Irish Catholics following the Cromwell invasion. I saw him start his conversation with Mary McAleese. I saw her frown. I saw her respond. I saw his brows darken and a cloud gather over his head—and I immediately made my exit from that room. I feel I needed to confess that to Gerry Peacocke's family I had some great times in this building with him. He is someone who is worth remembering, but I have always felt just a little bit guilty that I misled him about the background of a head of State. May God bless Gerry Peacocke.

**Mr RICHARD AMERY** (Mount Druitt) [10.23 a.m.]: I join the Premier and the Deputy Premier in passing on my condolences to not only Duncan and Jane in the public gallery today but also the whole family and friends of Gerry Peacocke. I was going to go back to about 1983, but the Premier has gazumped me—he has gone back to Cromwell. I cannot beat that! I acknowledge what has already been said by a number of people in relation to service that Gerry gave to his family, the community, the law—he was a lawyer and member of local government, but apart from that he seemed to manage quite well—and to this Parliament, which he served for more than 17 years.

Gerry was about 50, give or take a month, when he was elected to this Parliament in 1981, in the second of what are called Wran-slide victories for the then Labor Government. Gerry was admitted in a similar atmosphere to that felt by many new members of the Labor Party at the moment on the back of a landslide to political opponents. When I was elected to Parliament in 1983 I was about 32 years of age and I was surprised to learn that Gerry had been here for only two years, not only because he was about 50 years old but also because he seemed very involved in the workings of the House and in debates. I suppose I could say that he seemed a very established member.

I also noticed the level of respect with which he was treated by both sides of the House. At that time Neville Wran was the Premier of New South Wales, and other members included Ron Mulock, Frank Walker, Terry Sheahan, et cetera. It was very rough in question time. Even Neville Wran showed respect—I do not say "affection" because I do not think Neville would hand out too much affection in this place—when he referred to Gerry Peacocke, which was earned in only a couple of years. In contrast, Neville Wran would not have shown such similar respect to the then Leader of the National Party, Leon Punch. Wran would save much of his colourful language when describing Leon Punch.

I recall members from both sides speaking to a condolence motion just before question time. I remember Leon Punch standing at this very lectern in Opposition. I was sitting behind where the Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Hospitality and Racing is now sitting. I remember when Neville Wran was listening to Leon Punch, he turned and said to either Frank Walker or Terry Sheahan, words to the effect, "If I die before that bastard, and he starts talking on my condolence motion, you are to move that the member be no longer heard." Of course, in the next breath the then Premier would use a different tone when speaking to Gerry Peacocke.

We often say things about someone after they have passed away in eulogies and condolence motions. I am glad that I had an opportunity to say some appropriate things to Gerry when he was alive and when he was a member of Parliament and a former Minister. In fact, I sent him a letter following his removal from the Cabinet. I will raise a negative story because, no doubt, Gerry spoke to his family about it in colourful language that was printed in the newspapers at the time. At the time following a reshuffle Gerry was left out of the Cabinet. I understand that when he was at a country show and an ABC reporter said to him, "Mr Peacocke, would you like to comment on the fact that you are no longer in the Cabinet?" It was such a poor show by the Government that nobody had told Gerry about it. It certainly did not endear the Premier of the day to Gerry who was very colourful in describing what he thought of the Premier at the time in the local media. On 26 May 1993 I was prompted to write a letter to him, in which I stated:

Dear Gerry,

Just a note to sympathise with you on the disappointing and unjustified decision of the Premier not to include you in the Cabinet.

The removal from Cabinet usually follows some incident involving the conduct of a Minister or some question over his competency to hold Ministerial office. This cannot be said of your position as a Minister in the Coalition Government, since its election in 1988.

Whilst media reports correctly highlighted your achievement in getting the Local Government Act through the Parliament, it is two other Bills, which I as Opposition spokesman on Co-operatives would like to mention.

They are of course, the Co-operatives Act and the Australian Financial Institutions Commission (AFIC) Legislation.

These Bills, whilst not fully appreciated by the media or the whole community, were major reforms of long established institutions. Your role in the reforms will be a part of any complimentary list of Coalition achievements and your personal efforts are to be congratulated.

You have said that politics is a rough game. One could not argue that view if your case is an example.

If nothing else, your omission from the Cabinet shows that a person can serve as an effective Shadow Minister, be elected to the Cabinet, push through many Legislative reforms, **NOT** involve the Government in any scandal or embarrassing performances, perform well as an administrator and in the Parliament, and then be cruelly tossed out at the whim of an ungrateful Premier.

I went on to make a few closing comments about that. I was pleased to receive a letter back from him, which said:

Dear Richard

Thank you very sincerely for your extremely kind letter of 26<sup>th</sup> ultimo.

Gerry's language use always impressed me, and I will refer further to that shortly—he is a lawyer. He continued:

I find it difficult to express the deep appreciation that I have for your very caring and friendly comments contained in your letter.

The following is my point about Gerry:

I have always very much appreciated the friendship I have with so many members of your party and the response from you and from other members of your party since my dismissal from Cabinet has been simply overwhelming and reaffirms my strong belief that playing it fair is appreciated by one's opponents but quite often not by one's supposed friends.

He went on to talk about the support from his family and other matters. I shall provide copies of those letters to his family, if they do not have them. I was pleased to be able to say those things about Gerry at a time when I think he would have been feeling pretty low. That was a difficult period in his life. I have a more light-hearted example involving Gerry's smoking habit—or I should say smoking addiction. When we were in government Gerry would sit on this side of the House near this door. He could never remain for the whole of question time without a cigarette. He would duck out to this room, which is now called the Wentworth Room, and have his hit—his cigarette—return and sit down. If question time was extended, he would disappear again. His smoking prowess was well known.

In about the mid-1990s one of my branch members returned home to Croatia and, for reasons I do not know, decided to bring me back a gift of five packages of Albanian cigarettes. The packets were not like today's flip-top box; they were made pretty crudely—the same as the Lucky Strike soft pack with the foil strip over the top some members may remember seeing in the movies. I offered a few of these cigarettes to well-known smokers in my electorate—the Federal member, branch president and others. Half of them nearly keeled over and accused me of trying to kill them. As a result, the first packet was very hard to get rid of and was just thrown in my desk drawer upstairs on the ninth floor. One day I saw Gerry duck out of the House and I thought he might be the man to approach. Afterwards I said to him, "Gerry, I've got a bit of a problem." I told him the story I have just related about the Albanian cigarettes. He said, "That's unusual. I'll give them a go."

I handed him the opened packet and said, "If you like them, let me know. I've got another four packets at home." I had forgotten all about it but a couple of weeks later we were called to a division in this Chamber. I went up to Gerry and said, "Gerry, how did you go with those cigarettes?" In his lovely, gravelly voice he said, "Well, I've got to tell you, mate. First I got a bit dizzy. The legs got a bit wobbly and I thought I was going to fall over, but I wasn't going to let those things beat me. They're not too bad. Have you got any more?" I formed the opinion then that, clearly, he could smoke a broom handle. I have probably spoken too long. I had a lot of respect and affection for a man who not only served the Parliament and his people well, but also was actually a nice guy and an effective parliamentarian. Certainly, he would not in any way allow those friendly asides to pull his punches in debates. I give an example of Gerry Peacocke taking a point of order.

Just after I became the Minister I was answering a question on an important issue about cattle tick control. The subject always raised a bit of a chuckle from members on both sides of the House. I was having a bit of fun having a go at a few members using the double meanings of a few cattle tick terms. In those days Ministers were not restricted to five-minute answers, so answers taking 10 or 15 minutes were commonplace. Getting towards the end of my answer I was doing well and enjoying myself when Gerry Peacocke stood. He was sitting just there to my left. He said:

**Mr Peacocke:** On a point of order: I take the point of order on the grounds of the honourable Minister's extreme prolixity and lack of verbal propinquity. The only tick the Minister will get for this is for benchmark verbal diatribe. If we were in the United States he would be found guilty of cruel and inhuman punishment. I ask you, Mr Speaker, in all the circumstances and having regard to the Minister's extreme prolixity and lack of verbal propinquity, to have him abbreviate his answer.

Members and Ministers certainly know that in the middle of question time it is difficult to get a dictionary to find out whether you have been insulted. However, I struggled on. Mick Clough also made a good suggestion and, of course, it dumbfounded the Speaker, who I believe was John Murray. He said:

**Mr SPEAKER:** Order! I will consider the point of order and rule on it at a later time.

He also did not know what Gerry was talking about! Jumping onto Gerry's fumbling pronunciation I thought I better have the last word. I said:

**Mr AMERY:** I thank the honourable member for Dubbo for his help. I notice he said that without fear of contraception!

Hansard picked it up and added the obvious inflection. With that little bit of fun, my answer lasted another three or four lines. I sat down quickly. Gerry was an effective parliamentarian. I shall conclude with a further quote from Gerry Peacocke. In his maiden speech, and often in other speeches, these examples say a lot about him. He said:

That brings me, if somewhat tortuously, to the real point of this speech. I have become the honourable member for Dubbo because 17 494 people voted for me. I acknowledge that 12 042 people voted for my opponent—and friend—Peter Morgan, the Labor Party candidate.

... I intend to represent those who voted for the Labor candidate in the same way as I shall represent to the best of my ability those who voted for me.

Those comments say a great deal about Gerry Peacocke. I know that Nancy is not here today, but I ask Duncan and Jane to please pass on the great deal of respect from the Labor side of this House for a fellow who served his community and this Parliament extremely well.

**Mr GEORGE SOURIS** (Upper Hunter—Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Hospitality and Racing, and Minister for the Arts) [10.37 a.m.]: I am honoured to join the Premier, the Deputy Premier and other members to offer my condolences and commiserations to the family and friends of the late Gerald Beresford Ponsonby Peacocke. It is with great regret that we acknowledge the renowned resident of Dubbo and former member of the New South Wales Parliament, Gerry Peacocke, who passed away on 23 May 2013 aged 82 years. For the past couple of minutes, and even earlier, I was crossing out sections of my speech as they were dealt with systematically by others. However, Gerry Peacocke often would take a short point of order, unlike the lengthy one we just heard, and use another favourite expression to refer simply to what was being said: "The member is indulging in turgid diatribe." I am sure those who have been in this House with Gerry certainly would remember that as his most favourite interjection.

**Mr Richard Amery:** Turgid diatribe?

**Mr GEORGE SOURIS:** Turgid was the word. He has probably used it on the member for Mount Druitt. With sadness I offer a few words in this motion of condolence for a great Australian, wonderful friend and mentor. Many of us were stranded at Sydney airport on the day of his funeral, Tuesday 28 May 2013. That day Sydney airport was completely fogged in. Five of his former colleagues were at the airport and simply waited and waited. Finally, the funeral in Dubbo had commenced and we were still in Sydney. Sadly, we gave up and returned to Parliament. I have a copy of the order of service. I know the funeral service would have been lovely, with many people in attendance, including family members, who would have provided a very fitting send-off.

Gerry was a tireless and dedicated worker for his Dubbo community. He was born in 1931 at Warren. After completing school, the Dubbo High School student went on to become a solicitor and ultimately a parliamentarian. Gerry Peacocke's rise through political ranks began when he became a founding member of the Ratepayers Association of New South Wales—I do not know whether that association still exists. Gerry joined the Country Party in 1949 and was an alderman on Dubbo City Council from 1970 to 1976. He was elected to the New South Wales Parliament as the member for Dubbo in 1981 and served in that position for 18 years. He then served as the mayor of Dubbo and eventually retired in 2004.

Gerry Peacocke was the State's first Minister for Small Business and Consumer Affairs from 1988 to 1991. I was privileged to have served in the Greiner Cabinet with him from 1991 to 1993, when he was Minister for Local Government and Minister for Cooperatives. As the first Minister for Business and Consumer Affairs, he slashed red tape and initiated a number of innovative regulatory regimes, which made life much easier for small business operators—regimes that continue to this very day. As Minister for Local Government he undertook the first significant overhaul of the Local Government Act and introduced the concept of compatibility of services. He truly was a reformer. Interestingly, the first reform of the Local Government Act remains in force as we speak, although it is currently under review and ironically one of the people heavily involved in the review is the former member for Myall Lakes, John Turner, who was one of the people who assisted Gerry Peacocke in drafting the 1993 Act which remains in force.

Gerry's eldest and devoted son, Sam, told the *Daily Liberal*—the local Dubbo newspaper—that his father loved his community and worked tirelessly for its citizens. The community has always reciprocated that respect for the man who pushed successfully for rate pegging in New South Wales. Indeed, rate pegging is still very much in force throughout local government. Sam said that what made his dad tick was being an advocate for individual freedom, for country people but especially for the people of Dubbo and surrounds. Anyone who knew him would agree with his son's description that Gerry Peacocke was a man's man who loved football, telling jokes and the *Goon Show*. Sam told the *Daily Liberal*, "He was just a wonderful dad", and I can readily imagine that he was. He was a wonderful colleague and friend. Gerry's kindness and good nature were confirmed by the fact that he was admired and respected by both sides of politics, and I am delighted to follow the contribution of the member for Mount Druitt, who spoke on behalf of the Labor Party.

Gerry Peacocke assisted new members, and they did not have to be young. In this place seniority is not determined by age but length of tenure. Gerry Peacocke offered his experience to many new members, including me, in 1988 when a flush of Coalition members joined the Parliament. Premier O'Farrell described Gerry Peacocke as one of the true gentlemen of politics and a great custodian of regional New South Wales, and that is



certainly true. He did not deserve the end to his ministerial career that was imposed without the respect to which he was entitled. It was a disgraceful episode; it demonstrated a failure of leadership and etiquette. He and his family found out simultaneously, literally on the road, standing next to his leader. I for one have that etched into my memory and, for what it is worth, it is a pleasure to make these remarks on his behalf.

In defiance, Gerry Peacocke established the Feather Dusters Club, which met for tea and toast on sitting mornings at 10.00 a.m. The criterion for membership was very strict—one had to have suffered a fate of similar magnitude. Joe Schipp was his good friend and custodian of the Feather Dusters Club. I remember walking by on many occasions but was never game to walk in there because it might induce the same fate. Gerry is survived by his wife, Nancy, whom he married in 1961, sons Sam, Duncan, who is here, Ben and Angus and daughters Cathy and Jane, who is also here, 11 grandchildren and one great-grandchild. That is absolutely wonderful. I knew Gerry as a dedicated colleague, a kind man and a good friend. My sincere condolences go out to his family and friends. He is sorely missed. My dear friend, in cricket parlance you had a great innings, not just because you reached 81 but because of the brilliant manner in which you played the game of life and how you left the playing field a better place. May you rest in peace.

**Mr RON HOENIG** (Heffron) [10.45 a.m.]: It is an honour and a privilege to contribute to this motion. I knew Gerry Peacocke between 1991 and 1993 as the Minister for Local Government and Minister for Cooperatives. Many of us who serve in public office aspire to contribute in the best way possible and hope to be able to leave a lasting legacy. Few are able to achieve that goal. Gerry Peacocke, as a long-serving member for Dubbo, former councillor and mayor of Dubbo, has contributed and served many people over a long period of time in public office. However, I only knew him during my dealings with him as the Minister for Local Government in the Greiner Government and that is when I consider he made a significant and lasting contribution to the State. I met him in my capacity not only as the mayor of the City of Botany Bay but also as President of the Southern Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils and as the leader of the Labor Party in local government in New South Wales.

Local Government is a vital part of the institution of government in this State. It is the third tier of government, the level of government closest to the people, the tier that provides quality of life for people in this State. However, it has always been largely underestimated by other tiers of government and certainly by this House and Parliament. In 1993 the Local Government Act was revised. For years people like John Mant had been working on reforming local government but without much success. On being appointed Minister for Local Government Gerry Peacocke took it upon himself to undertake reform of local government, which, although it was 1991, had been operating under a 1919 Act—other than some tinkering around the edges by the Legislature there had not been any reform. The first thing Gerry Peacocke did was remove politics out of the Department of Local Government. For decades governments had used departmental inspectors to attack individual councils based upon their political complexions in an effort to obtain political advantage but Gerry Peacocke stopped that overnight.

I recall a specific political investigation into Drummoyne City Council and a mariner. This had not been unusual conduct for the department for some decades. It was a politically motivated attack on a Labor council in effectively a conservative area. Gerry Peacocke said that was not the department's role and he put a stop to the nonsense and the report into Drummoyne council. He then undertook a reform of councils in New South Wales and did this on a bipartisan basis. He appointed probably the last Sir Humphrey in the public sector in Australia: Garry Payne, as director general, and Mr Payne became widely respected in the local government industry. Perhaps it is unkind to refer to Garry Payne as Sir Humphrey but he was the consummate department head of the old school who served the government and Minister of the day irrespective of who that was. Gerry worked with Garry Payne to shepherd through the Local Government Act which was considerably controversial but had the objectives of strengthening and empowering local government.

Longstanding members of the House will recall there was some difficulty from 1991 to 1993—the Greiner and Fahey governments were minority governments and could only achieve success on a bipartisan basis. Reforming local government on a bipartisan basis involved getting all vested interests into the cart. The councillors—or aldermen as they then were—were elected on the basis of the system at the time and all had their own particular fiefdoms and vested interests. The changes proposed for the Local Government Act cut across all of that. Voting systems and methods of election were to be changed and it created a hullabaloo. The Labor Party found it too hard in its term under the Wran-Unsworth Government and shelved it. Gerry Peacocke's predecessor found it too hard, but Gerry took it on. He not only met with and listened to stakeholders but he was also passionate about the reform. Indeed, he talked ad nauseam about every clause of the bill and

could argue the purpose of every clause. This was not just something done by Garry Payne and his department; Gerry passionately believed in it. It might have taken a year or so but he certainly got me on board and earned my respect.

The Labor Party did not always agree to some provisions and compromises had to be made when he could not get some particular clauses through. I say today—and I have made reference to this in debate of the current Minister's reforms—that Gerry Peacocke was right. It has been shown that some of the relatively minor issues that he could not get through this House because the Labor Party would not agree now were right and we were wrong. During that time Gerry Peacocke earned the enormous respect of everybody he dealt with. He earned the respect of Labor mayors and former Labor mayors throughout Sydney, as well as the conservative mayors such as Barry O'Keefe, then mayor of Mosman and effectively the de facto conservative leader of local government in this State who led the conservative view in respect of local government reform. Gerry Peacocke managed to achieve mammoth local government reform and shepherded the 1993 Act into operation. He has handed over a lasting legacy to the third tier of government and has made councils more accountable by empowering them to deliver better services.

I note that the Minister is in the House and often hears the argument of how terrible cost shifting is in local government. What Gerry Peacocke did between 1991 and 1993 in the Act was to empower local government to play a far greater role than it could previously. Local government and councils voted to carry out that additional role with the additional responsibility and powers that were vested in them, and that is the cause of the increased cost to local government. The increased cost to local government is not through a general cost shifting related to policy; it is because Gerry Peacocke recognised that they should perform significant roles beyond roads, rates, rubbish and planning and empowered them to do so should the community demand it. Local government has expanded its activities within communities throughout New South Wales. Local government provides greater services to those in need of support from the public sector because the State cannot do so efficiently. Prior to 1993 some of those roles were prohibited. Indeed, people should think of Gerry Peacocke and realise that the social services and protections that councils now provide are the result of his foresight, knowledge, innovation and unique understanding.

In his eulogy earlier this year the Premier described Gerry Peacocke as a gentleman. I do not think there is a better way to describe him. Gerry was passionate about the National Party, formerly the Country Party. He was passionate about rural and regional New South Wales. He was a Minister who knew his demographics and those whom he had to represent. Other than that it was all about public policy and achieving something for the people of New South Wales. He left the local government ministry and this Parliament with the enormous respect and affection of all who had the privilege of working with him. In his passing, he leaves a legacy that will be unequalled by anyone in the local government sector.

Some of the things that Gerry Peacocke achieved cannot be easily measured. I will tell this story. On the election of the Greiner Government, it did what every other change of government does in New South Wales, other than the O'Farrell Government: it sacked the city council and changed the voting system to ensure that its own could be elected. The area was then divided between the city and South Sydney councils and all the lessees in Sydney were given a vote. The plan was to have conservative control of the small central business district. An Independent by the name of Frank Sartor and a number of other Independents managed to gain control of the city council. But by the time Gerry Peacocke became the Minister for Local Government the small central business district was in extreme financial difficulty and those who know Frank Sartor appreciate that he is not the easiest person to get on with when he does not get his way. Gerry was not concerned because the Conservatives were not in control of the council but because of the council's financial viability. Gerry did not want to interfere but he wanted Frank to fix things up. Frank Sartor is a person of enormous intellect and economic ability and he certainly had the ability to do it.

Gerry started talking about conducting a public inquiry into the city council, but he wanted it conducted by a relatively independent person. As a result the city council started attacking some of its financial sustainability problems and Frank Sartor turned it into the economic powerhouse it is today. The City of Sydney now has more money than it knows what to do with. Frank Sartor can take credit for that but he did it under the threat of Gerry Peacocke. But there are other ways to achieve objectives in local government without using a sledge hammer and to understand the impact this had on Frank Sartor one needs only to read his recently published book. Whilst that part of the story has not been told in Frank Sartor's book I have told it now; Gerry was behind it. As the then Premier stated, Gerry was a "gentleman", and in one word that sums up Gerry Peacocke. Gerry Peacocke has left this State a better place. He has brought immense pride and respect to the office of Minister for Local Government and elevated that office and those who serve in the now Division of Local Government.

Gerry brought great pride to the National Party and was respected by those on this side of the House for his contribution to public policy while maintaining the interests and protection of those that the National Party represents. He left this world a significantly better place through the service he gave to his community. I had the highest regard for Gerry Peacocke as a Minister, a member of Parliament, councillor and mayor, and also as a human being. I was shocked to hear of his passing. I want to take the opportunity to pay tribute to someone I regard as a great man and to extend to his family and friends my and the Opposition's very deepest condolences.

**Mr DONALD PAGE** (Ballina—Minister for Local Government, and Minister for the North Coast) [11.01 a.m.]: As the current Minister for Local Government I wish to extend my sincere condolences to the family of the Hon. Gerry Peacocke and to pay tribute to the former Nationals member for Dubbo and former Minister for Local Government. I served in this Parliament with Gerry for 11 years between 1988 and 1999, when he retired. I acknowledge members of the Peacocke family in the gallery today, Duncan and Jane, and two of Gerry's key policy advisers, Jim McCall and Sean O'Connell. Gerry not only represented the people of Dubbo with distinction but he was a significant reformist. It was Gerry, as the Minister for Local Government and Co-operatives, who introduced the current Local Government Act in 1993. At that time he was the first Minister for Local Government in 70 years to introduce a new Local Government Act. I acknowledge the comments of the member for Heffron and the member for Mount Druitt in relation to the reforms he instigated in local government and with cooperatives. Gerry was a significant reformer of public policy.

Gerry Peacocke was born in Warren, attended Dubbo High School and went on to become a solicitor and then a New South Wales Cabinet Minister. Gerry joined the Country Party in 1949 and was elected to Dubbo City Council. He served as the deputy mayor of Bathurst and later as the mayor of Dubbo. Gerry was elected to the New South Wales Parliament as the member for Dubbo and held that position for 17 years. He served as the Minister for Local Government and Co-operatives between 1991 and 1993 and during that time introduced the Local Government Act that we operate under today. His dedication to the local government sector continued after his retirement from Parliament with Gerry serving a term as mayor of Dubbo and retiring in 2004.

I first met Gerry Peacocke in 1987 at Casino airport when he was then the shadow Minister for Small Business and Consumer Affairs. He came to my electorate to campaign with me in the small business sector. He had a relaxed, comfortable manner about him and he was a really good bloke to campaign with. I acknowledge that as the shadow Minister for Small Business he probably helped me gain election to this place. In 1998 the Greiner-Murray Government was elected and Gerry became the Minister for Business and Consumer Affairs. In those days each Minister had a backbench committee and I was appointed chair of Gerry Peacocke's backbench committee. The procedure was that when Cabinet made a decision it would come to the backbench committee and the chair would convene a meeting and the committee would agree with Cabinet, mostly, and occasionally disagree. The support of the backbench committee would be sought before it went through the joint party room.

Through my role I had quite lot to do with the legislation Gerry Peacocke introduced and his achievements as a Minister in the Greiner-Murray Government. One of the first things he did as Minister was to look at that section of the Treasury Corporation that was responsible for extending loans to businesses that appeared, on the surface, to have an opportunity to grow. I do not know when that system was introduced but when Gerry became Minister he discovered that about 80 per cent of the loans made by this part of the Treasury Corporation were actually in default. They were bad loans. The previous Labaor Government had decided that it was a good idea to pick winners in business, but they were not very good at picking winners.

Gerry decided that the Government's involvement in providing finance for businesses that appeared on the surface to have opportunity to grow should cease and become a role for the private financing sector. Ironically, given his later contribution to, and support of, cooperatives, Gerry was responsible for one of the first privatisations, if you can call it that, of the Greiner-Murray Government. Gerry shifted that section of the Treasury Corporation to the private sector. During his parliamentary career Gerry exhibited a genuine interest in cooperatives. As the member for Mount Druitt stated, Gerry was responsible for introducing legislation that was not sexy but was important. Of particular note were the hospital cooperative at Yeoval and the wool scouring cooperative arrangements at Coonamble, and his interest in Asia, and China in particular.

Gerry Peacocke was held in high regard by the Chinese government and made a number of trips to China. I will relate to the House a couple of stories that he told me. By way of background Gerry loved his steak overcooked, in fact burnt. There is a meal that is not ordered so much now but that used to be known as the National Party steak. It is an overcooked steak with lots of chips and a fried egg on top. The National Party steak was Gerry's standard meal order. I knew of Gerry's meal preferences so I was quite amused when he told us one

day at the dining room table that while leading a delegation to China to talk about cooperatives he had to eat the eye of a fish. Gerry was not that keen on fish to start with, but to be asked to eat the eye of the fish was a challenge. He did it in the interests of diplomacy and we had a chuckle about Gerry as head of the delegation having to eat the eye of the fish.

Gerry had many intriguing stories. The Chinese government was very interested in Gerry; a person who was involved in cooperatives but resided in Australia, a capitalist society. The Chinese were interested to understand what Australia was doing with cooperatives in relation to self-help and building business, and so on. Gerry told me and others, on several occasions, that he had a personal relationship with the head of the Chinese government at the time, Deng Xiaoping. Deng Xiaoping was a bit reclusive about meeting overseas leaders. Margaret Thatcher wanted to talk to him about Hong Kong and the approaching end of the lease with China, but he was not interested in talking to the British Prime Minister. Deng Xiaoping was not interested in talking to many people on the international stage, but whenever Gerry Peacocke visited China, Deng Xiaoping wanted to talk to him. Gerry would describe going through this door and that door on his way to the meeting and having a personal conversation with Deng Xiaoping. I find that story quite interesting. I do not disbelieve Gerry for one moment. Gerry was a man of integrity and whilst he was a good storyteller I do not believe he embellished the truth.

Gerry deserves credit for establishing the NSW Inland Forum, which was an alliance of Dubbo, Tamworth and Wagga Wagga. That forum led to regular meetings between the mayors, general managers of councils, their development corporations and the three members of Parliament from those electorates. Gerry Peacocke contributed significantly to the New South Wales Country Summits that were held in 1996 and 1998. At that stage he was in Opposition. We have heard some erudite speeches today about Gerry's contribution. What is his legacy? It is very hard to summarise in a short speech. He was certainly a strong advocate for small business, and he cut a lot of red tape when he had a role with small business. He was a very strong advocate for cooperatives, and he introduced some important legislation in that area. But his greatest political legacy will be the fact that he brought in the then new Local Government Act—for the first time since 1919. As the member for Heffron indicated, that Act gave councils an opportunity to have more autonomy and more responsibility and to be more empowered to do things that they previously had not been able to do.

Gerry was much loved in his electorate. He was a real, genuine conservative. He was old school. He was a person of integrity. He was straight talking. He did and said things in those days that today would be regarded as being politically incorrect. He certainly was not a bleeding heart. He believed in accountability. As the member for Mount Druitt said, he was a regular smoker—perhaps almost a chain smoker. No wonder his voice was so deep and velvety. He loved a good red wine. He was not too fussy about the quality of the wine, so long as the conversation kept going. Gerry was a great story teller and I would often listen, wondering if what he was saying was true, particularly those stories about Deng Xiaoping. But I concluded in the end that they were all true. I feel very privileged to have known Gerry and to have been able to hear some of his stories.

He formed the Feather Dusters Club. His sacking as Minister was terrible. It should never have happened in the way that it did. He certainly did not deserve that ending to his ministerial career. The Feather Dusters Club consisted of Joe Schipp and Gerry Peacocke. They had been roosters one day, were sacked, and so became feather-dusters the next. Tony Windsor was in that club. There was some debate about whether Wal Murray, when he retired, should be invited into the club. The conclusion was that he should not be because, whilst he was a rooster that became a feather-duster, it was his own decision—it was not someone else's decision. So Wal Murray was kept out of the inner sanctum of the Feather Dusters Club, I am told. Gerry had a sense of humour. I will touch, very quickly on a couple of examples of that. In his valedictory speech he said:

Yet of course I know, as I suppose all of us do, that the time has come for me to go, and I would much rather my constituents feel sorry that I have gone than sorry I stayed.

A little further on in the speech he says:

When one looks at it, members of this place—members of the only institution that is run by the inmates—are from a broad cross-section of our society. I suppose that is how it should be. It is what makes this Parliament a democratic institution—although in my long time here I have observed that it is only democratic when one is in government, and then sometimes only for the ministry. Most members on the backbenches, I am sure, would feel that way.

He said, further:

... Parliament is made up of an interesting cross-section of the community. That fact has led to a variety of memorable incidents during the years I have spent here. All members have a distinct style of operation and speech. Some are a delight to listen to; others are boringly dull and often remind me of social comment by the famous American columnist Dorothy Parker who, when informed that American President Calvin Coolidge was dead, commented, "How can they tell?" Some members are addicted to the turgid diatribe, especially in question time. Indeed, I have indulged in turgid diatribe from time to time.

Gerry certainly had a sense of humour; he was a wonderful man. I will conclude by quoting one other thing he said in his final speech:

It is a great comfort if we can think that when we leave this place people will understand, as the press quite often does not, that we are here to serve our people, to achieve something, to make a difference and to walk away and say, "That time was not wasted. Our country is better off, our people are better off at least in some ways because we were there."

I say to Gerry's family that they should draw some comfort from the contribution that Gerry is still making today, particularly through the local government reforms that he introduced. He has made a difference. His family should feel very proud that what he said he wanted—in his last speech in this place—has occurred. I respected Gerry Peacocke very much for his commitment to his electorate and for his commitment to making things better for New South Wales and Australia. I respected him for the quality he had of telling it the way it was, his commitment to the reform of local government and his commitment to being a real gentleman. Gerry was a character. We do not have a lot of characters anymore in this place, and I am glad to have had the opportunity of working with him in this place and to have called him a friend. Vale Gerry Peacocke.

**Mr CHRIS HARTCHER** (Terrigal—Minister for Resources and Energy, Special Minister of State, and Minister for the Central Coast) [11.15 a.m.]: I wish to pay tribute to Gerry Peacocke and to extend my condolences to his family and his wife, Nancy. The first thing that always hit everybody when they arrived in this Parliament was Gerry's name. I thought, when I first read it, that it was a joke. I did not believe that he had a name like Gerald Beresford Ponsonby Peacocke, but it was true.

I had nothing to do with him until the 1988 campaign, when I stood for the first time for the seat of Gosford. Gerry was assigned to come up and assist me in that campaign. He arrived by train, and I did not really know what he looked like. I worked out that he was the only person in a suit getting off the train. We spent the day together. It was a great day. He was an excellent campaigner because he was so grass roots. He met people and talked to them as though he had known them all his life, although he had only met them at that instant. He urged them to "look after this young boy". Strange as it may seem, 25 years ago I was a young boy!

Gerry Peacocke was a great campaigner. At the end of the night we went to a function and at 10 o'clock I put him on the train at Gosford to go back to Sydney. We shook hands and the train left. He rang me up the next day and said, "Do you know what happened after you put me on the train?" I said, "No." He said, "The train left, went one kilometre down the railway line, stopped and then waited there for two hours. I sat there all on my own, Chris"—there were no mobile phones—"waiting there for two hours and thinking, 'I hope Hartcher wins this election because I am paying a terrible price.'" So, that was my introduction to Gerry.

When he took over his first portfolio, Minister for Business and Consumer Affairs, he sent out a memorandum to all members of Parliament—including Labor Party members—and it said, "I have the portfolio and this is what I will be doing." At the end of it there was a single sentence, which did not seem significant at the time, but as a backbencher I later realised that it was enormously significant. The single sentence said, "I have instructed my staff that all calls from members of Parliament are to be put straight through to me." As every backbencher knows, getting in contact with Ministers is not the easiest challenge but Gerry was there to look after his backbench and Opposition members. He was there to represent, and that is what he did brilliantly. I would like to pay tribute to Nancy. She was a great support for him. He always acknowledged that Nancy was his greatest critic. Some members have quoted his valedictory speech but he said something about Nancy in his valedictory speech. He said.

I remember when I was a young lawyer and had just started to practise in the courts. I had been going pretty well, winning quite a few cases, then appeared again before a particular judge whom I clashed with on a regular basis. I came home one day feeling very upset about his attitude, and I said to Nancy, "That bloody judge so-and-so thinks he's god." She said, "Well, darling, that can't be true: you know you are."

She certainly took no nonsense from her husband! I will not go into Gerry's political career; it has been well canvassed. He did make a great contribution to local government. But more than that was his strong belief in cooperatives. He saw cooperatives as a means of helping small business, particularly rural and regionally based small business, to deal with big enterprises and high-level competition. I can imagine now, given the current arguments about the Coles and Woolworths duopoly, Gerry being in there battling for the small shopkeepers, because those were the people he always wanted to look after: small people anxious to try to build a better life for themselves and their families. He represented that spirit as a lawyer in Dubbo, and he brought that spirit with him into the New South Wales Parliament. As is known, he founded the New South Wales Ratepayers Association, campaigned tirelessly for rate justice and was always a strong advocate for rural and regional New South Wales.

Anyone who met him would remember him as an old-style politician. He was in the classic style of Mr Smith in that old American movie *Mr. Smith goes to Washington*: he was the country boy, determined that everyone should know that he upheld country values. He smoked like a chimney. As probably only the member for Mount Druitt would know, when the smoking ban was imposed in the Parliamentary Dining Room, Gerry sat in there, quite ostentatiously smoking away, saying, "It doesn't apply to me." He refused to bow down to new injunctions denying his right to have a smoke. Gerry took a lot of interest in the Parliamentary Dining Room. The Minister for Local Government alluded to Gerry's "National Party steak". In 1987 he campaigned to have grilled sausages and mash included on the Parliamentary Dining Room menu. He also campaigned that the menu should include corned beef and hash pie, as well as crumbed lamb cutlets. These were the battles that Gerry fought on a small scale in the Parliamentary Dining Room. His big battles were out there in the community.

**Mr Richard Amery:** And the "Peacocke salad".

**Mr CHRIS HARTCHER:** As the member for Mount Druitt says, the "Peacocke salad". Gerry Peacocke had a disdain for personality politics. His first venture into politics was as an Independent candidate, standing for the seat of Dubbo in the 1978 elections. He once referred to Parliament as a "theatre which no-one goes to except the press". He was, however, a strong believer that the parliamentary system should represent everyone. His maiden speech is worth quoting because in it he expressed the values that he lived by and upheld. He said:

Whatever our race, colour, creed or politics, and wherever we choose to live, we are entitled to even-handed treatment. I shall not have to remind honourable members that we are collectively the Parliament of New South Wales, charged with the duty of doing what is best for the people, with dignity, fairness and equity.

He lived by those values all his life. He did not care who you were, or what you represented: as an individual, you were entitled to the fundamental Australian belief of a "fair go". He upheld that belief all his life. Many tributes will be paid by members and others, but I think Gerry would regard as one of the finest tributes that could be paid to him that he was the champion of the fair go: every Aussie, every person, had the right to be respected. He worked tirelessly to reform local government. He always saw that a valuable objective to be achieved through local government was in looking after local communities. A straight talker, Gerry asked himself a question in his valedictory speech. The Minister for Local Government has quoted it. It was, in a way, almost a self-criticism:

I suppose most members of this place have asked themselves, "What does it all mean?" I do that on a regular basis.

He went on to say:

And I have never found out!

But he did know what Parliament was all about: Parliament was the opportunity for the community, through its representative members, to express the aspirations of the community and to seek, on their behalf, to build a better life for members of the community. Gerry had a great love of the English language, a love that has often been spoken about—his references to prolixity and turgidity. He liked to express himself in the flowing style of the old King James Bible—a majestic use of language. But he also had a great love for Australian slang. My favourite was his use of the Aussie idiom that he always used when you asked him how he was. He would always reply: "I'm as flash as a buck rat with a gold tooth." He loved that one—and would always add: "And there's nothing flasher than that."

While talking about oratory quality in Parliament, I will read the same quotation alluded to by the Minister for Local Government:

All members have a distinct style of operation and speech. Some are a delight to listen to; others are boringly dull.

Some members are addicted to the turgid diatribe, especially in question time. Many are unfailingly prolix and their answers in question time are deliberately lacking in propinquity and perspicacity, and deserve severe excoriation by the Speaker. On the other hand, some are extremely sagacious and are studiously restrained notwithstanding the blather of their colleagues.

When I am next asked a question in Parliament, I might take those words into account. Gerry Peacocke made real contributions: a real contribution to Dubbo, a real contribution to the legal profession, a real contribution to Parliament and a real contribution to family. He is worthy of honour, and he is honoured here this morning. May he rest in peace.

**Mr BRAD HAZZARD** (Wakehurst—Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Infrastructure NSW) [11.27 a.m.]: It is with sadness that I rise to say a few words about Gerald Beresford Ponsonby Peacocke. When I came to this place in 1991 Gerry was part of my education. I was a bit wide-eyed and innocent when I first sat on these benches; I still could not quite work out why I was here. However, I was comforted by the fact that Gerry seemed never to have worked out why he was here either, and constantly challenged himself to find out. I listened with interest to his gravelly tones and resonating voice, but not just here in the Chamber. I will not repeat his responses to some of the interjections he dealt with. However, I did learn the word "prolix" from Gerry; I had no idea what it meant until Gerry started using it regularly. In the end, he seemed rather prolix in that he used the word so often.

I enjoyed Gerry's company—not so much in this place, because you do not get to enjoy this place an awful lot, but out in the members' dining room. I always looked forward to his company. In those days this place used to sit till 2 o'clock, 3 o'clock or 4 o'clock in the morning. Newer and younger members might not have a clue about that; they would probably think that the way the place is run now is the way it has always been run: vacating the premises at 6.00 p.m. or 7.00 p.m. Well, it was not always so. Gerry lived through those years when being a parliamentarian really involved a commitment to this place—a commitment to enormous hours, and a commitment to establishing relationships with members on both sides. You had to establish relationships because this place took up a fair whack of your life. Gerry was one of those who educated me in a whole range of aspects. I recall occasions when I was in the members' dining room—which really was then a central place in this institution—sharing a table with Gerry and Joe Schipp. They used to keep me both laughing and worrying, because Gerry would come out with the most incredible jokes; they certainly would not see the light of day now in this place. Rules have seen that era pass.

As I said, I was a little terrified at times when Gerry came out with the most incredible jokes. Joe Schipp would come out with more jokes to try to outdo Gerry's, and then Gerry would respond. I would just sit there shaking my head and they would both look at me thinking, "Who is this innocent fellow who is now in the New South Wales Parliament?" Even though Joe was a member of the Liberal Party, he was really a National in disguise. Gerry and Joe seemed to think I was the personification of some innocent little Liberal in the New South Wales Parliament. But they taught me a whole lot of things about the regions and they taught me a whole lot of things about life. As great and as friendly as he was, Gerry also taught me that as a member of Parliament you have to care for people and do what you can do while you are in this place to assist your community. He did a great job in Dubbo. I remember visiting Dubbo and sitting in his garden with Nancy, eating scones and cream. From memory, I was accompanied by my wife and my parents-in-law, and Gerry and Nancy were the epitomes of good and caring hosts. Gerry did not display any of the humour he showed down here in Parliament at times; he was well and truly on his best behaviour. He was a guy who could fit in to any situation. He was a man's man—if one can use that expression these days. He loved his footie, he loved his jokes and he loved his cigarettes.

The member for Terrigal quoted a line from Gerry's valedictory speech. I would like to read the whole passage because it epitomises Gerry's view of this place—he had a healthy cynicism about it. In one part of his speech he said:

I suppose most members of this place have asked themselves, "What does it all mean?" I do that on a regular basis—and I have never found out! When one looks at it, members of this place—members of the only institution that is run by the inmates—are from a broad cross-section of our society. I suppose that is how it should be. It is what makes this Parliament a democratic institution—although in my long time here I have observed that it is only democratic when one is in government, and then sometimes only for the ministry. Most members on the backbenches, I am sure, would feel that way.

I share Gerry's view. I do not think much has changed, and nothing will change as long as this democratic institution continues. I conclude by quoting again from his valedictory speech. Gerry said:

I realise that there is no-one so soon forgotten as a former member of Parliament. But I, like all of us who are leaving, hope that occasionally the ongoing members will spare us a kindly thought, miss us just a little, and remember that each one of us has contributed something to the wellbeing of our constituents and our country.

Gerry, we do regularly spare you a kindly thought. We do miss you—in fact, more than just a little—and we do remember your contribution to the wellbeing of your constituents, our State and our country. We thank you for that. I express my sympathies and condolences to Nancy, Duncan, Jane and all of Gerry's six children, 11 grandchildren and one great-grandchild. I still imagine quite regularly that I see Gerry walking through this place, and I think of him often. I thank him for his contribution and I thank his family for allowing him to be here and to share his time with us.

**Ms KATRINA HODGKINSON** (Burrinjuck—Minister for Primary Industries, and Minister for Small Business) [11.33 a.m.]: I also pay tribute to a wonderful man, the Hon. Gerald Beresford Ponsonby Peacocke. I was one of the younger members of The Nationals when Gerry was a member of this place. He was the stuff of legends—a man of enormous presence and someone you could always go to for advice and to check out a little fact or two. I looked up to Gerry very much and I too remember him walking on level 12 when I was first elected. Gerry was no longer a member then and I remember that smoking had been banned in this place but he walked along the corridor holding a cigarette—he did not care two hoots about the ban on smoking. That was just Gerry: He was very much his own man.

I thank Gerry's family for allowing him to be a part of the New South Wales Parliament. All that Gerry has brought to this place cannot be summed up in a condolence motion such as this. He was such a strong part of the National Party; he was quintessentially a Nationals man. He was generous to a fault and he was very well loved within the party and, I believe, throughout the whole of this place. He loved Dubbo very much. He performed a great amount of community service in both local government and State Parliament. He had many interests and was a highly intelligent, interesting person. Other members have represented the electorate of Dubbo since Gerry did so, and the current member, Troy Grant, is also doing a fine job. I am sure that Gerry would be very proud of him. My small contribution today is just to say that we will always remember Gerry very well. He was a wonderful man. We extend to his family our deepest sympathies. Vale Gerry Peacocke.

**Mr ANDREW FRASER** (Coffs Harbour—The Assistant-Speaker) [11.35 a.m.]: I stand here today with a wry smile on my face because that is the way I remember Gerry Peacocke. I acknowledge Duncan and Jane, who are in the gallery today, and also James McCall, one of Gerry's staffers. James and I know a lot of things about Gerry that we cannot say, or should not say. But today is a day to remember a great man and a great mate. I regard Gerry as a mate. I first met Gerry during my by-election campaign in 1990 when Gerry, along with all members of the Cabinet and of both the Liberal and the National parties, was sent to the electorate of Coffs Harbour to doorknock. I struck up an immediate friendship with Gerry because he was never short of cigarettes in his pocket. He had such an easygoing nature that, as has been said, attracted people to him. Gerry was sent to Urunga to doorknock. I will never forget him coming back and telling me about his experience. Urunga is divided into two areas: west of the highway and east of the highway. The east of the highway is very flat but Gerry copped a nice little hilly area—he reckoned they were the biggest mountains he had ever seen. He came back quite uncomplimentary about those who had organised the doorknocking schedule.

I will speak first about Gerry's sacking. I make no apologies for saying on the record in this House today that the actions of Ian Armstrong, the then leader of the National Party, in relation to Gerry Peacocke were the most disgraceful I have ever seen. I remember the news footage of Gerry, having travelled by plane from Sydney to Dubbo, walking up the street with Ian Armstrong and the media fronting Gerry to advise him that he was no longer in the Cabinet. Ian Armstrong could not stand by his side. I told Ian Armstrong at the time what I thought. I believe every leader has the right to sack anyone but they should do it face to face and for good reasons. I told Ian at the time that, whilst I acknowledged his right to do it, I considered the way it was done to be deplorable.

But every cloud has a silver lining, and the silver lining of Gerry's sacking was the Feather Dusters Club. The Feather Dusters comprised Gerry Peacocke, Joe Schipp and associate members such as me, Tony Windsor, Russell Smith and others, who were invited into the club. In those days Parliament sat into the wee hours of the morning—3.00 a.m. or 4.00 a.m. I will never forget one night when we were joined by two fellows who were editors of *Pix* magazine and compiled the jokes column. For three hours the jokes went non-stop between Joe Schipp, who was a great storyteller, Windsor, me, Russell Smith and a couple of others who were crowded in there. Gerry always finished the joke but no-one ever knew the punchline because when he got to it he would start to laugh, and the tears would run down his face. We would have to ask him the next day what the punchline of the joke was, and the reaction was the same. So we never actually heard the punchlines but they were always well-embellished yarns. The two blokes from *Pix* magazine got more ammunition for their jokes pages that night than they had ever had before.

I will talk about the lighter side of Gerry. One thing was his cigarettes. The member for Mount Druitt told the story about the Albanian cigarettes but shortened it. When Gerry told others about the Albanian cigarettes he said, "I've tried every cigarette in the world, I think. Some of them have been good, some have been bad. These things were so bad they burnt the back of your throat, they stung your nose, they made your eyes water and you went weak at the knees. But I never let the bastards beat me—I finished them." No-one was allowed to smoke in the parliamentary dining room. I will relay a true story. When smoking was banned from the dining room Gerry continued to smoke. David, who was the dining room manager, would always find him



an ashtray. One night the Premier was in the dining room and Gerry was smoking. So he said to Garry West, "I want you to go over and tell Gerry Peacocke that he is not allowed to smoke." Garry West's response was, "You go and tell Gerry to put out his cigarette—I'm not that game."

Another night in the dining room there was a lady of about 80 years of age. A member wanted Gerry to meet her; Gerry went up to her and asked her how she was going. She said, "It's a wonderful place. It's a wonderful experience to come into the Strangers' Dining Room, but you're not allowed to smoke in here." So Gerry ordered David to produce an ashtray and she lit a cigarette and sat there smoking it. As far as Gerry was concerned, the lady had paid her taxes and had earned the right to smoke. The day it was proclaimed that there would be no more smoking in this place Gerry was so disgusted that he pulled out the biggest Havana cigar I had ever seen—I kid you not, it was huge; it was about nine inches long and almost as round. When there was a division he lit the cigar in his office and continued smoking it in the lift. When he got to the door of the Chamber the Speaker's attendant, Joe Andrade, was standing there. Gerry handed the cigar to Joe and said, "Hold this, I'll be back shortly." Poor old Joe stood there holding the cigar for the duration of the division. I will never forget it. Gerry just sat in the Chamber and chuckled.

Gerry had such rapport not only with his staff and fellow members but also, I suggest, with the media. He is the only man in the history of politics who ended up on the front page of the *Sydney Morning Herald*—I think it was organised by Margie Osmond, his media advisor at the time—stating that he would not be challenging for the leadership of the National Party when Wal Murray stood down. All the challengers were mentioned in the back pages, but Gerry got a story and photo on the front page, saying that he would not be challenging. That is the kind of man he was; he was a great delight to be with. I will never forget the night prior to the Local Government Bill being introduced into the Parliament. Gerry had been summoned to the Premier's office and told that the speech he had prepared, which I think was originally designed to go for some five hours, had to be shortened.

We were having a glass of red in Gerry's office. Gerry stormed back in, took off his pager and gave us a description of John Fahey at the time. It was not the description offered later after he was sacked—that he was similar to a soup bowl, very broad mouthed and shallow. It was a little more colourful. Gerry threw his pager in the bin. In those days if members lost their pager it cost them \$400 to buy a new one. So the next morning Gerry went looking for his pager. He had forgotten to retrieve it the night before. His fit of pique that evening cost him \$400. It also meant Ian Manning had to sit at an old computer, from my memory of those days, rewriting that five-hour speech. When the House adjourned for the evening we all went home. Ian was left there to finish the speech, but the computers crashed.

The next day Gerry gave the speech in Parliament with James McCall sitting at the adviser's desk. Gerry read the rehashed speech at a pace that could only be described as a snail's pace because the parts that had not been retyped were being handwritten by James McCall and Ian Manning, handed over the bar of the House and given to Gerry to read. If my memory serves me correctly, there was a group of schoolchildren in the gallery that day so Gerry took the opportunity to talk to them while he was waiting for his bits of paper to turn up. I remember saying to him at one stage, "Look, Gerry, I have problems with the media in my electorate"—as all local members do at times. "My local paper does not give me a fair run." We all think that. Even if we get a positive front-page story, we say, "They've left out the most important sentence." Gerry said, "Boy"—he used to call a lot of us "boy"—"I'll tell you how to sort that. I solved that in my electorate." I said, "How did you do that, Gerry?" He said, "I stopped buying the paper. You do the same. Don't buy it. Don't read it and you'll find that your vote will improve." I think at the time Gerry had about 74 per cent of the vote in the Dubbo electorate, which was huge and something to which we all aspired.

I remember well in the joint party room one day when the issue of capital punishment came up. As was mentioned in earlier contributions today, Gerry had a pretty right-wing philosophy. His philosophy that day was that we should rig up a device in Martin Place, similar to a Hills rotary hoist, and we could sell tickets and hang people four at a time. The then Premier asked, "Who will pull the lever? You?" Gerry said, "No. We'll get rid of the lotteries. You can make money out of that. You can sell tickets to those who wish to pull the lever." I felt sure that it would be done. Gerry's right-wing attitude was fairly well acknowledged but always expressed in a jovial manner.

The Peacocke salad was served in the dining room for many years after Gerry left this place. I think his salad included an egg and a can of red salmon plus salad. Unfortunately, I think the majority of the staff these days would not know what a Peacocke salad is, but I know The Nationals and many Liberals members would remember it. We remember too the cremated steaks—I often saw Gerry send a steak back; unless it was rigid he

would not eat it. As was mentioned, Gerry argued with David Draper about the presentation of food in the dining room, the crumbed cutlets, the sausages and mash, et cetera. This place moved on; they stopped the smorgasbord in the Strangers Dining Room and the food became pretty much restaurant style. Gerry kept arguing with David over this.

I cannot remember whether it was at lunch or dinner—I think it was dinner. Gerry had organised for quite a few of us, including Joe Schipp, to go to the dining room. We sat at the centre table in the Members Dining Room. Gerry asked David Draper, "Could I get four or five jugs of tomato sauce please, and we would all like a plate and a knife and fork." So David begrudgingly obliged. He did not have a clue what was coming. Then one of Gerry's staffers arrived at the dining room door with a couple of boxes of pies from Harry's Café de Wheels and some mashed potatoes and peas. Gerry called David over and said, "This is the sort of meal we want. We aren't in a restaurant; we're in a dining room and we want something we can enjoy."

The work Gerry did for cooperatives and credit unions was phenomenal. The Financial Institutions Commission Bill, which he put through this place—I think the member for Mount Druitt mentioned it—was phenomenal legislation. Gerry could not get prudential standards to the level he wanted in Cabinet and he used me as a tool, via other meetings in the House and with credit unions, to make sure that interstate credit unions had the same prudential standards as New South Wales. It was a hard debate but we won it. Credit unions in New South Wales owe Gerry Peacocke a debt of gratitude not only for that but also for their trustee status, which Gerry achieved after he left the ministry.

Mention has been made of Gerry's legendary trips to China for the cooperatives. Gerry used to have boxes of Maotai sent from China. Maotai tasted like firewater and smelt terrible but he always had a bottle of it in his office. I do not know how he drank it! Gerry had some jumpers made in China for the wool cooperative. Gerry thought he had everything down pat—I am sure James McCall will remember this also. However, he did not make allowances for the unreliability of the Chinese manufacturing industry. The woolgrowers of New South Wales arranged for jumpers to be made in China from their wool. The plan was to value-add to their business and partake of the profits. The jumpers—which came in lovely colours—were duly delivered. I bought one very cheaply because they arrived not in time for the winter sales but in the middle of summer. Gerry shook his head and smiled his wry smile.

As the member for Heffron said, Gerry is remembered fondly across the State in local government circles not only for his great work in writing the Local Government Act but also for being able to quote it verbatim. Gerry would cite the applicable section of the Act when asked a question and then advise the council how to proceed. Members would often refer local government issues to him and Gerry would provide timely and accurate advice. Following Gerry's retirement I tried to pop in and see him every time I visited Dubbo. The last time I saw him was when I travelled to Dubbo for the launch of The Nationals election campaign in 2011, and unfortunately he was in a nursing home. But his memory of this place was as crystal clear as it was when he was a member here. Don Beck and I spent about an hour with Gerry, and when we left I noticed a tear in his eye. I enjoyed his and Nancy's company. I know Nancy's opinion of politics. I think she would probably think, as Gerry would, that this debate is somewhat prolix.

Gerry loved his family. We have all heard the story about him being a spectator at one of his son's rugby games and being sent from the ground for barracking too hard. I remember Nancy saying to me, "I wish he would go back to politics because he is driving me nuts down here." He ruined her golf day, he mucked around in the garden and did things he should not do. Gerald Beresford Ponsonby Peacocke was loved, I believe, by all who met him, respected by all sides of politics, and by local government and credit unions across New South Wales. I express to you, Duncan and Jane, and your families and especially Nancy my sincere condolences. He was a great mate who will be sorely missed.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** Order! I call the member for Dubbo, whom I know the Hon. Gerry Peacocke was thrilled to see elected.

**Mr TROY GRANT** (Dubbo—Parliamentary Secretary) [11.53 a.m.]: I have enormous pride in concluding this condolence motion for the tenth member for Dubbo in the New South Wales Parliament, Gerald Beresford Ponsonby Peacocke, who was known affectionately as Gerry. I do not intend to repeat many of the anecdotes that we have heard from earlier speakers who had the privilege to spend what was obviously rich and valued time knowing and working with Gerry Peacocke, their close colleague and friend. My job is to reflect on Gerry's contribution on behalf of the people whom he represented so proudly—the people of the Dubbo electorate—and those who I consider to be his greatest legacy, his family.

I thank the Premier, the Deputy Premier and the father of the House, the member for Mount Druitt, for their wonderful insights. I particularly thank the member for Mount Druitt, a member of the Opposition, whose contribution speaks volumes about the legacy of and respect for Gerry Peacocke. I also thank the Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Hospitality and Racing, the Minister for Local Government, the Minister for Resources and Energy, the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, and the member for Coffs Harbour for their insights about the trials and tribulations of the political career of Gerry Peacocke. I knew Gerry for a very short time, but I am sure that he would have appreciated the frankness and honesty of their contributions to this condolence motion because they accurately reflect his parliamentary life. I also thank the member for Heffron and the Minister for Primary Industries for their contributions.

I met Gerry on only two occasions due to his failing health. The first time was shortly after I was preselected as The Nationals candidate for Dubbo in the 2011 election. The second time was when I visited him after my election. Gerry's wife, Nancy, and his son Sam often said to me, "Dad has good days and bad days". I am enormously privileged because on both occasions I saw him on a good day. Gerry had an enormous personality and character. I am not ashamed to say that I felt nervous about meeting a legend, and did so with great trepidation. I was the preselected candidate and wanted the endorsement and support of a legend of The Nationals, of Dubbo and of this Parliament. When I met Gerry he was frail and aged but still sharp. The first thing he said to me—which segues from what the Premier alluded to earlier—was, "Thank God you're a bloke", which may not be terribly politically correct. I was not sure how to take that but I thought I was off to a good start. He then asked, in his very recognisable gravelly voice, "What religion are you?" I said, "I am Anglican but my wife is Catholic and so are my children." He said, "Boy, we don't expect you to be perfect from the start."

I felt I had to disclose everything to this legend, Gerry Peacocke. I shared with him a conversation that will stay with me forever and which I included in my inaugural speech in this place. It sums up Gerry Peacocke and something that I hope to take with me throughout my career in this place as the thirteenth member for Dubbo. The line in my inaugural speech comes straight from the mouth of Gerry Peacocke. He said, "You go there when you win"—he was a lot more optimistic about my chances than I was at the time—"and you represent your people well and you do it properly." I said in my speech, "I stand here today in this Parliament with a courage of conviction and a clarity of mind." Those words were a tribute to Gerry Peacocke, and I hope to fulfil them. Gerry was determined to attend The Nationals campaign launch in Dubbo and essentially run the show, but unfortunately Nancy and his health would not allow that. I know that Gerry was enormously proud of our team effort to reclaim for The Nationals the electorate of Dubbo, of which he was the last custodian for our party.

Although I shall not repeat the wonderful contributions that have already been made, it is important to highlight some of the stories about Gerry from his own community. The President of the Orana Law Society, Mr Andrew Boog, a great admirer, summed up Gerry Peacocke as follows:

He said what he thought and plenty of people loved him for it. Gerry had an amazing voice consistent with his character. He was extra forthright, had no airs and graces and was as he appeared.

He had a public career spanning four decades, a significant period, especially for a family to support him, and what he achieved during that time was immense. Those achievements could not have been made without the loving and steadfast support of his entire family and friends. After his retirement from State politics and after he had made his mark in this place and across the State, he was not satisfied with that. He returned to life in Dubbo where he was promptly re-elected to Dubbo City Council where he served as mayor. His oldest son, Sam, who is always very happy to point out that fact—and his siblings will appreciate that comment—said his father died in his sleep at John Whittle House, part of the Orana Gardens aged care facility. I know Sam and the family would want me to thank the wonderful team at Orana Gardens who showed Gerry such wonderful care in his later years. We have heard about the respect gained from his contribution to rate pegging; that respect was reciprocated. This is Gerry personified. Sam said:

He really loved Dubbo, really really loved Dubbo.

What made dad tick was being an advocate for individual freedom, for country people but especially the people of Dubbo and surrounds.

Sam referred to his father as a man's man who loved football, telling jokes—although he never quite got to the punch line—and he loved the *Goon Show*. Sam told me that he spent hours with his father listening to old records of the *Goon Show*, laughing uncontrollably. He was a wonderful dad. Almost everyone over a certain age in Dubbo has a story to tell about Gerry Peacocke, and we have heard many of them today. Dubbo City Council General Manager, Mark Riley, relays a story about rugby union as follows:

Gerry had a very recognisable voice. Coupled with that, he had a passion for rugby union [the mighty Dubbo Kangaroos] and enjoyed watching many games, having reputedly been somewhat of a handy player in his early years.

A very amusing incident that I remember was during a very tense game involving the Dubbo Kangaroos at Number 1 Oval when the referee made, in Gerry's opinion, a very poor decision.

Gerry, in his gravelly tone, yelled out "You don't have to have a long neck to be a goose".

There was much laughter on the sideline, however the referee took quite an exception and Gerry got his marching orders.

I am not sure how many times that occurred in this Parliament. Mark summed up by stating that Gerry's death was a tremendous loss to Dubbo. Many others have made comments and I shall allude to a couple. Niall Blair, Chairman of the New South Wales Nationals, has described Gerry as a legend of the party, a fitting description. He said:

He was one of the great characters of The Nationals' party room and will be missed by a great many.

That sentiment is reflected here today. Mark Coulton, Federal member for Parkes, said he was a true son of Dubbo. Gerry was a community leader at a time when many other areas such as Bathurst, Orange and Albury-Wodonga were part of the Whitlam regional investment programs and policies; Dubbo missed out on those programs and policies. However, that did not deter Gerry, who encouraged the community to be equal to any of those regional cities and, in our view, better. He said that we did not need a Whitlam handout to improve Dubbo; we could do it ourselves. He led the city by reaffirming the attitude and conviction that we did not need a handout but that occasionally we might need a hand up. He encouraged the Dubbo community to meet all challenges, good or bad, and to respond honestly and appropriately.

Gerry was a reformist who recognised the wonderful contributions within our city. He was enormously principled and because of Gerry Peacocke Dubbo has immense resilience, enormous pride and great community strengths. His son, Angus, was given the task of representing the family in delivering the eulogy. His eulogy was one of the most outstanding eulogies I have ever witnessed and I will share with the House a number of his reflections. Angus said:

He had a full and complicated array of interesting and personal traits.

He could be enigmatic, distant sometimes, even just old, but he was impeccably honest.

Angus said that a rough calculation of his father's lifetime consumption of tea was in the order of 240,000 cups and often it was in the kitchen. He said:

[The kitchen] was the coldest room in the house – with a blanket over his knees and a radiator at his feet with a pot of tea reading a trashy war book with half a packet of shredded wheat biscuits.

I'd say put the kettle on, and he'd say, "it doesn't fit", then he'd make a cut of tea and we'd have a talk.

Angus relayed how his father and family moved to Dubbo from Warren in 1939. He outlined his schooling, his time in banking, his cadetship with the law firm, his legal credentials and how proud he was of establishing the legal firm Peacockes with his brother. Angus described Gerry at the time of gaining nomination for the Country Party and how he was elected to the seat of Dubbo in 1981. During this time his majority increased from 54 per cent to 70 per cent but he was intensely worried at every election that he would not keep his margin; that he might lose. However, he never faced the chance of losing because he represented his people with the courage of conviction and clarity of mind and he was rewarded with increased margins. Angus said:

Dad was no buccaneer, he was risk averse and in public life his policies were full of contradiction. He was right-wing but not an economic rationalist.

He was against Sunday trading because he believed small business owners deserved a day at home with their families.

Angus told a few of the Peacocke family secrets that may have involved Duncan and Jane. They would take great delight in finding perfect ways to wind up their father. They would discuss benefits that other electorates were perceived to be enjoying more than Dubbo, knowing they would always get a bite from him. Angus said:

Even when Dad worked out what we were doing, he'd still bite a bit.

He believed everything in the Western Plains had been done off its own bat.

He loved his electorate.

Angus described how his father came from humble beginnings and did not spend money on grand upgrades for the house or overseas trips. He was proudly a meat and potatoes man. Gerry Peacocke did successfully lobby

Parliament to put sausages on the menu—an amazing achievement. His closest friends were his brothers and sisters. He was a deep thinker and fascinated with science but he did not read classical books: he read "trashy war books", as Angus said. He was a confirmed pacifist, extremely polite and gentlemanly but, as I described earlier, he could heckle an umpire. In his eulogy Angus described Gerry's inability to stop himself bursting into tears of laughter when he told a joke, which resounded with the congregation. He also described Gerry's unparalleled temper by telling a story about his father jamming the family station wagon between two posts in a rush to get to the airport and to demonstrate the level of his temper he head-butted the steering wheel and bent it out of shape.

Angus said his father's life was wonderful and long and he finished with an anecdote that illustrated Gerry's devote religious belief. Gerry said to his son that as a confirmed church-goer he understood there were two options after death: a big sleep which he could embrace or the pearly gates. Gerry figured if he did not get through the pearly gates then he and his Labor mates would have time to catch up. Gerry Peacocke has left an enormous legacy and incredibly large shoes to fill. His legacy was created by his commitment and love for his community and this State, but it was only possible because of the wonderful sacrifice and support he received from his family.

In conclusion, I thank each member who has spoken to the condolence motion and on behalf of the House and the people of Dubbo I extend to his wife Nancy Mabel Peacocke, Samuel Beresford Peacocke, Catherine Beresford Peacocke, Duncan Beresford Peacocke, Jane Beresford Lynch nee Peacocke, Benjamin Beresford Peacocke and Angus Beresford Peacocke the condolences of the House and our sincere thanks. Vale Gerald Beresford Ponsonby Peacocke.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** I thank the member for Dubbo and other members for their contributions to the motion. On behalf of all members of this House I extend to Duncan, Jane, Mrs Nancy Peacocke and family the deep sympathy of members of the Legislative Assembly in the loss of the Hon. Gerald Beresford Ponsonby Peacocke, a former Minister of the Crown.

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

**Motion agreed to.**

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

### **HEAVY VEHICLE (ADOPTION OF NATIONAL LAW) AMENDMENT BILL 2013**

**Bill introduced on motion by Mr Stuart Ayres, on behalf of Ms Gladys Berejiklian, read a first time and printed.**

#### **Second Reading**

**Mr STUART AYRES** (Penrith—Parliamentary Secretary), on behalf of Ms Gladys Berejiklian, [12.15 p.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The purpose of the Heavy Vehicle (Adoption of National Law) Amendment Bill 2013 is to amend the Heavy Vehicle (Adoption of National Law) Act 2013. The bill makes further provision in addition to the current Act for adopting the Heavy Vehicle National Law in New South Wales. It sets out the terms of the Heavy Vehicle (Adoption of National Law) Regulation 2013 and makes the necessary repeals and changes to existing legislation to give effect to the Heavy Vehicle National Law in New South Wales. This bill marks an historic moment in heavy vehicle transport and, by association, State and national road safety and freight productivity.

When the Heavy Vehicle National Law commences the same law will regulate heavy vehicles in all jurisdictions except Western Australia. In practical terms this will mean that truck drivers and operators will be much closer to a single rule book than ever before. There is a particular need for this reform in two key areas. The first is the long-distance road transport sector—also called "line haulage"—where operators and drivers currently contend with the laws of several States in the movement of a single load. As roads Minister Duncan Gay has repeatedly said from day one:

Truckies shouldn't have to carry a filing cabinet full of different jurisdictional permits and notices in their cab.

Indeed, one of the first things the roads Minister did in office was to abolish the requirement for truck drivers—notably drivers of B-double and road train trucks—to carry half-a-dozen notices. In October last year, under a nationally agreed framework, Minister Gay also allowed safer and more efficient modular B-triples to operate on approved road train routes west of the Newell Highway. Just last month, he announced modular B-triple trucks will be allowed on the Newell Highway from Narrabri to the Queensland border. Under this particular reform, transport operators travelling from far western New South Wales—say on the Kamilaroi Highway—will be able to access the Newell at Narrabri to use the 225-kilometre stretch of highway to Goondiwindi and then beyond deep into western, southern or central Queensland.

Overall, modern modular B-triples are safer than some of the older and heavier road train combinations currently using these routes, especially in terms of their manoeuvrability and handling performance. Put simply, being articulated, B-triple trucks "track" better on the road. Industry research has shown that a semi-trailer operating at a higher mass limit takes approximately 37 trips to transport 1,000 tonnes of freight, whereas for the same tonnage a modular B-triple operating at a higher mass limit only requires about 17 trips. The bottom line is that modular B-triples—also referred to as high-productivity vehicles—will provide a safer, more efficient way of carrying road freight; not to mention reducing truck movements and therefore wear and tear on our roads.

The stretch of the Newell Highway between Narrabri and Goondiwindi has been determined as having suitable infrastructure to accommodate these types of trucks. For example, last year as part of a record \$20 million funding package to fast-track improvements on the Newell, the New South Wales Government completed three additional overtaking lanes north of Narrabri, while construction on yet another passing lane north of Moree will commence in September this year. Such safe and sensible reforms, combined with long-overdue road upgrades, are designed specifically to "tie-in" neatly with overall national heavy vehicle reforms. Make no mistake, since March 2011 the O'Farrell Government has helped advance national heavy vehicle reforms like no other New South Wales Government before it.

In the past, NSW Labor was considered a significant roadblock for change on the eastern seaboard of Australia. Seven NSW Labor roads Ministers in five years was a significant factor in stalling the process of harmonising heavy vehicle road rules across the nation, not to mention New South Wales Labor's total indifference to improving road freight productivity. Today, in direct contrast, the O'Farrell Government is considered a leader in national heavy vehicle reforms—an adult government that understands and appreciates the need to enhance road freight productivity for the sake of both the State and national economy. New South Wales is a State that relies heavily on road, rail, sea and air freight, worth approximately \$58 billion each year and employing 500,000 people.

As the geographic "through state", New South Wales carries more than 60 per cent of Australia's national road freight task, which is a staggering figure. Highways such as the Hume, Pacific, Princes, Newell and New England carry a huge proportion of the nation's products and, by association, its ultimate prosperity. Under the national law being supported by the O'Farrell Government, for the first time, a truck will be able to travel from far North Queensland, through New South Wales and on to Melbourne under the same Heavy Vehicle National Law. Over time—and hopefully much sooner rather than later—reams of red tape will be cut, unnecessary and confusing cross-border rules will be eradicated and road freight productivity will increase substantially.

The second reason for the vital importance of these national reforms relates to key rural and regional economic hubs in the State, such as Albury in the south and Moree and the Tweed in the north. In these border towns and cities people do not confine their lives or businesses to just one side of a State border. Trucks delivering to supermarkets in Albury often also service Wodonga. Likewise, Tweed Heads and Coolangatta are only separated by a dotted line on a map. Similarly, thousands of ex-gin cotton bales are delivered by road from north-west New South Wales to the Port of Brisbane each year.

Thankfully, upon the commencement of the Heavy Vehicle National Law, there will no longer be different legislation in place on either side of the border. By way of some background, the Council of Australian Governments first agreed to establish the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator in June 2009. The creation of national regulators for rail, maritime and heavy vehicles was seen as a key element of creating a single national seamless economy. As such, these reforms are part of the National Partnership Agreement to Deliver a Seamless National Economy which aims to reduce costs incurred by business in complying with unnecessary and inconsistent regulation across State jurisdictions; to enhance Australia's longer-term growth, improving workforce participation and overall labour mobility; and to expand Australia's productive capacity over the medium term through competition reform to enable stronger economic growth.

In addition, the Council of Australian Governments saw the need for a single national law for each transport mode to ensure that business was unencumbered by conflicting regulatory requirements from State to State. The National Heavy Vehicle Regulator, and the Heavy Vehicle National Law which supports it, is the final piece in the creation of a harmonised national system of transport regulation that has been underway for many years under previous model law reforms. The passage of this legislation delivers on New South Wales' commitment under the Intergovernmental Agreement on Heavy Vehicle Regulatory Reform to adopt the Heavy Vehicle National Law. New South Wales has pursued this reform with vigour since Premier O'Farrell agreed to the Intergovernmental Agreement on Heavy Vehicle Regulatory Reform in 2011. Since the commencement of this reform, the New South Wales Government has provided more than \$5 million to the national project office to complete project work to build the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator. In addition, NSW has provided \$5.2 million to the recently established National Heavy Vehicle Regulator to assist with funding its first year of full operations in the 2013-14 financial year.

In summary, this bill adopts the Heavy Vehicle National Law as the law that regulates heavy vehicles in New South Wales, while Queensland is the host of the Heavy Vehicle National Law. In future any amendment to the Heavy Vehicle National Law will require several steps. First, any proposed changes will require the unanimous approval of the national transport Ministers council, which is currently called the Standing Council on Transport and Infrastructure—or SCOTI for short. The Queensland Parliament would then be asked to pass the changes agreed to by the national transport Ministers council. Those changes would then be automatically made to the law as adopted in New South Wales and updated on the relevant registers of current New South Wales legislation. An identical process will be in place for all other participating jurisdictions.

This process will allow the regulation of heavy vehicles to remain harmonised and at the same time permit the Heavy Vehicle National Law to be updated and modernised as needed for the sake of road safety, not to mention the national road freight task. The Heavy Vehicle National Law creates the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator and describes its functions, powers and objectives. The main function of the regulator is to achieve the objectives of the Heavy Vehicle National Law, which include: promoting public safety; managing the impact of heavy vehicles on the environment, road infrastructure and public amenity; promoting industry productivity and efficiency in the road transport of goods and passengers by heavy vehicles, including buses; and encouraging and promoting productive, efficient, innovative and safe business practices.

In order to achieve those objectives the Heavy Vehicle National Law: prescribes vehicle standards, mass and dimension limits, load restraint requirements, speeding compliance and fatigue management requirements; imposes duties and obligations on operators, drivers and other persons whose activities may influence whether the vehicles or drivers comply with requirements in relation to the standards, mass, dimension, loading and speed of a heavy vehicle, as well as a driver's fatigue; includes measures to allow improved access to roads in certain circumstances; and provides for accreditation schemes for best practice. It also provides for the national registration of heavy vehicles; however this function has been deferred until the creation of a national registration scheme some time in 2015. While the promotion of consistency and harmonisation has been a driving factor in the development of the Heavy Vehicle National Law, this bill also recognises the importance of retaining certain safety and productivity initiatives within New South Wales. As previously mentioned, New South Wales is the geographic "through State" for the eastern seaboard of Australia. As such, our communities and our roads experience interstate truck traffic like no other jurisdiction in the country.

Is New South Wales different from Queensland, Victoria and South Australia? You bet. Carrying 60 per cent of the national road freight task presents some challenging road safety and infrastructure issues for New South Wales. Here is a compelling fact. Interstate drivers of heavy articulated trucks account for one-quarter of all involvements in fatal crashes in New South Wales. Of the interstate drivers of heavy trucks involved in fatal crashes, nearly half were Queenslanders, while Victorians accounted for 40 per cent. That is why in conjunction with our fine colleagues in the NSW Police we have the largest, best equipped and most active heavy vehicle inspection force in the country.

For instance, we have nearly 300 heavy vehicle inspectors within Roads and Maritime Services alone. That is why we spend more than \$70 million each year on heavy vehicle enforcement and compliance—the largest annual funding commitment of any State in the country. We make no apologies for these activities; in fact our efforts in this vital area of road safety increase and become more targeted each and every day. That is why, since November 2011, the New South Wales Government has conducted 78 days of heavy vehicle enforcement and compliance, including four targeted and sustained campaigns in and around Australia's second

largest container terminal at Port Botany and numerous campaigns on our major highways; notably the Hume. In 2012-13 we inspected more than two million heavy vehicles, intercepted more than 206,000 heavy vehicles and identified more than 36,000 defects.

As the "through State" we must remain ever watchful. Today, if you speed in a truck in New South Wales you will be caught and you will face the full force of the law. In some cases your truck will be grounded on the spot. The people and Government of New South Wales have zero tolerance for transport operators who tamper with speed limiters. We also have zero tolerance for companies and their directors further up the supply chain who impose unrealistic and dangerous delivery schedules on transport operators and by extension their drivers. Unrealistic delivery schedules and timetables directly lead to speeding trucks and fatigued drivers. This in turn can lead to dangerous drug use on the road. As a clear indication that our campaigns are having a positive effect, in February this year, the roads Minister, Duncan Gay, and the police Minister, Mike Gallacher, announced a 79 per cent reduction in the past year in the number of trucks detected speeding at more than 105 kilometres per hour. Our point-to-point heavy vehicle monitoring system is also the most sophisticated and extensive in the country, helping to identify, track and capture speeding trucks at 21 major lengths of road across the State. Three more lengths are planned in the future.

We are also tough on monitoring and managing heavy vehicle fatigue issues via 27 Safe-T-Cam cameras located at 24 sites across New South Wales. Our State also led the pilot of electronic work diaries as a potential alternative to the written work diaries that are currently the key tool for implementing heavy vehicle driver fatigue rules. The pilot found that the electronic diaries are feasible from technical, operational and regulatory perspectives, and have the potential to generate safety and productivity benefits. In May this year the Standing Council on Transport and Infrastructure agreed that an approach to national adoption of the electronic diaries be developed by the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator and the National Transport Commission for consideration by the council later this year. Yes, we agree with and support national heavy vehicle reforms; but we must also protect the people and roads of this great State. For that reason this bill contains the following differences from the national law as applied in other jurisdictions. First, the current provision in New South Wales which holds operators accountable for noncompliant speed limiters will be maintained. The reasons for this I have just clearly explained above.

Another provision which requires the fitting of vehicle monitoring devices to heavy vehicles, including buses and coaches, is also being retained in New South Wales law. This allows the regulator and police to access information about a vehicle's performance prior to any incident as part of any investigation. Again, this represents a safe and sensible approach. In order to maintain parity with a number of light vehicle offences, the bill retains a number of demerit point penalties. Examples include trucks with defective brakes, steering and seating or fitted with dangerous bull bars. Again, this provision in the bill represents a safe and sensible approach to heavy vehicle road rules in New South Wales. The continued ability to issue a defect notice for an improperly displayed or damaged number plate will be retained to ensure the continued effectiveness of compliance systems such as Safe-T-Cam and traffic enforcement cameras.

Finally, the effective management of fatigue is of crucial importance not only to the heavy vehicle industry but to all road users as well as the broader community—especially in New South Wales, which is the State through which a majority of the nation's freight originates or transits. As part of the development of the Heavy Vehicle National Law, a new approach for managing fatigue has been proposed to potentially replace the current Advanced Fatigue Management [AFM] scheme. This new approach is known as the Risk Classification Scheme. The Risk Classification Scheme allows operators to balance their risks. For example, a longer evening rest could permit more work time during the day. New South Wales supports this concept and recognises the productivity benefits it could bring to industry through increased flexibility, notably for rural and regional transport operators such as livestock and grain carriers. As opposed to "line haulage" operators who run on clearly defined routes between major cities and regional centres, livestock and grain carriers are more affected by the vagaries of weather and/or harvesting operations. Hence, some added flexibility may be appropriate.

New South Wales supports the concept of developing a risk classification approach to managing fatigue for accredited operators. But again, this has to be done in a safe and sensible way. As this scheme has not yet been tested in the real world in any jurisdiction or transport sector, New South Wales strongly advocated at the Standing Council on Transport and Infrastructure meeting earlier this year that the scheme be trialled first. A trial, for example, would allow testing in actual transport operations about how different risk parameters interact with other risk parameters and what types of suitable countermeasures are needed to ensure safe fatigue levels. In fact, the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator itself has recognised the Risk Classification Scheme's newness and has committed to evaluate the new scheme at 12-, 24- and 36-month intervals and report back to transport Ministers on any refinements that may be necessary.



New South Wales is willing to play an active role in testing the new scheme and to work with industry and the National Regulator to finalise the best, most flexible and safest scheme possible. However, this testing needs to occur in a controlled environment with suitable conditions in place. While any trial is taking place, therefore, the current New South Wales maximum work times and minimum rest times—for example, a maximum 15 hours in any 24-hour period—will be retained as a safety net. Outer hour limits which appear in legislation are not unusual as other sectors are also subject to similar requirements including, for example, aviation and train drivers in New South Wales. This surety is also needed for those current advanced fleet management operators who will continue to operate under their existing arrangements. To make this trial work in New South Wales, I encourage operators who wish to participate to come forward to the National Regulator and make an application.

The regulator will then work with New South Wales officials to develop the parameters for operating outside the current prescribed limits—this explicitly means the possibility of up to 15.5 hours of work. The responsible Minister in New South Wales will then issue a notice in the *Government Gazette* to give legal effect to the specific accreditation. This final step is really meant as an administrative arrangement necessary only in this trial period because there is nothing in the national law which compels the National Regulator to take into account New South Wales's specific issues, notably in relation to operational expertise. I have asked New South Wales officials to work closely with the industry and the National Regulator to promptly finalise the policies and procedures that will give effect to this trial in New South Wales. I look forward to the future development and refinement of the Risk Classification Scheme and to the day when the real-life evidence is available that the scheme effectively manages the risk of fatigue and therefore the current New South Wales safety net outer limits can be removed. Let there be no doubt that the New South Wales Government is listening to industry about the importance of productivity, flexibility and safety; and that is why New South Wales is handling the transition from the old scheme to the new scheme in a considered, systematic and methodical way.

Certain industry exemptions are also being preserved in the New South Wales adoption law because there is no clear head of power in the Heavy Vehicle National Law to retain these productivity initiatives. These include: the provision stating that time spent in the driver's seat of the vehicle while its engine is running and during certain personal activities can count as rest time if certain conditions are met; the provisions which provide that a person who is an officer or member of staff of an emergency service, as well as certain bus operators and private hire vehicles, is exempt from some speed compliance and fatigue management requirements; and the Livestock Loading Scheme, which was long overdue in New South Wales, is being retained, with Roads and Maritime Services fulfilling the role of regulator.

Finally, many current permits, notices and ministerial orders are being transitioned—those relating to higher mass limits, oversize and overmass vehicles, B-triples and AB-triples as well as performance-based standards vehicles, for example. However, the bill also outlines some further modifications including: retention of the status quo regarding the use of force against property by Roads and Maritime Services enforcement officers for compliance purposes; and a provision allowing road managers—Roads and Maritime Services and councils—to charge for route assessments which may be required to grant a heavy vehicle permit. As drafted, chapter 2 of the Heavy Vehicle National Law establishes a scheme for the national registration of heavy vehicles. However, a single national registration system to support that scheme has not yet been completed. Accordingly, chapter 2 of the Heavy Vehicle National Law will be deferred by all participating jurisdictions. The Standing Council on Transport and Infrastructure has agreed that chapter 2 should commence in mid-2015. In the meantime, the bill provides for the current New South Wales heavy vehicle registration arrangements to continue.

Finally, I understand that there have been some recent concerns about how New South Wales is dealing with "prosecutions" under the Heavy Vehicle National Law. While the exact nature of these concerns is not clear, I can assure the House that New South Wales is not doing anything unusual. In fact the provisions that deal with commencing any proceedings were introduced as part of the first bill in May and no issue was raised at that time. Further, the New South Wales provisions reflect how Victoria has dealt with the same issue in its adoption law. There is, therefore, precedent and consistency in what this bill proposes. This bill is an essential part of the national seamless economy. For New South Wales it is a final component of a nationally harmonised system of transport regulation. It will mean that road transport operators will need to comply with only one rule book; it will mean that red tape will be cut for transport operators, drivers and customers; and it will mean that lines on a map do not hamper the productivity of the State of New South Wales. I trust that members will lend their support to the bill and the proposed amendments. I commend the bill to the House.

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

**STATE EMERGENCY AND RESCUE MANAGEMENT AMENDMENT (CO-ORDINATION AND  
NOTIFICATION OF RESCUES) BILL 2013**

**Second Reading**

**Mr GEOFF PROVEST** (Tweed—Parliamentary Secretary) [12.40 p.m.], on behalf of Mr Greg Smith:  
I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I am pleased to introduce the State Emergency and Rescue Management Amendment (Co-ordination and Notification of Rescues) Bill 2013. The bill amends the State Emergency and Rescue Management Act 1989 to implement two key recommendations arising from Mr Philip Koperberg's report, "Inshore Water Rescue—A review of procedures". Madam Acting-Speaker, you and I had the pleasure of serving with Phil Koperberg when he was a member in this place. Phil was recognised as having reformed and advanced the Rural Fire Service. He did an excellent job and is highly revered in the area of emergency rescue.

As members may be aware, Mr Koperberg was commissioned by the Minister for Police and Emergency Services and the Minister for Health to oversight the strengthening of response procedures between different emergency service organisations where a person who requires rescue is in the water. It is unfortunate that sometimes reviews are generated from tragedies that have occurred and the catalyst for this review was the tragic death of a rock fisherman at Little Bay in November 2012. That matter is currently before the Coroner. To inform the review, a series of stakeholder meetings was held and views were sought on the adequacy of the existing arrangements, areas in need of improvement and how that might be achieved. Agencies consulted included the NSW Police Force, the Ambulance Service of NSW, Surf Life Saving NSW, the Australian Professional Ocean Lifeguard Association, Marine Rescue NSW and the Westpac Life Saver Rescue Helicopter (Southern Region). The Commissioner of the Rural Fire Service was also consulted in his capacity as chair of the State Rescue Board.

Overall, the review noted that New South Wales has some of the most robust emergency response protocols in the country. The review made 18 recommendations, including the two legislative amendments that I present to the House today. Other recommendations relate to enhancements to policies, procedures and the use of technology. These include: requiring the State Rescue Board to direct all agencies that the NSW Police Force rescue coordinator be notified immediately when a call necessitating a rescue, including an in-water rescue, is received; amending the definition of "marine rescue" in the New South Wales State Rescue Policy to include the rescue of persons in the water; and amending the marine standard operating procedures for accredited search and rescue coordination centres, marine rescue units and marine radio bases to include the rescue of a person in the water, regardless of whether they originated from a vessel or on land.

The New South Wales Government accepted all 18 recommendations arising from Mr Koperberg's review and these are in the process of being implemented. Amendments to the State Rescue Policy have already been made by the State Rescue Board, fully acquitting this aspect of the review's recommendations. Those amendments have been implemented in advance of the review of the State Rescue Policy, which I understand is scheduled to take place later this year. The State Emergency and Rescue Management Act is the overarching piece of legislation governing rescue arrangements in New South Wales. Introduced in response to a 1988 report into rescue services, the Act contains clear responsibilities for rescue management and establishes the State Rescue Board. For the effective implementation of rescue arrangements, it is essential that the Act provides clear guidance on which agency has overall coordination of rescue operations. Part 3, division 3, of the State Emergency and Rescue Management Act currently states that the senior police officer present at a rescue operation has responsibility for coordinating and determining the priorities of action of the agencies engaged in an operation. However, the Act is silent on the scenario where a police officer is not already present.

The first recommendation in the review is that the Act be amended to clearly provide that the NSW Police Force has primary responsibility for the coordination of rescue operations in New South Wales. The bill seeks to address this by spelling out that the NSW Police Force is responsible for coordinating rescue operations and for determining the priorities of action to be taken in rescue operations. In doing so the Act remains clear that while police have responsibility for the overall coordination of rescue operations, agencies retain control of their staff. To facilitate the police coordination role, the second recommendation in the review is that the Act be amended to require that all emergency service organisations notify the NSW Police Force of rescue incidents. At present the Act does not contain such a general requirement and the bill implements this recommendation. These amendments bring the legislation in line with contemporary rescue management policy

and current practice. All members would be deeply appreciative of the efforts of the professional people involved in the rescue of people in New South Wales, whether they are police officers, ambulance officers, fire officers or the large number of volunteers in the State Emergency Service, the Rural Fire Service, Surf Life Saving and so on. The community is a far better place for having that level of dedication. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr NATHAN REES** (Toongabbie) [12.48 p.m.]: I lead for the Opposition on the State Emergency and Rescue Management Amendment (Co-ordination and Notification of Rescues) Bill 2013 and advise the House that we will support the bill. As a former Minister for Emergency Services I am acutely aware of the need to properly coordinate rescue and recovery services. Across New South Wales we are blessed with probably close to 100,000 volunteers and paid professionals, whether they be fireys, police officers, ambulance officers, the Rural Fire Service, the State Emergency Service, the Volunteer Rescue Association, the marine rescue outfits—

**Mr David Elliott:** St John Ambulance.

**Mr NATHAN REES:** St John Ambulance, thank you. The community is well served by paid professionals and the volunteers who support our communities in disaster recovery, disaster responses and, in this instance, rescue responses. As the member for Tweed said, these amendments have been precipitated by a review of emergency arrangements carried out by the Hon. Phil Koperberg, OAM. I consider Phil to be a friend. He has also been a fine servant for the people of New South Wales, most notably in his role as the Commissioner of the Rural Fire Service but also as a senior Minister in the Iemma Government. Phil's knowledge of matters rescue is second to none. The only person who to my knowledge has an equivalent level of expertise is Stacey Tannos, who is heavily involved in marine rescue now. The two of them probably have the best brains on these matters of anyone in the world. The review and these amendments have been informed by Mr Koperberg's work. On behalf of the Opposition I take this opportunity to thank him.

The coordination of rescue efforts is critical. When 100,000 people are ready to help, it is important that the lines of communication and the hierarchy of operational response are made clear. This bill does that; it makes clear that the senior police officer present at the scene of a rescue operation is responsible for coordinating and determining the priorities of action of all the agencies engaged in the rescue operation. Instead of limiting the responsibility for coordinating a particular rescue operation to the senior police officer at the scene, schedule 1 item [2] of the bill will ensure that the NSW Police Force generally has responsibility for the coordination of all rescue operations in the State, including responsibility for determining the priorities of action to be taken. This arises from a couple of tragedies in which, to use the vernacular, things fell through the cracks in terms of process. It is regrettable and unfortunate, and I extend our condolences to the families of the deceased. This is an appropriate amendment of the existing Act. It has been informed by experts. In commending the bill to the House, I hope that it prevents a repeat of any of the tragedies that led to the initial review.

**Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD** (Myall Lakes) [12.52 p.m.]: I support the State Emergency and Rescue Management Amendment (Co-ordination and Notification of Rescues) Bill 2013. The object of the bill is to amend the State Emergency and Rescue Management Act 1989 to ensure that the NSW Police Force is responsible for coordinating rescue operations and is notified by emergency service organisations of any incident requiring the rescue of a person. The bill implements two of the recommendations from Mr Philip Koperberg's report, "Inshore Water Rescue—A review of procedures", which was released in November 2012. The report was commissioned by the Minister for Health and the Minister for Police and Emergency Services following the tragic death of a rock fisherman at Little Bay in 2012. Mr Koperberg was commissioned to oversee the implementation of new emergency response protocols for inshore water rescues. In particular, he was asked to oversight the strengthening of response procedures between different emergency service organisations where a person in the water requires rescuing.

The review made 18 recommendations, two of which recommended amendments to the State Emergency and Rescue Management Act 1989. The first was that the Act clearly provide that the NSW Police Force has primary responsibility for the coordination of rescue operations in New South Wales. The second was that the Act be amended to require all emergency service organisations to notify the NSW Police Force of rescue incidents. The recommendations are sensible and aimed at providing a clear legislative framework for the efficient and effective management of rescue operations. This legislative framework is supported by the State Rescue Policy and current procedures, and will provide a solid reference point for their key components. The State Rescue Policy sets out rescue arrangements for New South Wales. These include land rescue and marine rescue. The State Rescue Board administers the policy.

The remaining 16 recommendations relate to enhancements to policies, including to the State Rescue Policy, procedures, training and technology. The Government accepted all of the recommendations in the report and is currently implementing them. The State Rescue Board has already made the suggested amendments to the State Rescue Policy. For example, the definition of "marine rescue" has been amended to include the rescue of persons in water, regardless of whether they fell into the water from land or a vessel. In terms of provisions, at present under section 50 of the principal Act, the senior police officer present at the scene of a rescue operation is responsible for coordinating and determining the priorities of action of the agencies engaged in the rescue operation. Instead of limiting the responsibility for coordinating a particular rescue operation to the senior police officer at the scene, schedule 1 [2] will ensure that the NSW Police Force generally has responsibility for the coordination of all rescue operations in the State, including responsibility for determining the priorities of action to be taken.

The legislation was considered by the Legislation Review Committee. The committee made no comments about the bill. This is good policy. It is good legislation to ensure that someone is coordinating rescue operations at all times. On several occasions when I was a police officer there was a dispute as to who had responsibility. I can remember going to scenes involving incidents of fire, arson and the use of explosive devices, and there was a dispute as to whether the police or the then fire service had control of the incident. That often comes up. Having this matter legislated shows that the police have ultimate responsibility for the coordination of incidents and in particular rescues of people in the water. I commend the bill to the House.

**Ms TANIA MIHAILUK** (Bankstown) [12.57 p.m.]: I note from the outset that the Opposition will not be opposing the State Emergency and Rescue Management (Co-ordination and Notification of Rescues) Bill 2013. Indeed, we support the bill, which seeks to amend the State Emergency and Rescue Management Act 1989 to guarantee that the NSW Police Force is responsible for the coordination of rescue operations and that the force is notified of any incident requiring the rescue of a person by emergency service organisations. As previously mentioned, the bill implements two of the 18 recommendations from Mr Koperberg's report, "Inshore Water Rescue—A review of procedures", which was released in November 2012.

The report was commissioned by the Minister for Health and the Minister for Police and Emergency Services following the drowning of a fisherman at Little Bay in 2012. Mr Koperberg was commissioned to oversee the implementation of new emergency response protocols for inshore water rescues. The focus was on strengthening the response procedures between different emergency service organisations where a person in the water requires rescuing. Under schedule 1 [2] to the bill, the principle Act will be amended. The Act states that senior police officers at the scene of a rescue operation are responsible for coordinating and determining the priorities of action for those agencies involved in the operation. This applies irrespective of whether the agencies are permanent or volunteer. The bill will be amended to ensure that the NSW Police Force is responsible for coordinating rescue operations and determining the priorities of action to be taken in these rescue operations.

Schedule 1 (4) to the bill is an amendment to the State Emergency and Rescue Management Act 1989. Essentially, the agency that manages the rescue, whether it is Fire and Rescue NSW, the Rural Fire Brigade or the Ambulance Service of NSW, after becoming aware of an incident that is likely to require the rescue of a person is required to notify the NSW Police Force. If the emergency services organisation is aware that the NSW Police Force has been notified of the incident the organisation does not have to inform the Police Force. This bill is in response to the tragic drowning of a fisherman who was swept off the rocks at Little Bay in Maroubra in November 2012, which is now before the Coroner. On that occasion it took 35 minutes for an ambulance helicopter to arrive at the scene and 31 minutes for the Ambulance Service to inform the NSW Police Force.

Ten months prior to this incident on 7 March 2012, the member for Maroubra asked the Minister for Health to explain the logistics surrounding the rescue operation of a drowning man at Maroubra Beach, which occurred on 28 January 2012. After that tragic incident, the member for Maroubra drew to the attention of the Minister the oversight in emergency procedures and the need to overhaul rescue operations given that the Ambulance Service is unable to perform rescue operations. It took a further tragic accident on 11 November 2012, and a series of questions from the Leader of the Opposition, the member for Blacktown, and the member for Maroubra before this Government finally accepted there were protocol issues and commissioned a review by Mr Koperberg, Chairman of the New South Wales Emergency Management Committee on 19 November 2012. A number of stakeholders were consulted during the review process. It is pleasing that the Government has accepted all 18 recommendations from Mr Koperberg's review, and I understand that these recommendations are in the process of being implemented. It is hoped that this bill will provide the appropriate governance and modification to procedure to prevent such tragedies in the future. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr KEVIN CONOLLY** (Riverstone) [1.01 p.m.]: I support the State Emergency and Rescue Management Amendment (Co-ordination and Notification of Rescues) Bill 2013. I commend all agencies and employed or volunteer personnel who work in the field of rescue in New South Wales to keep our people safe, including the NSW Police Force, Fire and Rescue NSW, the State Emergency Service, the Volunteer Rescue Association, the Rural Fire Service, Marine Rescue, the National Parks and Wildlife Service, and the Ambulance Service of NSW. I apologise if I have missed any other agency that may be involved in this field. The length of the list indicates that coordination is necessary and the task of coordinating rescue services is an important issue. Given the stakes involved when these agencies are in the field, it is important to get it right prior to emergencies occurring.

The amendments contained within this bill implement the first of 18 recommendations made in the report "Inshore Water Rescue—A review of procedures", conducted by Philip Koperberg. All 18 recommendations were accepted by the Government and this bill puts into effect two of those recommendations. The remaining recommendations are largely procedural and will be implemented later this year. I was disappointed that the member for Bankstown attempted to make some political mileage out of this legislation. No other member from either side of the House has objected to this process going forward. All members support these common-sense and prudent measures to ensure the coordination of rescue services.

The commissioning of a review into emergency response protocols for inshore water rescues came about as a result of the tragic death by drowning of a fisherman at Little Bay in late 2012, a matter that is currently before the Coroner. This bill has two primary objectives in clarifying the management of rescue operations. The first purpose is to broaden the specification of who is responsible for the coordination of rescue operations. Currently, section 50 of the Act provides that responsibility for the coordination of a rescue operation lies with the senior police officer present at the scene of the rescue operation. The amendment to section 50 in schedule 1 to the bill will allow the NSW Police Force in general to have authority and responsibility for the coordination of rescue operations and the determination of priorities for action to be taken. That will mean that other expertise beyond that available on the spot can be taken into account and a high degree of coordination with personnel elsewhere can also be taken into account. This is a sensible measure. In most instances, it may be that the person calling the shots is the person at the scene who has the opportunity, if deemed appropriate, to look elsewhere for guidance.

The second purpose of the bill is to require emergency services organisations to notify the NSW Police Force of any incident that requires, or is likely to require, the rescue of a person. Section 51 of the Act will be amended so that the emergency services organisation is required to advise the NSW Police Force immediately after it becomes aware of the situation and to forward all relevant information. In relation to the incident that gave rise to this bill, it would have been assumed or expected that such notification would have been made, but it was not required by law. By not notifying the police in as timely a fashion as possible, no-one had contravened the Act or any regulations. Yet such notification may have made a difference to the outcome of the rescue operations.

By way of clarification and to ensure that everyone is aware of expectations, this legislation will make it a requirement that emergency services organisations notify the NSW Police Force. The police will then have the obligation to take such measures as necessary to coordinate the rescue operation. All parties agree that this legislation is a sensible step forward, having noted the expert input of Phil Koperberg and others following the sad incident that occurred in 2012. We are doing what we can to improve legislation. We are putting processes in place to make New South Wales as safe as possible and to give as much support as possible to all organisations involved in rescuing New South Wales citizens. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr GUY ZANGARI** (Fairfield) [1.06 p.m.]: The purpose of the State Emergency and Rescue Management Amendment (Co-ordination and Notification of Rescues) Bill 2013, is to provide legislative clarification of the hierarchy of command during rescue operations when multiple agencies are involved. The bill acknowledges the chain of responsibility during rescue operations and it confirms the role of the NSW Police Force in occupying that managerial position and the scope of the responsibility of police during rescue operations. The changes, which include amendments to the State Emergency and Rescue Management Act 1989, will see the enactment of two significant recommendations in the 2013 report "Inshore Water Rescue—A review of procedures" by Philip Koperberg. The report was triggered by the tragic death of a man who was swept off rocks at Little Bay, Sydney, whilst allegedly rock fishing with friends. The ensuing rescue operation highlighted procedural shortcomings in established emergency rescue protocols. The report was commissioned jointly by the Minister for Police and Emergency Services and the Minister for Health. According to the report, the terms of reference were:

... to oversee the strengthening of response procedures between different emergency service organisations where an inshore rescue of people in distress is involved.

The final report made 18 recommendations, two of which are dealt with in this bill. Recommendation 1 was to amend the State Emergency and Rescue Management Act 1989 to clearly provide that the NSW Police Force has primary responsibility for the coordination of rescue operations in New South Wales. Recommendation 2 was to amend the State Emergency and Rescue Management Act 1989 to require all emergency services organisations to notify the NSW Police Force of rescue incidents.

The other recommendations are largely procedural in nature. They include: simplifying the definition of "marine rescue" to include the rescue of persons in water irrespective of whether the incidents originated from a vessel or on land; streamlining existing protocols and procedures of all emergency services agencies to include a definition of rescue as provided in the NSW State Rescue Policy; recognising the central role of police in rescue coordination; requiring immediate notification of police upon receipt of a "person in water" rescue notification; ensuring that all emergency personnel are aware of multiagency rescue operations procedures; disseminating the multiagency rescue notification protocols; and recognising the potential role played by Surf Life Saving NSW and the Australian Professional Ocean Lifeguard Association in water rescues. Schedule 1 [2] will amend section 50 of the current Act by omitting subsections (1) and (2) and inserting a new subsection (1), which states:

The NSW Police Force is responsible for co-ordinating rescue operations and for determining the priorities of action to be taken in rescue operations.

This will essentially achieve the primary purpose of this bill to remove any limitations, apart from the limitations that exist in the Act, for senior police at a multiagency operation from taking up the management of the overall rescue operation. Furthermore, proposed section 50 (1) clarifies the scope of the authority of police during multiagency rescue operations. It vests police with the responsibility of determining the priorities of action in a rescue operation. Finally, schedule 1 [4] ensures that police become the central repository of all requests for assistance by way of a rescue. It requires other emergency services agencies to notify police as soon as they become aware of an incident requiring the rescue of a person. These changes to the State Emergency and Rescue Management Act are significant because they streamline the multiagency rescue operations where the difference between life and death could be determined by a matter of seconds. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr TONY ISSA** (Granville) [1.11 p.m.]: Since the Government has been in office its concentration has been on ensuring New South Wales is number one again and providing the people of New South Wales with the service they deserve. The Government makes resolutions based on the requirements of the people of New South Wales and with their approval. This is achieved by more front-line services, reducing the cost of living, making New South Wales safer and the reform of legislation, after consultation with all stakeholders concerned in order to reach the right outcomes for all concerned.

Today I am pleased to support the State Emergency and Rescue Management Amendment (Co-ordination and Notification of Rescues) Bill 2013. The object of this bill is to amend the State Emergency and Rescue Management Act 1989 to ensure that the NSW Police Force is responsible for coordinating rescue operations and is notified by emergency services organisations of any incidents that occur which require the rescue of a person. This amendment will implement the two key recommendations arising from Mr Philip Koperberg's report and within the terms of reference of this report. Mr Koperberg oversaw the consolidation of response procedures between different emergency services organisations where a person in the water requires rescuing. The reason for the review was the tragic death of a rock fisherman. This matter is before the Coroner.

To assist with the review, a series of stakeholder meetings were held to look into the adequacy of the existing response arrangements and how to improve and achieve the response arrangements. A consultation process took place with agencies including the NSW Police Force, the Ambulance Service of NSW, Surf Life Saving NSW, the Australian Professional Ocean Life Guard Association, Marine Rescue NSW, and the Westpac Life Saver Rescue Helicopter Southern Region. This review identified a number of opportunities for the establishment of a better protocol for inshore water rescues. Out of these, 18 recommendations were made and the Government has accepted all recommendations.

At present, under section 50 of the principal Act the senior police officer present at the scene of a rescue operation is responsible for coordinating and determining the priorities of any action of agencies engaged in the rescue operation. Schedule 1 [2] ensures that the NSW Police Force generally has responsibility for the coordination of all rescue operations in the State, including responsibility for determining the priorities of action to be taken. I am pleased to say that the Government is proceeding to implement all recommendations required under this reform and that this amendment has already been approved by the State Rescue Board. I take this

opportunity to acknowledge and pay tribute to all State emergency agencies for their hard work, commitment and determination to provide services to the people of New South Wales and to help this Government make New South Wales number one again. I commend the bill to the House.

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

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** Order! The sessional orders provide that members may give community recognition statements for a total of 15 minutes. I will call each member to give one statement. If the time allocated has not expired, I will then call members to give a second statement.

## **COMMUNITY RECOGNITION STATEMENTS**

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### **ARTIST MAY JAMIL WOOD POWER EXHIBITION**

**Mr TONY ISSA** (Granville) [1.15 p.m.]: I congratulate local artist May Jamil on her wood power exhibition, hosted by Holroyd City Council. Ms Jamil, who is of Iraqi descent, came to Australia in 2008 as a refugee to start a new and better life and with a desire to share her experiences through her work. Her wood power exhibition depicts her memories, hopes and dreams for a brighter future in her new country. I commend May Jamil on her first solo exhibition in Australia.

### **LAMBTON-NEW LAMBTON LIONESSE CLUB**

**Ms SONIA HORNER** (Wallsend) [1.16 p.m.]: Yet again the Lambton Lionesses have demonstrated their outstanding ability to give. Under the leadership of the lofty Laurel Leddy, our lionesses are supporting Waratah West Public School in their important Learn to Swim program during term 4 this year. All members would understand the vital need to teach our children water skills. I congratulate these wonderful women.

### **MIRANDA LOCAL AREA COMMAND POLICE MEDALS AND AWARDS**

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN** (Cronulla) [1.16 p.m.]: This morning I attended, together with the Parliamentary Secretary for Police and Emergency Services, the Central Metropolitan Region Zone One Police Medals and Awards presentation ceremony in Cronulla. I congratulate the following recipients of medals and awards from the Miranda Local Area Command: National Police Service Medal, Detective Superintendent Gregory Antonjuk and former Leading Senior Constable Martin Lochrin; National Medal and Clasp Set, Inspector Mark Magrath; Warrant of Appointment, Sergeants Carly Burtenshaw, Kelly Donaghy and Peter McMaugh; and Region Awards for 2010-11 Queensland Flood and Cyclone Citation, Senior Constable Michael Todd. I thank all Miranda Local Area Command police for their dedication, hard work and courage in keeping our community safe.

### **VILLAWOOD NAIDOC FESTIVAL**

**Mr GUY ZANGARI** (Fairfield) [1.17 p.m.]: The Annual Villawood NAIDOC Festival was held at Hilwa Park, Villawood, on Sunday 7 July 2013. The festival is held as part of the National NAIDOC Week celebrations. The festival is organised by Woodville Community Services Inc., with the assistance of Federal, State and local agencies. The festival is a wonderful celebration of Aboriginal culture, with local Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists contributing to the festivities and entertainment. This year's festival commemorated the presentation of the Bark Petition to the Australian Federal Parliament by the Yirrkala people in 1963. The master of ceremonies for the day was Gumaroy Newman, with Uncle Greg Simms providing the welcome to country. Congratulations to Pam Batkin, Executive Officer of Woodville Community Services Inc., and her entire team on organising and hosting the celebrations.

### **JOHN AND SALLY RITCHIE SIXTIETH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY**

**Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD** (Myall Lakes) [1.18 p.m.]: I inform the House that John and Sally Ritchie of Black Head celebrated their sixtieth wedding anniversary this year. They were married at Our Lady of the Rosary Church in Taree in 1953 and, as both came from large local families, more than 90 people attended their wedding. Shortly after their marriage John and Sally moved to Lismore where John worked in the Norco Dairy factory. Three of their four children were born in Lismore. They later returned to Taree where John

worked as an engineer at Manning Base Hospital and each Christmas climbed the large pine tree out the front to put up the Christmas lights. They have lived in Taree for more than 40 years. After raising her family, Sally returned to work in 1973. John and Sally travelled extensively around Australia and to parts of the world but now are enjoying a quieter chapter of their lives, spending their time fishing and being with friends and family, especially their children, seven grandchildren and five great-grandchildren.

### **NGIOKA HORTICULTURE EDUCATION AND THERAPY CENTRE**

**Mr CRAIG BAUMANN** (Port Stephens—Parliamentary Secretary) [1.19 p.m.]: I ask the House to acknowledge an important community organisation in my electorate, the Ngioka Horticulture Education and Therapy Centre, which is celebrating 20 years of operation. Ngioka, a joint project of Port Stephens Council and the community, is a horticulture and therapy centre for people with disability. It is an invaluable project that assists people with disability to maintain independence and participate in a community setting. It aims to provide for all members of the community, the more and less abled, and offers opportunities for participation in leisure and community activities, vocational education and training and disability management. Thanks to the hard work of all those involved, this project not only assists our community members but also provides information on urban bushland management in Port Stephens.

### **CABRAMATTA LEAGUES CLUB**

**Mr NICK LALICH** (Cabramatta) [1.20 p.m.]: I inform the House that on 28 July 2013 I had the pleasure of attending the ribbon-cutting ceremony of the newly renovated facilities at Cabramatta Leagues Club. Also attending the event was the Federal member for Fowler, the Hon. Chris Hayes; Chief Executive Officer of Cabramatta Leagues Club, Mr Brad Woodhead, and Cabramatta Leagues Club President, Mr Wayne Blewitt. I was delighted to see the many visitors to the newly renovated areas, which took over seven months to complete. The families attending were entertained by a live band, face painting and dragon dancing. The newly renovated facilities of the club are stage one of a two-stage proposal. Stage two will be completed at a later date. I congratulate Cabramatta Leagues Club on its ongoing support through the provision of entertainment and employment opportunities for the local community.

### **NEWPORT PUBLIC SCHOOL MUMS FOR MUMS**

**Mr ROB STOKES** (Pittwater—Parliamentary Secretary) [1.21 p.m.]: Today I recognise the inspiring work being done by Mums for Mums, a registered charity comprising mothers of children attending Newport Public School in my community of Pittwater. The simple focus of Mums for Mums is to reach out to Newport mothers with young children who are going through times of grief, stress, illness, incapacity or trial. Newport Public School has seen too much tragedy over the past couple of years, with a number of parents losing a spouse or experiencing traumatic illness and disability. Mums for Mums, led by a group of talented local young women, including Katrina Meek and Rebecca Hunt, coordinate a number of services performed by volunteers, including house cleaning, gardening and household maintenance. Mick Millar offers life coaching and Corella Catering provides meals. Mums for Mums also raises funds for rehabilitation and other services.

Together with Pittwater mayor Jacqueline Townsend and Newport Public School deputy principal Natalie Baldi, I was delighted to attend the latest Mums for Mums fundraising event at the Royal Motor Yacht Club, Pittwater. The use of this beautiful venue was donated by the club through the club's chief executive officer, Karen Baldwin. The quality of any person is measured not by what they have but by what they give and the measure of any community is not what it acquires for itself but what it provides to others. Based on these measures, the mothers of Newport Public School are extraordinary people, and I thank them for their love and generosity.

### **WEAR IT PURPLE DAY**

**Mr ALEX GREENWICH** (Sydney) [1.22 p.m.]: I acknowledge today the inspiring Wear It Purple campaign, which is run by young people to support and empower sexuality and gender-diverse young people. The organisation believes that no-one should be subject to bullying, belittlement or invalidation for being themselves and that every young person is unique, important and worthy of love. I agree with their beliefs. The Wear It Purple campaign works toward a world where all young people thrive, regardless of sexuality or gender identity. The campaign organisers want the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and questioning communities to be safe, supported and empowered wherever they are, including in their schools and youth groups. On Friday I will join police, the City of Sydney and residents at local events to oppose homophobia and



bullying. I encourage members of Parliament, businesses, service providers, community groups and individuals to also show support by wearing a purple t-shirt, a purple tie or a purple onesie. I commend all those involved in the Wear It Purple campaign, particularly the students who run this non-profit group.

#### **HUNTER NEW ENGLAND HEALTH AWARDS FINALIST PAT PARRY**

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL** (Northern Tablelands) [1.23 p.m.]: I acknowledge and congratulate Pat Parry who, as front-line administrative officer of the Mehi-McIntyre Mental Health Service in Inverell, was one of four finalists for Outstanding Contribution of the Year in the Hunter New England Health Awards. Pat is part of a 22-member team which services a large area and faces the challenges that are unique to the region. Pat is the first port of call for all inquiries. If a person is in strife in Mungindi, Boggabilla, Wee Waa or Ashford she is there to guide them to the nearest assistance. Described as the heart and soul of the team, Pat has a very caring nature and radiates calm and warmth when dealing with clients who are struggling with mental health issues. I congratulate Pat on her selection as a finalist and wish her well in her work.

#### **NRMA INSURANCE COMMUNITY GRANTS PROGRAM**

**Ms TANIA MIHAILUK** (Bankstown) [1.24 p.m.]: On behalf of NRMA Insurance, I recently had the great pleasure of presenting a certificate to Bankstown City Council as part of the NRMA Insurance community grants program. This program supports groups that are committed to making communities safer and more sustainable. This year across New South Wales 74 groups received a community grant; the investment in local initiatives totalled over \$300,000. Since the program's inception in 2003, funding of over \$5.8 million has been distributed to 1,400 recipients nationally. Bankstown City Council received a community grant from NRMA Insurance of \$5,000 for a twilight soccer project in Bankstown. This project will provide young people aged 12 to 18 years the opportunity of a nutritious meal, life skills workshops and soccer games and a safe transport option home. The project aims to reduce crime. I congratulate both NRMA Insurance and Bankstown council on their collaboration on this worthwhile project.

#### **PORT MACQUARIE STATE EMERGENCY SERVICE**

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS** (Port Macquarie) [1.25 p.m.]: I want to congratulate Port Macquarie State Emergency Service. In a first for the mid North Coast, the local team has taken out the title at the NSW SES State Disaster Rescue Competition. At the competition, which was held recently at the Sydney International Regatta Centre, a group of six team members showcased their skills through a range of challenging and realistic scenarios. Port Macquarie unit controller Kevin Sherwood said that the win was testament to the highly professional team serving the Hastings region. The team, comprising Kevin Sherwood, Michael Ward, Brett Flight, Michael Brumby, Peter Young, Peter Burke and team manager Ashley Bell, will now head to Melbourne for the national titles. Congratulations on your award and best of luck at the coming national titles.

#### **ICE SKATING AUSTRALIA**

**Ms LINDA BURNEY** (Canterbury) [1.26 p.m.]: I congratulate Ice Skating Australia on securing an international competition to be held annually in Australia. The inaugural competition, Skate Down Under, was held recently at Canterbury Olympic Ice Rink. The Canterbury Olympic Ice Rink is a longstanding institution and an integral part of the electorate. This competition is extremely important not only to the development of ice skating in Australia but also as a selection event for Australian senior skaters to secure a place at the final qualification competition that will be held in Germany next year. Generally, our skaters have to travel to Europe and the United States to compete in an international competition. The staging of this competition in Canterbury will mean significant cost savings for competitors and will give local aspiring skaters the chance to see an international competition, inspiring them on to bigger and better things.

#### **MULGOA ELECTORATE AWARD RECIPIENTS**

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES** (Mulgoa) [1.27 p.m.]: I congratulate Melissa Quinn, a year 12 student from Penrith Anglican College, on achieving a Duke of Edinburgh's Gold Award. She is the first student from her school to achieve such a distinguished award. I also congratulate Matthew Quinn, a year 11 student from Penrith Anglican College, on achieving a Duke of Edinburgh's Gold Award. The Duke of Edinburgh's Award is a challenging program that requires participants to engage in physical activity, learn a new skill, do community service and complete a demanding bushwalk. I also acknowledge that Melissa Quinn and Matthew Quinn have previously received their Duke of Edinburgh's bronze and silver awards. I also congratulate Stephen Gee of

Concise Architectural Drafting Designs in Glenmore Park on his commendation award received at the Building Designers Australia New South Wales awards ceremony. The award was received in category 6, Residential Alterations/Additions over \$250,000, for the sympathetic renovation of a traditional Californian bungalow-style cottage on a heritage conservation road.

### **ORANGE BASE HOSPITAL AUXILIARY**

**Mr ANDREW GEE** (Orange) [1.28 p.m.]: Hospital auxiliaries do wonderful work in regional areas. Last month I attended the annual general meeting of the Orange Hospital Auxiliary. I congratulate this volunteer group on its wonderful achievements, which help deliver better health outcomes for patients. The cafe that the auxiliary operates at Orange hospital had a sales turnover of more than \$700,000 for an operating profit of \$264,000. Funds raised by the auxiliary were used to buy equipment for the hospital. In the recently completed financial year, the auxiliary purchased \$413,746 in equipment for the hospital, including oxygen concentrators, cardiac ultrasound equipment and a portable vibroscan. This is a great result and acknowledgement must be given to the men and women of the auxiliary, including the executive: president Tracy Wilkinson; vice-presidents Patricia Devenish and Florence Corbyn; secretary Doreen Thurtell; assistant secretary Kim Thurtell; treasurer Robyn Sloan; and assistant treasurer Brian Brooks. I recently performed my annual work experience at the cafe and I enjoyed it immensely.

### **GREYSTANES COMMUNITY CENTRE**

**Mr ANDREW ROHAN** (Smithfield) [1.29 p.m.]: I am delighted to inform the House that on 27 April 2013 I attended the official opening of the Greystanes Community Centre in my electorate of Smithfield. Although the centre was built some 40 years ago and has served the community since then, it was only recently discovered that it had never been officially opened. The mayor of Holroyd City Council was in attendance to open the centre, together with councillors, staff, volunteers, guests and members of the community. A number of citizens were honoured for their contribution to the development of the centre. Residents of Holroyd see this centre as an intrinsic part of their daily lives. It has been a place of celebration for weddings, birthdays and other functions throughout the years. It holds countless community workshops, dance classes, church meetings and preschool sports activities. Finally, I congratulate the Greystanes community on achieving this milestone and I wish them many happy celebrations for years to come.

**Community recognition statements concluded.**

*[The Deputy-Speaker (Mr Thomas George) left the chair at 1.30 p.m. The House resumed at 2.15 p.m.]*

### **BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

#### **Routine of Business**

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** Order! I call the member for Wyong to order for the first time. I call the member for Shellharbour to order for the first time.

#### **MINISTRY**

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL:** For reasons he will explain to the House following question time, a short while ago I regretfully accepted the resignation of the Minister for Sport and Recreation.

### **REPRESENTATION OF MINISTERS ABSENT DURING QUESTIONS**

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL:** I advise members that as a result of the resignation of the Minister for Sport and Recreation, the Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Hospitality and Racing will answer any questions relating to the Sport and Recreation portfolio during question time today.

### **BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

#### **Notices of Motions**

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

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

**QUESTION TIME**

*[Question time commenced at 2.25 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. How can the Minister claim that critical caseworker shortages are not impacting child protection when, according to her 2011-12 annual statistical report, at least 20,000 reports of children at risk of serious harm were closed due to "competing priorities"—more than double the number in the previous year?

**Ms PRU GOWARD:** I thank the member for his question. Of course the number of children being seen is absolutely critical. This House needs to remember that when this Government came to office only 21 per cent of children were being seen. That is to the eternal disgrace of the previous Government. We have now managed to increase the number of reports receiving face-to-face assessment to 27.7 per cent.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** Order! The Leader of the Opposition asked the question. He will listen to the Minister's answer in silence.

**Ms PRU GOWARD:** That, most definitely, is not enough; but it is absolutely going in the right direction.

**GARDEN ISLAND NAVAL BASE**

**Mr CHRIS SPENCE:** My question is directed to the Premier. What has been the reaction to Federal Labor's plan to close the Garden Island Navy base?

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL:** I thank the member for The Entrance for his question and for his interest in keeping jobs in New South Wales, in addition to the great effort that Ministers, led by the Treasurer, are making to ensure New South Wales has the strongest jobs growth in the country—115,000 jobs net created in New South Wales since we came to office in March 2011. Yesterday I outlined our efforts to stop the boats leaving—in the face of Kevin Rudd's thought bubble, which would see 4,000 jobs lost at Garden Island; and, in the face of a KPMG report of 2011, that 6,700 people across this city—in electorates as far away as Lindsay, Werriwa, Macarthur, Reed, Barton, Banks and Kingsford Smith—would have woken up yesterday incredibly worried. We are determined to keep those boats here in Sydney Harbour, and to keep those jobs at Sydney Harbour.

**Mr John Robertson:** They are ships.

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL:** That is not the language you should use when referring to a Premier! I did note, though, that when Kevin Rudd safely got back to Brisbane yesterday—but only when he got back to Brisbane—he said that I was a grumpy Premier. I say to Mr Harris's students: I was not grumpy; I was "bleep" angry at the proposal of the Prime Minister to do away with 4,000 jobs in this city and in this State. I was concerned and angry that Kevin Rudd, in making that announcement, did not even make a phone call to the Premier of the State affected. So much for the consultative Kevin he promised his colleagues and the nation he would be when he became Prime Minister again. As I said yesterday, even Julia Gillard would have phoned; we are on speed dial with each other.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** Order! There is too much audible conversation in the Chamber. Members will listen to the Premier in silence. I call the Leader of the House to order for the first time.

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL:** It was not just me who was angry yesterday and it was not just people in this Chamber who were angry; people across the State were angry that the Prime Minister would seek to rip jobs out of this State and relocate them to Queensland, not for some economic reason but because the Prime Minister wants to sandbag or shore up marginal Labor electorates in that seat. My inbox has been flooded since I appeared on television news last night or after people heard about this on radio. My personal favourite—and the Deputy Premier will appreciate this because he was with me—was the person who said I should have taken the opportunity to throw Mr Rudd in the harbour when I had the chance. I have to tell the Brissie-born Kevin Rudd: Our sharks have standards.

In less than 24 hours we have seen Kevin Rudd's plan unravel faster than some of the cheap suits we see on those opposite. We know that he acted in direct contravention of his own defence department. He did not ask the experts, he did not consult the defence department about this; the Bonaparte of Brisbane thought this one up by himself. My source for that is impeccable—almost impeachable, some would say: the *Sydney Morning Herald*. The *Canberra Times* quotes the former chief of the Navy, Vice-Admiral Russ Crane—someone who has not spoken on military matters since he stepped down from the job in 2011—as describing the Rudd plan as impractical, a poor use of public funds and a possible strategic risk in the event of war. Vice-Admiral Crane said that if the Navy moved out of Garden Island the biggest dry dock—not those opposite—in the Southern Hemisphere would have to be moved as well. The Australian Defence Association likened Mr Rudd's thought bubble to living in "Bizarro World". [*Extension of time granted.*]

Neil James from the Australian Defence Association said:

It's not possible to move all of the Navy out of Garden Island East simply because there is nowhere for them to go.

I understand that Brisbane does not have the deep water to get these vessels into its harbour. So much for Bonaparte—he has forgotten Waterloo. Perhaps Bonaparte should have listened to his defence Minister—he is still the defence Minister; he is still drawing a salary even though we have not seen him during the election campaign and even though he clearly would not stand beside Kevin Rudd when he made this announcement. Stephen Smith could have saved Kevin Rudd from making this massive mistake. Last March Mr Smith said:

We have in Sydney, in Fleet Base East—

which is the proper name of Garden Island—

very substantial Navy and Defence assets, which it is difficult, if not impossible, to imagine being replicated elsewhere. That, of course, includes the substantial industrial and maintenance base and the dry dock that we find in Fleet Base East.

My real concern is the flow-on consequences. Present in the Chamber is the member for Kiama; the member for South Coast is absent. What does this mean for HMAS *Albatross* in Nowra?

**Ms Linda Burney:** We had this yesterday.

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL:** You are not worried about jobs—I am. I worry about jobs in this city and in the regional areas. There are 1,800 jobs attached to HMAS *Albatross*. It is the sole Royal Australian Navy Air Station; helicopters from ships docked at Garden Island are sent there for maintenance and repairs. If Garden Island goes north, so too will the jobs at Nowra and at HMAS *Albatross*. Those opposite are prepared to rip a multibillion-dollar defence industry out of this State without standing up to their Federal Labor colleagues. I take back what I said a moment ago: They do care about jobs, but the only jobs they care about are their own.

#### DEPARTMENT OF FAMILY AND COMMUNITY SERVICES CASEWORKER VACANCIES

**Mr JOHN ROBERTSON:** My question is directed to the Minister for Family and Community Services. How can the Minister justify misleading the Parliament over the huge shortages of caseworkers she knew about when more than 23,000 reports of children at risk were closed because the Minister did not employ the staff to check up on them?

**Mr Chris Hartcher:** Point of order: The question is in breach of Standing Order 127 and Standing Order 128 in that it is contentious. The question pre-judges the answer because it automatically assumes that the Minister has misled the Parliament, which is a question to be put to the Minister and not a statement to be made to the Minister.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** Order! I uphold the point of order. A similar point of order was taken yesterday and upheld. The Leader of the Opposition may restate his question.

**Mr JOHN ROBERTSON:** My question is directed to the Minister for Family and Community Services. With staff shortages of more than 300, how does the Minister justify continuing to tell people the number of caseworkers when she is closing 20,000 cases of children at risk on her watch?

**Ms PRU GOWARD:** We are seeing more children than on the former Government's watch, and that is absolutely critical.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** Order! I call the member for Canterbury to order for the first time. The Leader of the Opposition asked the question. Opposition members will listen to the Minister's answer in silence.

**Ms PRU GOWARD:** We have wonderful caseworkers all over New South Wales working very hard seeing, as I say, an increasing number of reports. The member for Murray-Darling will be thrilled to know that in western New South Wales caseworkers are now seeing one in three reports.

**Ms Linda Burney:** Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 129, relevance. Clearly, the Minister is going to go nowhere near answering the question.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** Order! The member for Canterbury will resume her seat. There is no point of order. I place the member on three calls to order. I will not tolerate points of order when the Minister has just commenced her answer.

**Ms PRU GOWARD:** What an extraordinary point of order from a former failed Minister who, bewitched, bothered and bewildered, is muddled and befuddled, and is now dudding herself and the public. The member for Canterbury is saying that an increase in reports by members of the public means that there is some problem with staffing. What a ridiculous proposition.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** Order! Opposition members will listen to the Minister in silence.

**Ms PRU GOWARD:** Caseworkers cannot act on a report of a child at risk unless it is received by a member of the public first. It is obvious that the former Minister has no idea now and had no idea then how the system was supposed to operate.

**Mr John Robertson:** Point of order: My point of order is under Standing Order 129, relevance. The question was about 20,000 cases being closed, not the number of visits that are being made—20,000 cases being closed because of competing priorities. So far the Minister has gone nowhere near answering the question.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** Order! There is no point of order. I call the member for Lakemba to order for the first time.

**Ms PRU GOWARD:** There were cases closed under the previous Government as well. It is an ongoing quest of the department to increase the number of children who have a face-to-face assessment and that we then make the right and wise decision when we have seen those children. This morning we heard that the Opposition has had a revelation: It has found a report my department published online in June—a report that has been available on the department's website since June. All I can say to the Opposition is welcome to the internet age. I gave the Opposition a hint last week when I talked about Google. It is amazing what one can turn up on Google. This morning I used Google and I searched for a few key words—caseworkers, Linda Burney, Auditor-General—and guess what I found?

**Mr John Robertson:** Point of order: My point of order relates to relevance. Those three references the Minister says she googled relate in no way to 20,000 cases being closed.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** Order! There is no point of order.

**Ms PRU GOWARD:** If the Leader of the Opposition googled he would find that in 2010, when the member for Canterbury was in charge, 59,558 children were reported and 12,743 were given face-to-face assessments.

**Mr John Robertson:** Point of order: My point of order is Standing Order 129, relevance. The Minister is trying to confuse everybody. Only one person in this place is confused and that is the Minister, because she does not have an answer.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** Order! There is no point of order.

**Ms PRU GOWARD:** I remind members opposite that unfortunately no situation has ever occurred where all children received a face-to-face assessment. That is the ongoing challenge of child protection. Labor saw only one in five children. If members opposite googled more recent statistics they would find a much better story. [*Time expired.*]

## DECENTRALISATION STRATEGY

**Mr GREG APLIN:** My question is addressed to the Deputy Premier. How is the Government supporting decentralisation?

**Mr ANDREW STONER:** I thank the member for Albury for a terrific question. The Government came to office with a commitment to a decade of decentralisation, and we did so because we want to achieve balanced population and economic growth across the State. That is good for regional communities and their economies; it is also good for the city because it takes some of the pressure of overdevelopment and congestion off the metropolitan areas moving forward. We put forward a number of policies to help us achieve this decade of decentralisation, including 40 per cent of the Jobs Action Plan payroll tax rebates directed to regional areas to drive jobs growth and 30 per cent of our catch-up infrastructure fund, Restart NSW, to invest in infrastructure to get those regional economies moving.

Additionally, we have a process to decentralise government agencies to regional towns. We have already achieved quite a few such decentralisations, with an ambitious target of 1,500 more public sector jobs to go to regional New South Wales, regional communities, by 2021. The Regional Relocation Grant—a first in this State—is providing an incentive for people to consider making the tree or the sea change and take up the jobs we have created to use the infrastructure in which we have invested. To review the progress of that suite of policies, we established the Decentralisation Taskforce in November last year. I thank the members of that task force. It is chaired by the member for Lismore and includes the member for Albury, the member for Port Stephens and the member for Bathurst. The task force consulted widely across the State with local government and other stakeholders, regional development bodies, with Evocities and so on. Out of that feedback I can announce today that the Government has acted on a number of recommendations made by the Decentralisation Taskforce.

**Mr Nathan Rees:** Decentralise Jock Laurie.

**Mr ANDREW STONER:** The member for Toongabbie will get decentralised as a result of the redistribution. He will get decentralised right out of here.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** Order! Opposition members will listen to the Minister's answer in silence. I call the member for Keira to order for the first time.

**Mr ANDREW STONER:** In particular, the Government has responded by changing the criteria for the Regional Relocation Grant program. I turn to some of the feedback. The original program was based on the sale of a property in a metropolitan area and the purchase of a property in a regional community. We found that this restricted the number of people applying for the program, particularly those young working families that we would encourage to make the tree or the sea change. Many of them simply cannot get into the housing market in Sydney due to the economic policies of members opposite in relation to housing and its affordability. So the first change we have made is to widen the criteria to provide for people who have rented in a metropolitan area for two years or more to access the Regional Relocation Grant. That grant is \$7,000 and involves the purchase of a property in a regional community, stimulating the housing and construction sector in those regional economies.

The second change we have made—this is well known to the member for Lismore but perhaps not to other members or to people in the gallery—is to target the assistance towards providing skills and meeting workforce needs in regional communities. We have a \$10,000 grant that is applicable to people whether they rent or currently own a property in a metropolitan area. The successful applicants must hold a job of two years duration in a regional community, regardless of whether they buy a property in the regional community or rent. The criterion is around jobs. That is another economic imperative of the Regional Relocation Grant in meeting workforce needs in regional communities. The third sensible change, as recommended by the task force, was to look at the distance criterion. [*Extension of time granted.*]

The change we have made relates to the distance criterion. We heard a lot of criticism from members opposite about the original guidelines for the Regional Relocation Grant. We have responded by having a minimum—

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** Order! I call the member for Keira to order for the second time.

**Mr ANDREW STONER:** Members opposite sat in government—

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** Order! I call the member for Keira to order for the third time.

**Mr ANDREW STONER:** Members opposite sat in government for 16 long years and neglected regional New South Wales. They did not bring forward any policies aimed at encouraging decentralisation.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** Order! I remind the member for Keira that he is on three calls to order.

**Mr ANDREW STONER:** Under Labor, the projected population growth in Sydney over a 25-year period was 31 per cent; for regional New South Wales, it was less than half that, at 15 per cent. And members opposite thought that was a good policy outcome. They can whinge and whine all they want; they did nothing. We are doing something. There is a minimum 100 kilometres distance involved with the move before either stream of the Regional Relocation Grant will be paid. The member for Keira has made a lot of noise, and the member in the other place, Mr Veitch, has made some noise about the Regional Relocation Grant. The member for Keira says that it will turn Wollongong into a ghost town, while Mick Veitch says the program is a dud. One says it does not work well enough; the other says it should not work at all. That is consistency from the Labor Party! Members opposite are policy bereft. It is why, according to Antony Green, they failed to win a country seat at the last State election.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** Order! I call the member for Lakemba to order for the second time.

#### **DEPARTMENT OF FAMILY AND COMMUNITY SERVICES CASEWORKER VACANCIES**

**Ms CARMEL TEBBUTT:** My question is directed to the Minister for Family and Community Services, and Minister for Women. On 28 February the Minister told the House that the policy on replacing caseworkers on maternity leave "has not changed and will not change". Why then did her department prepare a briefing in June on the impacts of her changes to the maternity leave provisions used for backfilling caseworker positions?

**Ms PRU GOWARD:** I refer the member to my previous answer.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** Order! I remind members that several of them are on calls to order. Yesterday two members were removed from the Chamber and permitted to return at the conclusion of question time. Members who are directed to leave the Chamber today will be ordered to leave the parliamentary precinct.

#### **STATE ECONOMY**

**Mr CHRIS HOLSTEIN:** My question is addressed to the Minister for Education. How is the Government strengthening the skills base of the New South Wales economy and supporting the economic growth of New South Wales communities?

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI:** On Monday night at Barangaroo my parliamentary colleague the Minister for Family and Community Services and I had the pleasure to launch National Skills Week in New South Wales. TAFE representatives and private training providers were also in attendance. The function showcased what will happen during the Barangaroo development, when 10,000 people will be trained in a variety of skills with quite a strong focus on Aboriginal students. We want to provide every opportunity possible to support Aboriginal students in gaining skills. This morning I was at Circular Quay at 7.00 a.m.—which is very early for me—to see various TAFE institutes from around New South Wales showcase some of the courses available to residents of this State as part of National Skills Week celebrations.

Today I also launched the TAFE NSW Statement of Owner Expectations, agreed to by this Government. It is a clear statement of what this Government expects of TAFE NSW as we move forward, during a period of significant reform. The Government has already announced measures that it is undertaking as part of the Smart and Skilled reform. We want to increase contestability for students to access vocational training across New South Wales. Informing that was the Let's Talk about TAFE extensive consultation process,

which was conducted across New South Wales to gauge people's understanding and expectations of TAFE. I do not think members will be surprised to learn that more than 90 per cent of people valued TAFE highly and considered it to be an incredibly high-quality trainer in New South Wales.

Last Monday I attended the Community Cabinet in Armidale. We are continuing in government what the Coalition did in opposition—that is, listening to people in communities, particularly in regional New South Wales, and not simply sitting in offices in the central business district or at Parliament House. Next Monday we will be in Broken Hill. The Premier and I had the pleasure to open new facilities at Armidale with the newly elected—newly minted—member for Northern Tablelands. People are the key factor in any organisation, and the Premier and I had the chance to acknowledge the hard work of TAFE staff across New South Wales who provide students with great opportunities.

**Mr Barry O'Farrell:** How much can you bench press?

**Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI:** As the Premier has reminded me, I had the opportunity to try out some exercise equipment. I could be a lot fitter but it is a little difficult to bench press while wearing a suit. However, I am working on it. The \$8 million for Armidale TAFE is not the Government's only investment. We are also providing a new multimillion-dollar Transport Engineering Technology Centre at Wetherill Park college—the member for Smithfield and I saw the great work there—and there are new facilities also at Nepean college and Kingswood TAFE to address skills shortages around aged care and nursing. A few months ago I visited Young with the Minister for Primary Industries to announce funding of approximately \$10 million for new facilities in health, aged care, children's services, electro-technology, engineering, hairdressing—who needs that—and beauty.

A new fashion design studio is being provided at Ultimo TAFE. I visited Mudgee with the member for Orange to talk about new facilities and investment there. A new student services centre will be provided at Wollongbar, which is in the electorate of Ballina. That is the kind of investment that this Government is making in New South Wales. It is more than facilities; it is about supporting staff who do a great job. The Statement of Owner Expectation clearly states what this Government expects of TAFE NSW to make sure that it continues to do the great job it has done for many years.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** Order! I call the member for Cessnock. I recognise that his mother is in the public gallery. We can probably find a film clip of the question for his mum. The member for Cessnock will be heard in silence. Give the young bloke a go.

#### **DEPARTMENT OF FAMILY AND COMMUNITY SERVICES CASEWORKER VACANCIES**

**Mr CLAYTON BARR:** My question is directed to the Minister for Family and Community Services.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** Order! The member for Cessnock will be heard in silence.

**Mr CLAYTON BARR:** Has the Minister made any changes to the backfilling policy for caseworkers who go on maternity leave?

**Ms PRU GOWARD:** This is obviously a matter for the department.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** Order! The Minister will be heard in silence.

**Ms PRU GOWARD:** At no time have I given such an instruction. We have had 31 questions; every question demonstrates the ignorance of those opposite and their determination to lie and to distort.

#### **FRINGE BENEFITS TAX IMPACTS**

**Mr MARK COURE:** My question is addressed to the Treasurer. What will be the impact of the Federal Government's proposed changes to the fringe benefits tax and what has been the response from New South Wales?

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** What a difference a change of member and of government makes to the fight for St George Hospital. It got nothing for 16 years and now the member for Oatley has secured \$39 million for a new emergency department. That is the difference: A good member is looking after his electorate.



**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** Order! The Treasurer has just commenced his answer. He will be heard in silence. I call the member for Newcastle to order for the first time.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** As to the policies coming from the Federal Government, we have all seen—including those in the public gallery—Captain Chaos travelling from city to city, zipping in and out. But he made a big mistake yesterday. He tried to take thousands of jobs from Sydney but he ran into a coathanger from the Premier. It was an absolute boomer—down he went. And he was not getting back up; no-one saw him get back up from that one. The Premier is happy to stand up for this State, but what about those opposite?

**Government members:** No.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** Absolutely nothing. That is why we cannot keep having policy made on the run. That is what Captain Chaos is doing—moving around and causing all kinds of havoc. He announced the policy in relation to the fringe benefits tax and the industry responded. These are not my words. Fleetcare said that the whole industry had put a hold on new business and Qantas said that it had placed a freeze on all new motor vehicle purchases. You might expect some sympathy from the unions, but even they said, "Holden is in an extremely difficult position right now and this does not help at all". Ford said that it blamed Rudd's fringe benefits tax overall for stopping production and forcing it to stand down 750 workers. There was not a word from those opposite—nothing whatsoever. When the press release was issued Labor tried to pretend that chief executive officers driving BMWs would be the only people impacted.

**Mr Troy Grant:** What about the nurses?

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** That is a very good point. Labor did not tell us that the changes would impact on 10,000 public sector employees. That was not in the press release.

**Mr Nathan Rees:** When were you the shop steward?

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** We look after workers much better than you do.

**Mr John Robertson:** Point of order: The State Government's changes have impacted on 15,000 public sector workers, not 10,000.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** Order! There is no point of order.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** He is close; there are 115,000 jobs under the O'Farrell Government. That is what he missed. Captain Chaos missed also that this will impact on 4,500 health workers, including nurses. What is the cost to them? It will be \$1,500 a year. But Labor did not mention that, and we have heard nothing from members opposite. It will also take \$7 million a year from the Health budget. Members opposite are not standing up for the broader interests of this State—or for the workers or the Health budget. Government members make no apologies for standing up for New South Wales. We have said no to the fringe benefits tax changes and we have clearly said no to taking jobs from Garden Island and out of Sydney. We have also said that if the Federal Government does not support the WestConnex then we will do it ourselves. But the good news is that Tony Abbott is ahead in the polls, which means that Labor is interested in supporting and developing the WestConnex for this great city. As to the overall response, has anyone heard anything from the Leader of the Opposition, either in public or in this Chamber, about Kevin Rudd, the campaign and these policies? We have not heard anything. [*Extension of time granted.*]

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** Order! The Treasurer does not need assistance answering the question.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** We all know that the Leader of the Opposition has a bit of form on electoral issues. He took out Mr Beazley and Morris Iemma, so one would think he would be front and centre in this campaign—all over it—right next to Kevin, arm in arm, taking it on. But we have seen nothing from him. Perhaps the Leader of the Opposition has been taking the campaign to Twitter. I looked for anything that showed him standing up for New South Wales. I have been advised that he went to the Coptic Church B-grade finals, and apparently it was a tense game. That has been his contribution to the Federal election campaign, apart from noting that the traffic lights were out at the intersection of Richmond Road and Quakers Hill Parkway. He knows that he is going to be taken out as leader so he wants Vic Lorusso's job—and he would do it very well. One can imagine the Leader of the Opposition captaining the helicopter, giving instructions and saying, "Traffic

lights are out". Government members are determined to look after the interests of New South Wales. We make no apologies for standing up for the State, jobs, investment and confidence. We say simply: 7 September cannot come soon enough.

### LAKE MACQUARIE AIR QUALITY

**Mr GREG PIPER:** My question is addressed to the Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage. Given the significant mining activity, coal transport and power generation in the Lake Macquarie electorate and with ongoing debate about air quality impacts from those industries in the Hunter, will the Minister have the Environment Protection Authority extend the Newcastle particle characterisation study to include Lake Macquarie?

**Ms ROBYN PARKER:** I thank the member for his question and commend him for his interest in air quality. I heard his speech yesterday and I know that people in the Hunter are engaged in the air quality debate. I do not know whether the mother of the member for Cessnock comes from the Hunter, but when I moved to the Hunter there were air quality concerns regarding BHP. Whether it is industry, coal generation or electricity generation, the community is concerned about this issue and so is the Government. Unlike the former Government, which closed two air quality monitoring stations, we have opened air quality monitoring stations, including one at Wyong last year. The Government has acted swiftly on air quality. To be fair, the former Government started the Upper Hunter Air Quality Monitoring Network and this Government has completed that process and is working with industry to get it established. This will give people information and make the process as transparent as possible. The Government is also investigating additional monitoring around the Port of Newcastle.

I have established the Newcastle Community Consultative Committee on the Environment and asked industry to report on air quality. The Upper Hunter coalmines and power generators must contribute to the cost of the air quality monitoring network. We have dust stop programs and have provided councils with information and at least \$1 million to help with air quality issues. In April I met with Newcastle environmental representatives to discuss air quality. I gave in-principle support for an air particle characterisation study similar to the Upper Hunter study to determine the major components and sources of fine particles in Newcastle. On 10 July I announced a study to further the scientific evidence-based approach to reducing impacts.

That research will provide valuable information on the sources of fine particulates and priorities for reducing particle emissions, and examine the health and respiratory impacts. The study will help the Environment Protection Authority and the Hunter community to determine how best to direct our efforts in reducing emissions and improving air quality. When I announced the study I also said that industry needed to support it. It may be that, as Orica has pleaded guilty to nine pollution incidents, the Land and Environment Court will order the company to contribute to the costs of the study. Samples will be collected over a year and we will make sure that the scoping study work is done.

I will consult with the community while drafting the terms of reference to ensure that we are inclusive and look at the geographic spread, that the necessary resources are available and that the peer review process is agreed. Everyone needs to be in the tent and participate. I note the member for Lake Macquarie asked that the western side of Lake Macquarie be included in the upcoming particle characterisation study. All members of the Hunter should contribute so that we get the study right and everybody agrees on the terms of reference. In that way we can provide the community with the best information. I look forward to community input into the scope of the study. We will be inclusive of all affected communities, including western Lake Macquarie and Lake Macquarie generally.

### TEENAGE BINGE DRINKING

**Mr GEOFF PROVEST:** My question is addressed to the Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Healthy Lifestyles, and Minister for Western New South Wales. What is the Government doing to combat the rates of teenage binge drinking?

**Mr KEVIN HUMPHRIES:** I thank the member for Tweed for his question and commend him for his ongoing interest in young people. Teenage binge drinking is an issue in the Tweed, and the member has raised this matter with me previously. However, all members will be concerned about the repercussions of teenage binge drinking for our communities. We know that teenage binge drinking has the potential to destroy promising young lives, rip apart friendships and break down families. We also know that it drives much of the anti-social behaviour we see on our television screens and read about in the newspapers. This morning I released the results of a comprehensive questionnaire completed by close to 8,000 students across the State aged between 12 and

17 years of age. The survey breaks down the nutrition, physical activity and alcohol consumption trends of New South Wales high school students. The survey started in 1987 and is one of the more comprehensive longitudinal studies done on young people's behaviour.

The New South Wales School Students Health Behaviours Survey provides the only snapshot of health behaviour patterns of secondary students in New South Wales, with a key focus on the alcohol consumption trends of the State's teenage students. It may be true that sometimes we are all a little bit guilty of thinking the worst of our young people—they eat too much, exercise too little and, to a lesser extent, spend their weekends drinking alcohol. This report challenges these misconceptions. Among the range of extremely positive findings in the survey is that there are fewer students drinking today than there were 15 years ago. In 1987 more than 90 per cent of students aged 12 to 17 at some point had consumed an alcoholic drink; today it is under 70 per cent. Furthermore, the number of students who have consumed alcohol in the last 12 months has dropped from 72 per cent in 1987 to 47 per cent today.

This report shows that when it comes to reducing the rate of teenage drinking we are certainly heading in the right direction. However, that is not to say there is not a range of concerning statistics contained within this report. It shows that the rates of teenage alcohol consumption remain far too high and too many students are drinking too many alcoholic beverages too often. Why does this concern me and why should it concern every member in this House? Because we know that drinking habits that start early are often carried through life. Evidence suggests that young people who start drinking at the age of 15 are five times more likely to have alcohol problems into adulthood compared with those who start drinking after age 21, and issues around dysfunction in later life are far less prevalent.

This is why the Government is tackling teenage alcohol abuse and reforming youth mental health services across the State. It has been a key priority for the New South Wales Liberals and Nationals since coming to Government. The Government is committed to addressing the challenges of teenage binge drinking and to support parents to deal with these issues and this is seen in a range of highly successful public education campaigns such as "Know when to say when" and "What are you doing to yourself?" These campaigns have raised awareness of the social and health impacts of binge drinking among young people. We believe the best chance of changing a culture is when it is driven by those it affects. That is why the Government is committed to empowering parents and communities to promote the benefits of a healthy lifestyle and address the risks associated with binge drinking.

The key partners in this endeavour are our 80 Community Drug Action Teams—local groups of community members, volunteers, local businesses, welfare organisations, and government and non-government agencies set up to raise awareness and tackle drug and alcohol related issues in their communities. The New South Wales Government wants to increase community participation in Community Drug Action Teams so as to bring about real change. To this end, I recently announced that for the first time the Government was seeking to partner with non-government organisations to support our Community Drug Action Teams. It is my great pleasure to announce that the tender to run the Community Engagement and Action Program, which supports the Community Drug Action Teams, has closed and that the Australian Drug Foundation has been selected to work alongside our Community Drug Action Teams to provide strategic direction, increase skills and resources and boost the number of people participating in these outstanding community groups. The Government is committed to a healthy, meaningful and productive life for all youth living in New South Wales.

#### **DEPARTMENT OF FAMILY AND COMMUNITY SERVICES CASEWORKER VACANCIES**

**Ms PRU GOWARD:** Earlier in question time the member for Cessnock asked me a question. I provide the following further information. I have signed a briefing note from the department regarding policy and practice on backfilling caseworker positions and vacancies and after further investigation I will update the House. As I stated in the House, on 7 March I instructed the director general to fill all budgeted caseworker positions and that is what I expect.

**Question time concluded at 3.14 p.m.**

#### **BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

##### **Suspension of Sessional Orders: Order of Business**

**Motion, by leave, by Mr BRAD HAZZARD agreed to:**

That standing and sessional orders be suspended to permit the member for Miranda to make a statement to the House forthwith.

**RESIGNATION OF MINISTER FOR SPORT AND RECREATION****Ministerial Statement**

**Mr GRAHAM ANNESLEY** (Miranda—Minister for Sport and Recreation) [3.16 p.m.]: As the Premier advised earlier today, I have submitted my resignation as the Minister for Sport and Recreation effective immediately and I will be resigning as member for Miranda in due course. I have done so because I intend to relocate to Queensland and return to my former profession as a full-time sports administrator. This decision, which I do not take lightly, follows an unsolicited approach from the Gold Coast Titans Rugby League Club to join the Queensland-based organisation as the chief executive officer. Whilst I accept my decision to leave Parliament mid-term will attract criticism, it is important I place the reasons on the public record.

As most members would be aware I am not a career politician. I became involved in politics during the 2007 election, having been encouraged to contest preselection for the seat of Miranda. I did this because I felt I had something to contribute. I genuinely believe, as with most things in life, if you are not satisfied with the status quo you can sit around and complain or get involved and try and do something about it. I chose the latter course of action and following a narrow defeat in 2007, after which the electorate of Miranda became the most marginal seat held by the former Government. I decided to run again in 2011 to finish off what I had started four years earlier. I am proud to say that over the two elections we achieved a cumulative swing of around 30 per cent.

After the O'Farrell Government was elected in 2011, I was honoured and privileged to be asked to take on the role of Minister for Sport and Recreation. I have undertaken this role to the best of my ability and have thoroughly enjoyed it. However, throughout my time in this place I have never really considered myself to be a politician; more of a sports administrator working in politics. Self-praise is no recommendation but I believe I have been a good Minister. Equally, I do not consider myself to be a very good politician. In fact, there are many aspects of politics I do not really care for. However, I have the utmost respect for anyone who enters political life because it is a very tough commitment—far tougher than most would appreciate. Sport, in particular rugby league, has been in my life. It has been in my blood since I was a kid. As an adult I had 15 years on the field at the top level and a further 15 years as a full-time administrator, including close to a decade as National Rugby League Chief Operating Officer.

Whilst the Titans' approach was unexpected, it forced me to contemplate whether my future should be in politics or whether I should return to my lifelong association with rugby league. In the end, I felt if I committed to a further term in politics and was re-elected—another five-and-a-half years in Parliament—it would be too late to return to my former career. It would have been unreasonable to expect to remain in the Sports portfolio long term if I had stayed. I acknowledge the magnitude of my decision and accept that I am letting a lot of people down, including the Premier, my colleagues, my staff, and the constituents of Miranda. For that I am genuinely and extremely sorry.

It is fair to say that as a local member of Parliament I have been gratified—even perhaps a little surprised—at just how many people my staff and I have been able to help in the Miranda electorate. Whilst I have given my responsibilities as the member for Miranda and my ministerial duties 100 per cent of my effort, everyone in my local community deserves a representative who is able to maintain that level of commitment in that role in the future. Our system of government will always be bigger than any one individual. We should never forget that everyone who serves in this House is simply a representative of their local community—no more, no less. The system is designed so that each representative elected by their local community comes here to make a contribution on behalf of that particular community, and I believe I have done that to a high standard. Some members will make a very significant contribution over many years in Parliament but it is not always necessary to be here for a long time to make a difference. In fact, a reasonable turn-over can be a good thing in some cases so that members do not forget why they are here or who they are representing.

Politics is a brutal game, and ultimately everyone who comes here will leave this place either by personal choice or by the choice of others. One of the hardest aspects of my decision was the impact it would have on my staff, who have been unbelievably loyal and hardworking. I understand the potential consequences for them and it troubles me greatly but that is how our system of government works. I am very confident they will all continue to do well because of their skills and experience. Regrettably my actions will also force a by-election. This is an automatic consequence of the system applying to this House, as opposed to the other place, where casual vacancies are filled along party lines. I place on record that before making this decision, as required, I sought the advice of the Parliamentary Ethics Advisor. I seek leave to lay that advice on the table for the information of members.

**Leave granted.**

**Documents tabled.**

I fully understand, and commit to observing at all times, the legal and ethical restrictions placed on me as part of my post-separation employment obligations. In fact, I have asked the Titans to include a clause in my employment agreement that acknowledges the prohibition period placed on former Ministers as to lobbying the New South Wales Government about matters related to a former Minister's portfolio—not that I can foresee any circumstances where that would arise in my new role with a Queensland-based club.

I thank my Cabinet and Liberal-Nationals colleagues for the friendship and assistance they have unhesitatingly offered me at all times. I also thank Opposition members for the courtesy and respect they have afforded me. I hope I have reciprocated in kind. Regardless of what people may think of my decision, I assure the House that I am leaving with a heavy heart. This State has a great future. It will continue to grow and prosper under the leadership of the Premier and my former Cabinet colleagues. I will be forever grateful to the Premier for everything he has done for me. I am sure he is disappointed and upset that I have let him down but in time perhaps he and everyone else I have let down will forgive me. In closing, I thank the people of Miranda and New South Wales for allowing me the opportunity to serve you. It has been an honour and a privilege.

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL** (Ku-ring-gai—Premier, and Minister for Western Sydney) [3.25 p.m.]: The member for Miranda should in no way feel that he has let me down. I could not have asked for a better sports Minister over the past 28 months. I do not say this in any partisan fashion but the member for Miranda has brought to this place the undoubted skills of a sports administrator, which he gained whilst working for the greatest code in this country. In all that he has achieved in so many sports—whether in relation to stadia policy, his successful introduction of legislation to deal with match-fixing, or his work with former Federal Minister for Sport Arbib in securing funding to upgrade the Sydney Cricket Ground—he has acted in a way that would please any Premier. My only concern was that at one stage Graham seemed to be attending every sporting event around and, regrettably, would drag his wife Erica along with him. It was a standing joke in my house that he would even go to a tiddlywinks competition if he was not told he could relax.

I understand his great passion for rugby league. I understand also—as I think the public does—that that was his career before he came to this place. I am obviously disappointed that we are losing him, not only as a colleague, friend and member of Parliament but also as someone who was making a real difference through his portfolio to this State, but it is absolutely understandable that when an offer of a lifetime comes along—presumably the sort of offer he dreamt of in his previous life—he would give that offer consideration and weigh it up. I will now reflect on a couple of points he made. He said that he was probably more of a sports administrator than politician. People say things like that at times but in relation to the member for Miranda it is true for all the right reasons. Others pretend they are not politicians but when one tracks their records one sees they are. I wish the member for Miranda and Erica well. The only real regret I have is that had I known he was going to leave early I might have engineered his leaving to occur before this year's State of Origin series. We might have put him on the field as a referee and he might have done a Barry Gomersall—that greatly biased Queensland referee—and delivered us a series win!

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** I am sure he will still wear a blue jumper.

**Mr JOHN ROBERTSON** (Blacktown—Leader of the Opposition) [3.28 p.m.]: I assure the member for Miranda that this side of the House will give him no grief about this decision. I had the privilege of dealing with Graham Annesley a long time before he and I set foot in this place. We even sat across the table from each other in our first dealings and the one thing that struck me about him was his integrity and decency. His speech this afternoon demonstrated that he has continued to be someone who acts with decency and integrity—something that all of us in this place could aspire to in our behaviour from time to time. The member for Miranda has not allowed this place to change him nor has he allowed politics to interfere in how he interacts with people. He should go with all our best wishes.

The Premier was disappointed about one thing. I too have a disappointment. I was hoping the member for Miranda was going to announce that he was going to Parramatta. The member for Miranda has always been a decent person—prior to politics and in this House. He has interacted with all of us in a very professional and dignified way. I speak on behalf of all on this side of the House in saying that he goes with our best wishes. I once again assure him that he will get no grief from us about the decision he has taken. I have watched the member for Miranda many a day during question time and wondered what he was thinking. In one way it does not come as a surprise that he has taken an offer to get back into sports administration. He is a very good administrator, as my early dealings with him proved, and I am slightly envious that he is going to the Titans and not the Eels.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** I am sure that all members aspire to match what the member for Miranda has achieved in such a short time in this place. I am equally sure that every member of Parliament, every staff member and everyone else associated with the Parliament wishes the member for Miranda health, happiness and success in the future.

**MARINE PARKS AMENDMENT (MORATORIUM) BILL 2013**

**ROAD TRANSPORT AMENDMENT (ELECTRONIC TRAFFIC INFRINGEMENT NOTICES TRIAL) BILL 2013**

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

**Messages received from the Legislative Council returning the bills without amendment.**

**PETITIONS**

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

**Sydney Electorate Public High School**

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

**Callan Park**

Petition calling on the Government to implement the Callan Park master plan and establish the Callan Park and Broughton Hall Trust, received from **Mr Jamie Parker.**

**Coal Seam Gas Mining**

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

**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.**

### **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**.

## **BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

### **Business lapsed**

**General Business Order of the Day (General Order) No. 1 and General Business Notices of Motions (General Notices) Nos 2519 and 2521 to 2526 and General Business Order of the Day No. 1 lapsed pursuant to Standing Order 105 (3)**

**General Business Notices of Motions (General Notices) Nos 2527 to 2530 will lapse tomorrow pursuant to Standing Order 105 (3).**

## **CONSIDERATION OF MOTIONS TO BE ACCORDED PRIORITY**

### **Federal Government Policies**

**Mr STUART AYRES** (Penrith—Parliamentary Secretary) [3.34 p.m.]: I seek priority for my motion, which states:

That this House:

- (1) Opposes the Federal Government decision to send electricity prices soaring through the introduction of its carbon tax.
- (2) Condemns the Federal Government for broken promises on the carbon tax, the budget surplus and its failure to secure our borders.
- (3) Condemns the Federal Government's arrogance for its failure to consult on the closure of the Garden Island naval base.
- (4) Supports a change of Federal Government to restore responsible, stable and competent leadership in Canberra.

This motion should be accorded priority because for the past six years we have seen nothing but chaos reigning supreme in the Federal Labor Government. This House should debate this motion because the people of New South Wales know all too well how this story will end if we do not make this change in government federally this year. We have seen what happens when a government cannot live within its means. We have seen what happens when a government is wracked by chaos. We have seen what happens when a government does not have any stability of leadership. The people of New South Wales know where that story ends; and it is time for a change.

I will give the House some specifics to support my argument that this debate should be accorded priority. The carbon tax—a tax that epitomises the Federal Labor Government more than anything else—has been a huge impost on the people of New South Wales. It, along with that Government's green schemes, has been driving up electricity prices across New South Wales, adding more than \$330 to electricity bills in this State. That is nothing short of a disgrace. Those involved in business or any other form of government who look back on the past six years would be thinking about regulations. Federal Labor has overseen 200,000 new regulations, affecting the people of this country. That also is a disgrace. How will anyone be able to do their work when someone is looking over their shoulder?

It would be remiss of me not to draw to the attention of the House that for six years Federal Labor has had a deregulation Minister. If you are from western Sydney you know full well that Federal Labor has ignored you, particularly when it comes to roads and transport infrastructure. At no stage has that Government committed itself to WestConnex. WestConnex is a game changer for this city and the people of western Sydney. If you are from Campbelltown, Parramatta, Wollondilly or Penrith you know these types of infrastructure projects are absolutely needed. It is time for change. For too long the people of New South Wales have lived under that incompetent Government; they have seen the incompetence of that Government

for the past 16 years. We cannot let Labor have another crack at it. We know what the result will be if Labor is returned federally. The 16 years of Labor in New South Wales must not be followed by 16 years of Labor federally. [*Time expired.*]

### **St George Hospital**

**Ms CHERIE BURTON** (Kogarah) [3.37 p.m.]: I ask the House to accord priority to my motion, which states:

That this House:

- (1) Calls on the State Government to commit to the rebuilding and modernising of St George Hospital.
- (2) Welcomes the Federal Labor Government's commitment of \$22 million to help rebuild St George Hospital.
- (3) Notes the overwhelming support and strong local campaigns for the upgrade of St George Hospital by the St George community, doctors, nurses and the Labor candidates for Barton, Steve McMahon, and for Banks, Daryl Melham.
- (4) Calls on all members of Parliament, including those local members of Parliament who to date have been silent on the issue, to finally join the Medical Council's "Code Red" campaign.

My motion should have priority because the community has outgrown the St George Hospital facilities, which need to be rebuilt now. Though St George Hospital is staffed by world-class professionals who provide the community with the best care possible, overcrowded and aged facilities are compromising delivery of that care and destroying morale. The New South Wales Government's Local Health District Asset Strategic Plan states that the hospital is on "code red". The only area in which St George Hospital has not been identified as code red is location, which is rated as good. St George Hospital is in the right place to service the community; it just does not have the right facilities.

St George Hospital is the only hospital in the whole of the local health area that has been rated code red or poor in more than one category. Despite this, St George Hospital has not been prioritised in the capital investment plan. While the emergency department is being redeveloped, other essential areas of the hospital have no timing commitment for the urgent funding required. The Coalition Government once again has been exposed as having no substance—exposed for the smoke and mirrors and spin that have become its legacy for the past two years. It has claimed credit for St George Hospital's new emergency department when the planning work, costing \$1 million, was already done and the funding of \$30 million for the work was in the budget prior to the Coalition taking office.

The real facts are these. Labor increased the Health budget to a record \$15.5 billion—a 192 per cent increase since the last time the Coalition was in office. Since 1995 nearly every major hospital was rebuilt or upgraded under Labor; and in the last year alone more than \$918 million was spent on capital works. That was almost double the amount of spending when the Coalition last left office. We increased the health workforce to 43,000 nurses and 8,500 medical staff working across the system. The last time the Coalition was in office it closed or downgraded 20 hospitals across New South Wales. In the last two years alone, since the Coalition took office, we have had the highest-ever levels of trolley-block, emergency department waiting lists have blown out and the Government has started to close wards.

I welcome the Federal Labor Government's commitment of \$22 million, which will begin the first stage of the high dependency unit—imperative if the emergency department is to function properly. I congratulate the medical staff council on its Code Red campaign and I congratulate the member for Banks, Daryl Melham, and the Labor candidate for Barton, Steve McMahon, on their very vocal and public support. I condemn the Federal Liberal Opposition for its deathly silence on this issue. It is about time the State Government supported the Code Red campaign.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** Order! I call the member for Oatley to order for the first time. I call the member for Cabramatta to order for the first time.

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

**The House divided.**



**Ayes, 63**

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

**Noes, 22**

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

**Pair**

Mr Barilaro

Ms Hornery

**Question resolved in the affirmative.****BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE****Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders: Motion Accorded Priority****Motion by Mr BRAD HAZZARD agreed to:**

That standing and sessional orders be suspended at this sitting to permit the conclusion of the motion accorded priority prior to the commencement of Government business.

**BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE****Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders: Divisions and Quorums****Motion by Mr BRAD HAZZARD agreed to:**

That standing and sessional orders be suspended at this sitting to provide that from 6.00 p.m. until the rising of the House, no divisions or quorums be called.

**FEDERAL GOVERNMENT POLICIES****Motion Accorded Priority**

**Mr STUART AYRES** (Penrith—Parliamentary Secretary) [3.50 p.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) Opposes the Federal Government decision to send electricity prices soaring through the introduction of its carbon tax.
- (2) Condemns the Federal Labor Government for broken promises on the carbon tax, the budget surplus and its failure to secure our borders.
- (3) Condemns the Federal Labor Government's arrogance for its failure to consult on the close of the Garden Island naval base.
- (4) Supports a change of Federal Government to restore responsible, stable and competent leadership in Canberra.

As I said earlier, no doubt the people of New South Wales have a clear understanding of what is required in the lead-up to the election. The State knows all too well the lessons to be learned from a government that lacks leadership, coherent policy thinking and stability, a government that has absolutely no focus on anything but itself. We have known this type of government for all too long because we have seen it in New South Wales. Unfortunately for the people in the rest of the country, it seems clear that the thing called the New South Wales disease has infiltrated the Federal Labor Party as well. We have seen that in a number of different areas. One reason we definitely need to support this motion and why it should be debated is because of things like the carbon tax. The carbon tax epitomises people's view of the Gillard-Rudd-Rudd-Gillard— I cannot remember the order these days—Government. The leadership failure at the Federal level is epitomised by the carbon tax.

The carbon tax has not gone anywhere. It is still there and it is still increasing. The carbon tax is currently costing the people of New South Wales more than \$330 a year when it is added to all of Labor's ad hoc green schemes—the ill-thought-out green schemes that Labor has not nailed down. Labor has not figured out how they work; it has simply dumped them out there. For the benefit of anyone who supports good green energy, they should instil a bit of confidence in those schemes, which is the exact opposite to what the Labor Government has done. Earlier I spoke about regulation. Regulation is another key performance indicator of the Federal Labor Government. The Federal Government has dumped 2,000 additional regulations on people across the country and in this State. That is not a bad effort for a government that has a deregulation Minister, a Minister who is responsible for removing regulation.

If that is what Labor calls good performance, imposing an additional 2,000 regulations, they are dead set kidding themselves. The Federal Labor Government has also completely failed to recognise the importance of New South Wales when it comes to infrastructure, particularly in the road space. As a representative of a constituency in Western Sydney, I can say that we know this more than anyone else. Western Sydney represents 8 per cent of the population but has received only 1 per cent of Federal Government roads funding over the past five years. That is a catastrophic failure of the Federal Government to recognise the importance of Western Sydney. We heard a lot about the Federal Government's other failures. One that stands out for me is its failure on border protection. At a State level we cannot have much influence on or see the by-products of what happens with people smuggling. But the Federal Labor Government's massive failure is its failure to support Customs.

Under the Howard regime the Coalition Government was able to screen about 60 per cent of all air cargo coming into this country. Under the Federal Labor Government it is now less than 10 per cent. In this State the NSW Police Force, through exceptional work, has been able to crack crime groups. On the issue of guns, the police have found that criminals are posting gun parts to Australia to have guns reassembled. That has a direct relationship with the ability to screen air cargo. If people can get away with posting guns from Germany to Australia so they can be sold on the street, that is a catastrophic failure of our Customs and border protection and it puts the people of New South Wales at risk. That is exactly the reason that people in New South Wales should be seriously thinking about a change of government because they can see what happens at the end of this story. If people vote for a Labor government for another three years, the Federal Labor Government will treat the voters as mugs and it will not invest in this State. New South Wales requires appropriate investments. We need a government in Canberra that can learn to live within its means. We cannot afford to have a budget that racks up \$33 billion of deficit; more than \$200 billion of debt, and an interest bill of \$10 billion a year. For someone in Western Sydney that is one WestConnex every year.

**Mr NATHAN REES** (Toongabbie) [3.55 p.m.]: I thought the Parliamentary Secretary would have been hitting the phones at this stage. We have a clear choice in 10 days time as the people of Australia head towards an election. It is a choice between a party that will set Australia up for the future, or the antediluvian tactics of Tony Abbott and his quest to take the country backwards half a century. The Labor Government has given the people of Australia superannuation to guarantee their economic future, Medibank and Medicare, and free tertiary education; it has expanded and improved public school education; and it has ensured that public housing is being provided, that Aboriginal people and their land rights are looked after, and that it is setting us up for the future with the National Broadband Network. To the Liberal Party's great shame, Labor deregulated the financial sector and set up Australia's financial institutions to weather the international storms and to drive interest rates down. That is Labor's proud record. To cap it off, Labor provided an industrial relations regime that guarantees fairness and equity in the workplace. In contrast, let us start with industrial relations. I remember clearly when the Liberal Party pulled out its old mate, Tony Hewson, who wrote *Fight Back*. I remember the 1993 election. Indeed, I had a discussion directly with Tony Hewson in a mall in Parramatta.

**Mr Rob Stokes:** Who's Tony Hewson?

**Mr NATHAN REES:** I am sorry, John Hewson. Tony Hewson was a Labor member and not a good one. John Hewson's industrial relations policy had input from a fellow called Peter Boyle who was head of the South Australian Chamber of Commerce. Boyle said, "We have to reintroduce fear into workers' lives." That is the core of industrial relations for the Liberal Party and The Nationals. The Liberal Party is not interested in a fair go for workers or a good ABC or an SBS that flourishes. It does not believe in a public health system, a public school system or climate change. The Liberal Party's solution for climate change is the most inequitable application of taxpayer funds in policy history in Australia. The Liberal Party will take Australia backwards. Tony Abbott is not the man to lead Australia into the future. He leads an outfit that, in elections past, has taken us to war on a lie. In the children overboard election—

**Mr Kevin Conolly:** Come on.

**Mr NATHAN REES:** You are kidding.

**Mr Kevin Conolly:** You are. You don't believe that.

**Mr NATHAN REES:** That is a discussion for another day. We were taken to war on a lie and the member for Riverstone knows it. The other great lie was the children overboard. I am happy to engage in the politics of division. The Liberal Party is happy to scratch the underbelly of the darkest parts of the Australian psyche for pure political gain. Children overboard was a lie. Going to war in Iraq was based on a lie. That is the record of the Liberal Party. That is the clear choice for the people of Australia. Environmental degradation should be of interest to the member for Blue Mountains as her electorate sits in a World Heritage listed area.

**Mrs Roza Sage:** Absolutely.

**Mr NATHAN REES:** The World Heritage listing for the Blue Mountains was opposed by the Coalition. A heritage listing for the Great Barrier Reef was opposed by the Coalition. Heritage listing for the Great Barrier Reef was opposed by the Coalition. Heritage listing for Parramatta Park was opposed by the Coalition. This outfit does not have any regard for the environment of Australia or for the preservation of forest for future generations and, as was said by its leader, does not believe in climate change. The people of Australia have a very clear choice in a couple of weeks: a party that will expand public education, a party that will expand public health, a party that will build the National Broadband Network, a party that looks to the future or one that is a handbrake on the progress of Australians.

Tony Abbott is the equivalent of myxomatosis to rabbits, and members of the Government are the rabbits in this case. This bloke will burn the reputation of the Liberal Party. His B. A. Santamaria manifesto will blow up in his face. He is not a man committed to the ideology of the Liberal Party, and as much as I might disagree with it, I understand it, and there has been some consistency over the past 50 years, but Tony Abbott is not your man. He is not Australia's man. He does not deserve anyone's vote, and this motion should be rejected.

**Mr CHRIS SPENCE** (The Entrance) [4.00 p.m.]: I support the motion moved by the member for Penrith. I note that the member for Toongabbie left out Federal Labor's legacy during the six years it has been in government. What happened to Petrol Watch? What has that done for people? What happened to Grocery Watch? It came and went. There was also the pink batts fiasco, the Building the Education Revolution waste of

money and the carbon tax. The Federal Government's record on the budget was reported in yesterday's *Daily Telegraph* as \$147.1 billion gross debt at the end of Kevin Rudd's first term, \$257.4 billion gross debt when Kevin Rudd rolled Julia Gillard and now, just before he called the election, a \$269.7 billion gross debt. That is in stark contrast to the legacy of a \$50 billion budget surplus that was left by the Howard Government, which has been wasted and squandered by the Labor Party in the past six years.

Yesterday the Prime Minister came to New South Wales, as the Premier so eloquently said, and arrived at Garden Island and said he wanted to take 4,000 of our jobs to Queensland. That is gross waste and mismanagement by Kevin Rudd who simply announces policy on the run. One of the biggest legacies left for New South Wales families by the Federal Government is the carbon tax. We all remember the statement: "There will be no carbon tax under a government I lead." Julia Gillard introduced the tax and we are left with it and it is costing families in New South Wales \$332 every year in household bills. We, as a responsible Government, need to make sure that New South Wales taxpayers know exactly what their electricity bill consists of. That is why the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal agreed that every electricity bill in New South Wales will have the words:

The NSW Government estimates that Federal carbon tax and green energy schemes add about \$332 a year to a typical 6.5 megawatt household bill.

That is a disgrace. Under this Government we have finally seen, after more than 80 per cent prices rises in the 16 years under Labor, the bills reduced to just 1.7 per cent with an expected decline by 6.9 per cent in 2015-16. That is what responsible government is about and that is what the people of New South Wales expect, and they will get more by voting for Tony Abbott on 7 September.

**Mr MICHAEL DALEY** (Maroubra) [4.03 p.m.]: Since my election to this place in 2005 I do not think I have seen many more bewildering motions than this one. Members of the O'Farrell Government are talking about the carbon tax, with all of the statements of the Premier and Treasurer already on the public record; they are talking about budget surpluses, something that they have only seen as a matter of accident; they are talking about arrogance and all they need to do is to look at the conduct of the Premier in the past 24 hours and they will see the embodiment of arrogance; and they are talking about jobs when the blood of 15,000 public servants is dripping off their ministerial pens. This is completely bewildering.

What is more bewildering about this motion is that they lead with their chin and introduce a concept of arguing matters economic against the Federal Government. The Federal Government is now presiding over the lowest interest rates effectively in the history of Australia, the lowest unemployment for decades and the lowest tax to gross domestic product ratio that has been experienced by the people of Australia for many decades and perhaps ever in real terms. The Federal Government kept Australia out of recession with its internationally acclaimed stimulus policies, and the theme continues. The arrogance of the Premier was on display for all to see yesterday when he gatecrashed a press conference by the Prime Minister. He made a fool out of himself and, augmenting that foolishness, he entered this Chamber and stuck his middle finger up at the Leader of the Opposition.

Compound that with his misogynistic behaviour towards the member for Canterbury and the member for Marrickville in this place in the past 2½ years and it is a bit strange for members opposite to talk about arrogance. What is even stranger than representatives of this Government talking about arrogance is their talking about the economy. They led off by talking about budget surpluses. They had a budget surplus of \$1.3 billion that they rapidly turned into a \$700 million deficit, a \$2 billion net turn-around in the first budget of the O'Farrell Government. A deficit was then forecast and what happened? The Treasurer is the first in the history of this State to lose \$1 billion. Thirty-seven major errors were picked up by the Auditor-General—a \$3.4 billion error in capital spending. That is what happens to economics under Barry O'Farrell and Mike Baird. The only surplus members of the Government have seen is an accidental one. The narrative was corrected quickly and the budget put deliberately back into debt so that they could match their economic credentials with the narrative of cutting, slashing, burning and sacking.

Members of the Government talk about jobs that will be lost from Garden Island when they are ripping the heart out of TAFE, sacking 15,000 public servants and using words like, "Imagine how those families would feel?" The Premier said yesterday they would be devastated. There are 15,000 families in New South Wales that have been devastated by his sacking of their mum and their dad.

**Mr STUART AYRES** (Penrith—Parliamentary Secretary) [4.06 p.m.], in reply: I thank the member for Maroubra, the member for Toongabbie and the member for The Entrance for their contributions to this debate. It is important to acknowledge the work of the member for The Entrance on the Central Coast, together

with his other colleagues in State Parliament. They have been exceptional advocates for their part of New South Wales and are working incredibly hard to ensure that the people of the Central Coast do not have to suffer again under the performance of another Labor Government, which has quite clearly forgotten them, in the same way that the Labor Government has forgotten the people of Western Sydney.

The member for Toongabbie spoke about some of the reforms of Labor governments in years gone by. He referred to land rights, Medicare, superannuation and financial deregulation, just to name a few. I am more than happy to acknowledge what governments have done in the past and what they continue to do when the reforms are good. The problem that the member for Toongabbie did not mention is that all those good things stopped the moment Kevin Rudd was elected. There were no landmark reforms and there was no great social change. The great moral challenge of our time was easily dismissed when polling went the wrong way, so much so that his own colleagues decided to get rid of him. When they did not like the performance of his replacement they got rid of her too and reinstated Kevin Rudd.

The current Labor Party in Canberra in no way resembles the Labor Party of the past that delivered any of those changes such as land rights, Medicare, superannuation or financial deregulation. The member for Toongabbie would see that demonstrated on the streets of Toongabbie. I see it every day when I talk to people on the streets of Penrith. The Labor Party is nothing but a rotting carcass. It has completely corrupted itself. It has lost its soul; it has lost its way. As with any political party that has lost its way, the Federal Labor Party needs to spend a long period in opposition to get its house in order. That is why the people of New South Wales must consider a change of government federally. They have seen electricity price rises, poor national energy regulation—which has been a catastrophic failure—and underperforming infrastructure investment in New South Wales. The list goes on and on. There has been complete disregard of State leadership. It is time for change in this country.

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

**The House divided.**

**Ayes, 58**

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

**Noes, 21**

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

**Pair**

Mr O'Dea

Ms Hornery

**Question resolved in the affirmative.****Motion agreed to.****Pursuant to sessional orders Government business proceeded with.****STATE EMERGENCY AND RESCUE MANAGEMENT AMENDMENT (CO-ORDINATION AND NOTIFICATION OF RESCUES) BILL 2013****Second Reading****Debate resumed from an earlier hour.**

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS** (Port Macquarie) [4.19 p.m.]: The State Emergency and Rescue Management Amendment (Co-ordination and Notification of Rescues) Bill 2013 sets out to improve the lines of communication with emergency services organisations and the NSW Police Force. The bill amends the State Emergency and Rescue Management Act 1989 to ensure that the NSW Police Force is responsible for coordinating rescue operations and is notified by emergency services organisations of any incident requiring the rescue of a person. As has been mentioned earlier by the Parliamentary Secretary, the bill was introduced following key recommendations by Mr Phil Koperberg in his report, "Inshore Water Rescue—A review of procedures". The report was commissioned by the health Minister, the Hon. Jillian Skinner, and the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, the Hon. Mike Gallacher, in the other place. The review of procedures for such rescues follows the tragic death of a rock fisherman at Little Bay in November 2012.

In any emergency situation the lines of communication and command, along with the appropriate response procedures, must be clear and concise and all personnel involved from the various emergency services organisations must be aware of the procedures. The bill specifically requires that an emergency services organisation other than the NSW Police Force must, immediately after the organisation becomes aware of an incident that requires the rescue of any person, notify a member of the NSW Police Force of all relevant information concerning the incident. Appropriately, a number of stakeholder meetings were convened to determine the areas that needed improvement with regard to emergency rescues and the amendments that needed to be made to the legislative framework to ensure that protocols are robust and effective. I take this opportunity to commend all our emergency services personnel and the many volunteers, including those in the State Emergency Service, who this year demonstrated their outstanding skills in rescue and recovery situations on the mid North Coast.

During the flood crisis earlier this year the lines of communication between all the emergency services organisations involved were critical. The mid North Coast experienced two floods in less than two weeks as slow-moving low pressure systems developed. In total, more than 8,000 people were evacuated from areas including parts of Kempsey and Port Macquarie and more than 25,000 people were isolated by floodwater. These two low pressure systems brought gale-force winds, heavy rains and damaging surf, with waves greater than six metres recorded offshore. The NSW State Emergency Service received a total of 2,039 calls, which resulted in 1,576 requests for assistance being generated and sent out to units. The majority of those calls were for flood rescue, evacuation, food resupply, tree removal, leaking roofs and threatened flooding. The calls were handled by State Emergency Service crews in Port Macquarie, Wauchope, Camden Haven and Harrington in the Port Macquarie electorate, as well as crews from Taree, Wingham, Forster, Kempsey and South West Rocks in electorates to the north and the south.

These rescues and attendances for assistance were handled with the courage and commitment we have come to expect from our emergency services personnel and volunteers. During the flood crisis approximately 44,608 volunteer hours were spent helping people on the ground. This was achievable only because systems and procedures were in place following years of coordination, resulting in practised chains of command and expertise. There were also daily emergency services management briefings during the flood crisis to identify ways to further improve a coordinated response. I was pleased to attend a debrief following the disaster and to have the opportunity to congratulate all the services involved in working towards effecting change and improved

responses and outcomes. Similarly, I congratulate the New South Wales Government on responding to the recommendations of the "Inshore Water Rescue—A review of procedures" report to improve rescue outcomes. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr TIM OWEN** (Newcastle) [4.23 p.m.]: I support the State Emergency and Rescue Management Amendment (Co-ordination and Notification of Rescues) Bill 2013, which implements the recommendations of the "Inshore Water Rescue—A review of procedures" report prepared by Mr Phil Koperberg. The reason for this review was the unfortunate drowning of a rock fisherman at Little Bay in November last year. The rescue arrangements then in place lacked a clear description and understanding of the responsibilities regarding the coordination of services such as police, volunteers and ambulance. Therefore, Mr Koperberg was commissioned by the Minister for Health and the Minister for Police and Emergency Services to oversee implementation of new procedures and response protocols and identify opportunities that would strengthen the response procedures between different emergency services organisations when a person in the water requires rescuing.

Based on the multi-agency consultation between the NSW Police Force, the Ambulance Service of NSW, Surf Life Saving Australia, Marine Rescue NSW, and a series of stakeholders meetings, the review identified a number of opportunities for the establishment of more robust protocols for inshore water rescues. Mr Koperberg made 18 recommendations, two of which recommended amendments to the State Emergency and Rescue Management Act 1989. The bill provides that the NSW Police Force will be responsible for the coordination of all rescue operations, and rightly so. The second requirement is that all emergency services organisations immediately notify the Police Force of rescue incidents. The balance of the recommendations are largely procedural.

I note that the recommendations also included that the definition of "marine rescue" in the New South Wales State Rescue Policy be amended to include "the rescue of persons in water." Furthermore, it was recommended that the Ambulance Service of NSW amend its computer-aided dispatch system to include a category of "person in water" rescue; and that the marine standing operating procedures for accredited search and rescue coordination centres, marine rescue units and marine radio bases be amended to include the rescue of a person in the water, regardless of whether they originated from a vessel or on land.

As noted, in order to ensure efficient rescue management through policy and procedures, it is essential that the Act provides clear guidance on which agency has control of the coordination of rescue operations. With my background, I can say from experience that it is extremely important to know who is running an operation and has responsibility and accountability for the outcome. Instead of limiting responsibility for coordinating a rescue operation to the senior officer at the scene, this bill also will ensure that the NSW Police Force generally has responsibility for coordinating all rescue operations, including the responsibility for determining the priority of actions to be taken.

Rock fishing is a popular recreational activity in the Newcastle electorate and thus it is important to be aware of its dangers when seas are rough. Perhaps some members here today will recall a group of five Chinese who were swept off rocks in 2009 at Catherine Hill Bay, south of Newcastle. It was the worst fishing tragedy to occur in New South Wales for 20 years—no-one was wearing a life jacket and one body was never recovered. Recent research by Surf Life Saving Australia shows that Asian anglers represent 84 per cent of all rock fishing related drowning deaths. Recognising this trend, Surf Life Saving Australia has begun working with fishing groups to deliver a multilingual education campaign in the ethnic media, and I commend them for that. The New South Wales Government's Safe Waters website provides information in English, Chinese, Korean and Vietnamese; we need to be cognisant of precautionary and safety measures that we can take into consideration.

Educating people about the possible dangers of rock fishing is vital, as is educating people about who to contact in case of an emergency. In the event that a person is swept off rocks, the police are able to contact the people necessary and available to rescue that person or persons. The bill also provides that all emergency services must notify police immediately after becoming aware of an incident requiring the rescue of a person. I strongly believe that police are well placed to coordinate such rescues and to lead these rescue operations. I am pleased that the Government has accepted all 18 recommendations, and I take this opportunity to commend both the Minister for Health and the Minister for Police and Emergency Services for their efforts and collaboration in improving safety for the community and rescue personnel. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr BRUCE NOTLEY-SMITH** (Coogee) [4.28 p.m.]: I support the State Emergency and Rescue Management Amendment (Co-ordination and Notification of Rescues) Bill 2013. This amendment will shore up any procedural uncertainties about the role of the NSW Police Force in incidents that warrant the rescue of a

person by enacting an official requirement that the relevant State emergency organisations notify New South Wales police of rescue operations. The bill will ensure that there is no confusion as to who is responsible for determining the course of action taken by a State emergency organisation. The NSW Police Force will be responsible for coordinating any rescue operations and determining the appropriate response, including actions taken by Fire and Rescue NSW, rural fire brigades and the Ambulance Service of NSW.

These procedural changes are the result of a review undertaken by Mr Philip Koperberg and his report "Inshore Water Rescue—A review of procedures", largely in response to the death of a fisherman in November 2012 at Little Bay, not far from my electorate of Coogee. Rescue operations will invariably require action to be taken by multiple emergency organisations, and the amendment will ensure that the most efficient and effective response is mobilised. Currently, the State Emergency and Rescue Management Act does not adequately outline the centralised role of the police rescue coordinator in operations, simply referring to police coordination at the tactical level. Therefore, the bill reiterates the important distinction between "control" and "coordination" of rescue operations. The change in the heading of part 3, division 3 to "coordination" from "Police control" seeks to emphasise that police have the wider responsibility to coordinate the operation and allocate tasks amongst rescue units, whilst control of units remains with the agency or organisation.

Section 50 is amended to specify that "the NSW Police Force is responsible for coordinating rescue operations and for determining priorities of action to be taken in rescue operations". Section 50 is also amended to change the wording of "some other person or" to "another". Proposed new section 51 outlines the new responsibility of other emergency services organisations to notify the NSW Police Force "immediately after the organisation becomes aware of an incident that requires or is likely to require the rescue of any person". New section 51 makes clear that this requirement does not apply if the organisation is "aware that the incident has already been notified" to New South Wales police. I note that Mr Koperberg's report included 18 recommendations, all of which the Government has accepted. The two changes requiring legislative action are included in this amending bill.

I understand that the remaining recommendations are being implemented through amending certain protocols within our State emergency organisations. For example, the State Rescue Board will direct all agencies to notify the NSW Police Force rescue coordinator as soon as a call is received requiring a rescue response. Also to be implemented is a requirement for emergency services organisations to amend their internal protocols to reflect the changes outlined in this amendment that the NSW Police Force be recognised as the coordinator of rescue operations. I believe we have the best possible emergency services in the world in New South Wales, and the Government is committed to ensuring that those services continue to operate in the most effective way, producing the most successful outcomes for rescue operations. We are also committed to making the relevant changes, where required, to improve these services and adapt procedures to the latest expert advice, as in this amending bill. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr MICHAEL DALEY** (Maroubra) [4.33 p.m.]: I am glad that the State Emergency and Rescue Management Amendment (Co-ordination and Notification of Rescues) Bill 2013 has come to the House. It will go a long way to preventing tragedies such as the two that occurred in my electorate, and possibly more elsewhere in the State. Those tragedies should not have occurred. They would not have occurred if some people in the bureaucracy of the Ambulance Service of NSW—and perhaps some people in the Government—had acted in a more responsible fashion. I thank and commend the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Mike Gallacher, for acting swiftly to rectify this matter. I have spoken to him about this. He acted swiftly; the Minister for Health did not. I also thank the Hon. Phil Koperberg for his efforts in bringing forward this bill and changing the law. On 7 March 2012 I put a question on notice to the Minister for Health. I asked:

In relation to the drowning of a man at Maroubra Beach after being swept off rocks while fishing on the afternoon of 28 January 2012 at around 4-5 pm :

1. What time was the NSW Ambulance Service notified of the incident?
2. How was the NSW Ambulance Service notified (i.e. by 000 call or in another manner)?
3. Did any person within the NSW Ambulance service make a call to the 1300SURF telephone number in relation to this incident?
  1. If yes, what time was 1300SURF called?
  2. If not, why not?



The Minister replied curiously, and erroneously:

I am advised:

(1) to (3) The Ambulance Service of NSW was first notified of the incident at 4:26 pm from a member of the public via a Triple Zero call, and the appropriate ambulance resources were arranged. It is the role of NSW Police to coordinate any emergency rescue response for incidents involving a person in the water. NSW Police notified the Ambulance Service that they were in attendance at this incident shortly after the Triple Zero call was received.

That answer was factually incorrect. Whether the NSW Police Force is able to coordinate a response for people who are to be rescued—particularly in inshore rescues; people in the surf—depends on the method of dispatch. When someone rings 000 and asks for a particular service they are dispatched to that service. The incident that brought about this bill occurred in Little Bay on Sunday 11 November. On that occasion a person rang and said that someone was drowning. Because they did not ask for a service they were dispatched to the Ambulance Service.

When I was the Minister for Police I made efforts to get this protocol changed, and I did it within the NSW Police Force. If the Police Force is the first service called about a person who is drowning or needs rescuing from the water, its first line of response in the standard operating procedures—the VKG or radio room—is to notify 13SURF. So the police phone that number and the call goes to Surf Life Saving New South Wales, which is then able to dispatch the considerable coastline rescue and resuscitation resources that it has at its disposal. It is one of the best—if not the best—volunteer rescue organisations on the planet.

In my electorate of Maroubra we have on hand to respond to incidents of drowning Randwick City Council lifeguards along the coastline of the local government area and volunteers from Maroubra and South Maroubra, Clovelly and Coogee surf clubs, and all the resources at their disposal—such as jet skis, inflatable rescue boats and the like. We also have the Westpac rescue helicopter situated at Cape Banks. It can be in the air within six minutes, whereas I am told that it takes the CHC helicopter at Mascot 13 minutes to get into the air, at a minimum. We also have an offshore rescue boat at Malabar. It is a twin-hulled Shark Cat rescue service, which is equipped for rescuing, people, fishermen and boaties far out to sea. The police, as a matter of course, notify 13SURF so that all of those considerable resources can be dispatched. The Ambulance Service—until the review by Phil Koperberg that led to the introduction of this bill, which will become law—did not notify 13SURF. Frankly, it refused to do so.

I know that because I heard deputy commissioners of police asking the service to do this at State Rescue Board meetings. I also know it because I have documents that were given to me which show that on countless occasions Surf Life Saving NSW asked the Ambulance Service to change its protocols and standard operating procedures to report as a matter of course to the police, knowing that the police readily, and without having regard for a turf war, would task Surf Life Saving NSW to act. If it were not for Minister Gallacher listening to people like me and to people in Surf Life Saving NSW, and dragging the organisation and recalcitrants kicking and screaming to the table, the protocol still would not have been changed. It was not changed on Sunday 11 November 2012, when a fisherman was washed off the rocks at Little Bay. As I said in this place in my statement to the House on 13 November:

He died; and he should not have died.

All of the rescue services that I have just mentioned were on task on the morning of 11 November 2012. Most tragically, the offshore rescue boat in Malabar was on the water in a training exercise, with a doctor and fully equipped crew on board, oxyvivers and the like, 60 seconds away from this man who died; but they did not know he was in the water because the Ambulance Service kept the call to themselves and did not notify the police. If they had, this man would have been out of the water and home with his family now, instead of being at Rookwood Cemetery. He got washed off the rocks with two of his friends; his two friends were washed back onto the rocks, and he remained in the water for 20 minutes. He struggled to stay alive for 15 minutes, and then succumbed. Some 20 minutes after he was washed into the water, a wave delivered him back onto rocks, where a golfer and some other fishermen and a swimmer attempted resuscitation.

It was 35 minutes after the 000 call that the CHC helicopter arrived; and that is just not acceptable. The Ambulance Service had been told numerous times by NSW Police and by Surf Life Saving NSW that the protocols needed to be changed, but ignored those calls. I am filthy about this; the man died when he should not have. But at least we have managed to get the protocol changed, because Minister Gallacher listened. The operative provision in this bill is new section 51, which provides in subsection (1):

An emergency services organisation other than the NSW Police Force must, immediately after the organisation becomes aware of an incident that requires or is likely to require the rescue of any person, notify a member of the NSW Police Force of all relevant information concerning the incident.

That is what Surf Life Saving, NSW Police and I have been seeking for an extraordinarily long time. It has taken this bill to bring that request to fruition. I request the Treasurer and Premier to reinstate full funding to the Westpac Rescue Helicopter Service. That service was promised \$1.5 million; it had \$400,000 cut from its budget. If you are in the water and drowning, you want to know that the best people in the world are coordinating your rescue. In New South Wales we have them. I commend Minister Gallacher for bringing this bill to the Parliament. The Opposition supports it wholeheartedly. Once again I commend the bipartisan part that Surf Life Saving NSW continues to play to this day. They are not concerned with politics; they are concerned with rescuing people.

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN** (Cronulla) [4.43 p.m.]: On 11 November 2012 a man was swept off rocks at Little Bay while rock fishing with friends. The man was brought back onshore, but attempts to revive him were unsuccessful. That incident highlighted a number of procedural shortcomings with rescue operations in New South Wales, despite established protocols. Until the late 1980s there was not a single agency that had responsibility in New South Wales for coordinating rescue, and there were no standards in place for practices or equipment. In 1988 the New South Wales Government commissioned a report on rescue services for New South Wales. As a result of that report, the Government introduced the State Emergency and Rescue Management Act 1989. That Act established clear responsibilities for rescue management and established the NSW State Rescue Board. The NSW Police Force was made responsible for coordinating and determining priorities at a rescue, and the State Rescue Board was made responsible for recommending, to the then Minister for Emergency Services, which rescue units should be accredited to perform this function. Those arrangements have remained largely unchanged and, generally speaking, have served the community pretty well.

As a result of the incident that I identified at the start of my speech, the Minister for Police and Emergency Services and the Minister for Health jointly commissioned Mr Phil Koperberg to prepare a report on the oversight and implementation of new emergency response protocols for inshore water rescues. That involved looking at strengthening response procedures between different emergency service organisations where inshore rescue of people in distress was involved. In preparing his report, Mr Koperberg commissioned a series of stakeholder meetings and sought the views of stakeholders on the adequacy of existing response arrangements, areas in need of improvement, and how these arrangements may be achieved. The stakeholders who were consulted during the preparation of the report included the chair of the State Rescue Board, the NSW Police Force, the Ambulance Service of NSW, Surf Life Saving NSW, the Australian Professional Ocean Lifeguard Association, Marine Rescue NSW and the Westpac Life Saver Rescue Helicopter Service, Southern Region.

The report of Mr Koperberg, entitled "Inshore Water Rescue—A review of procedures", identified a number of shortcomings in existing arrangements for inshore water rescue protocols and made recommendations to address those shortcomings in order to establish a more robust protocol for inshore water rescues. The recommendations cover legislation, policies and procedures, agency standard operating procedures, supporting arrangements, emergency dispatch technologies, and radio communications compatibility. The bill before the House today seeks to implement the first two of the 18 recommendations, namely, the two recommendations that Mr Koperberg made about legislative change. At the moment, part 3, division 3 of the State Emergency and Rescue Management Act, which is entitled "Police control of rescue operations", contains section 50, which provides that the senior police officer present at the scene of a rescue operation is responsible for coordinating and determining priorities of action of the agencies engaged in the operation. However, that Act is silent on situations where police are not already present.

There is another problem: Pursuant to section 51, the agency that manages or controls an accredited rescue unit must notify police of incidents which require the rescue of a person. But there is no general requirement in the Act for emergency service organisations to notify police of rescue incidents; however, the State Rescue Policy does contain that requirement. The first of those two recommendations of Mr Koperberg was:

That the State Emergency and Rescue Management Act 1979 be amended to clearly provide that the NSW Police Force has primary responsibility for the coordination of rescue operations in NSW.

The second was:

That the State Emergency and Rescue Management Act 1989 be amended to require all emergency service organisations to notify the NSW Police Force of rescue incidents.

The bill proposes amendment of section 50 to explicitly state that the NSW Police Force is responsible for coordinating rescue operations and for determining the priorities of actions to be taken in rescue operations, and also amendment of the Act by omitting section 51 and inserting a new section 51, the primary provision of which is:

An emergency services organisation other than the NSW Police Force must, immediately after the organisation becomes aware of an incident that requires or is likely to require the rescue of any person, notify a member of the NSW Police Force of all relevant information concerning the incident.

In other words, it is not limited to emergency services organisations that are managing the rescue. So we have Mr Koperberg's expert advice and his review of legislation. We have had the tragic circumstance of the death at Little Bay, to which a number of members have referred. The Government is pleased to proceed with these legislative amendments to implement two of Mr Koperberg's eighteen recommendations. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr NICK LALICH** (Cabramatta) [4.49 p.m.]: I make a brief contribution to the State Emergency and Rescue Management Amendment (Co-ordination and Notification of Rescues) Bill 2013. The object of the bill is to amend the State Emergency and Rescue Management Act 1989 to ensure that the NSW Police Force is responsible for coordinating rescue operations and is notified by emergency services organisations of any incident requiring the rescue of a person. Under section 50 of the Act, the senior officer present at the site of a rescue operation is responsible for coordinating and prioritising the actions of agencies involved in the rescue operation. The proposed amendments ensure that the NSW Police Force will have responsibility for the coordination of all rescue operations in the State, including responsibility for determining the priorities of action to be taken, rather than limiting the responsibility of the NSW Police Force to coordinating a rescue operation. This amendment does not affect the current exception where the control of a particular rescue operation is vested by law in another agency.

The amendments stem from the recommendations detailed within Mr Philip Koperberg's report, "Inshore Water Rescue—A review of procedures". Eighteen recommendations are contained in that report and two of those are now before the House. The report recommends that the definition of "marine rescue" in the New South Wales State Rescue Policy be changed to include the rescue of persons in water and that the Ambulance Service of NSW amend its computer-aided dispatch system to include a category of "person in water" rescue; and that the marine standard operating procedures for accredited search and rescue coordination centres, marine rescue units and marine radio bases be amended to include the rescue of a person in the water, regardless of whether they originated from a vessel or on land.

The proposed amendments provide that all emergency services organisations, such as the NSW Rural Fire Service and the Ambulance Service of NSW, must inform a member of the NSW Police Force immediately after becoming aware of an incident requiring the rescue of a person. These amendments will help to ensure that coordination priority will be the main focus in rescue operations in order to prevent tragic incidents, such as what happened in November 2012 when a fisherman was swept off rocks at Little Bay and died because the Ambulance Service of NSW did not notify local lifesavers or police. Any legislation to help save lives, prevent tragedies and better serve our communities should be commended and supported. The proposed amendments in the bill are responsible changes. They aim to confer additional powers on the NSW Police Force and grant them the ability to better coordinate and prioritise search and rescue operations. Hopefully, this will help save lives in the future. I commend the bill to the House.

**Dr GEOFF LEE** (Parramatta) [4.53 p.m.]: I support the State Emergency and Rescue Management Amendment (Co-ordination and Notification) Bill 2013. The object of the bill is to amend the State Emergency and Rescue Management Act 1989 to ensure that the NSW Police Force is responsible for coordinating rescue operations and is notified by emergency services organisations of any incident requiring the rescue of a person. First, I will briefly mention the wonderful State Emergency Service at Parramatta. The service is located adjacent to Parramatta jail and has been there for a number of years. The State Emergency Service volunteers do a wonderful job of looking after the good people of Parramatta and surrounding areas. Every time I see the volunteers I commend them for their vigilance and dedication to the job and for putting themselves at risk to save lives and property.

Recently I had great pleasure in attending an event in recognition of the dedication and hard work done by our police, ambulance officers, State Emergency Service volunteers, firemen and—this year—nurses. I commend Parramatta council for organising this event. The Parramatta State Emergency Service crew won an award recently for their training and skills—very similar to an ironman competition. I will not

name the guys individually because that would embarrass them. They work as a team and perform services for the benefit of the whole community. Every time I see them in Parramatta, which is quite frequently, I chat to them. In particular, I bring to the attention of the House the fantastic work done by Katie, who works for the State Emergency Service at Parramatta. She puts in a lot of extra time and effort to look after the crew there.

The State Emergency Service at Parramatta occupies a space that hopefully one day will become part of the Parramatta Heritage Precinct Master Plan. We look forward to restoring assets along the Parramatta River, including the jail, the old orphanage, the Female Factory and the Cumberland Hospital. I note that the Minister for Fair Trading is also a big supporter of the refurbishment and adaptive reuse of all those wonderful assets and opening them up to the public.

**Mr Anthony Roberts:** I am a big supporter of the local member too.

**Dr GEOFF LEE:** I thank the Minister for his kind words. If there is anything I can do for the Minister I pledge support for him.

**The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser):** Order! I draw the member for Parramatta back to the leave of the bill.

**Dr GEOFF LEE:** My apologies, Mr Assistant-Speaker. It is very difficult when I have a great Minister beside me, especially one who really supports Parramatta. His department has moved to the new Eclipse Tower and The Barrington building in Parramatta. It shows what a committed Minister he is, not only to Fair Trading but to Parramatta and Western Sydney.

**Mr Charles Casuscelli:** He is a friend of Parramatta.

**Dr GEOFF LEE:** That is exactly right; he is a friend of Parramatta. I assure the Minister that Parramatta is always open to him. Returning to the bill, I commend the State Emergency Service crew at Parramatta for their hard work, dedication and support. It is always a pleasure to deal with them and I look forward to visiting them shortly. Hopefully, as part of the Parramatta Heritage Precinct Master Plan we can include facilities for those guys and look after them in more appropriate accommodation.

**Mr CHRIS SPENCE** (The Entrance) [4.57 p.m.]: I support the State Emergency and Rescue Management Amendment (Co-ordination and Notification of Rescues) Bill 2013. I note the great praise of the member for Parramatta for the Minister for Fair Trading. I clearly do not praise the Minister enough because a department has not been relocated to my electorate. The review by Philip Koperberg, "Inshore Water Rescue—A review of procedures", was commissioned by the Minister for Health and the Minister for Police and Emergency Services after a rock fisherman lost his life at Little Bay in November 2012. The Ministers should be commended for their prompt action in appointing Mr Koperberg. An inquest into the fisherman's death is currently being conducted by the Coroner.

During the review Mr Koperberg held meetings with rescue organisations, including the NSW Police Force, Ambulance Service of NSW, Surf Life Saving NSW, Australian Professional Ocean Lifeguard Association and Westpac Life Saver Rescue Helicopter Service and the chair of the State Rescue Board to gain their perspectives on the efficiency of the current response protocol and how improvements could be implemented. The review contained 18 recommendations, two of which were amendments to the State Emergency and Rescue Management Act 1989. The first amendment was to give the NSW Police Force the responsibility of coordinating all rescue operations in New South Wales. This is an integral process to ensure that every rescue operation that takes place in New South Wales is coordinated as quickly as possible and with the best possible plan of action that involves all necessary rescue agencies.

The second amendment was that all emergency service organisations notify the NSW Police Force in every rescue incident. With the NSW Police Force at the helm of coordinating all rescue operations, we can ensure that every rescue operation utilises the correct rescue organisations, and in turn will ensure that the fastest possible response is provided. Having the most efficient response time to every rescue is crucial, as minutes and even seconds can be the difference between a rescue operation being completed successfully and a life being lost. Surf lifesaving rescues, particularly ocean rescues, are conducted successfully in my area on the Central Coast. Surf lifesavers conducted 7,074 rescues in New South Wales last season, and the Australian Lifeguard Service performed 1,040 rescues across Australia. I commend the work that the volunteers of the five

surf clubs in my electorate do throughout the summer months in giving their time on weekends to make our beaches safe. Indeed, surf lifesavers across New South Wales give up their time on weekends to protect our beaches, particularly for tourists and visitors to our beaches.

Beaches are wonderful but they have the potential to be dangerous; our surf lifesavers make sure that they are as safe as possible. The number of rescues by these two organisations alone illustrates the importance of having a clear and efficient rescue protocol to ensure that every rescue is carried out efficiently and safely. The amendments suggested in the review will ensure that there is clear legislative direction outlining who has responsibility in all rescue operations performed in New South Wales. The other recommendations made in Mr Koperberg's review are aimed at providing an efficient rescue operations system. The Government has accepted all 18 recommendations and the rescue board has already begun to implement these recommendations in the State Rescue Policy. Mr Koperberg is to be commended for his detailed and valuable review. Likewise, I commend the Minister for Police and Emergency Services for adopting those recommendations and creating the necessary legislative amendments through this amendment bill. I am supportive of the outcomes it will produce. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE** (Bathurst—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.02 p.m.]: I am pleased to speak to the State Emergency and Rescue Management Amendment (Co-ordination and Notification of Rescues) Bill 2013. It is great to have the Parliamentary Secretary for Police and Emergency Services in the Chamber; he is doing an admirable job. Only about a month ago he was making award presentations on behalf of the Minister, and I know he is travelling the State far and wide to recognise the hard work of our emergency services personnel. It is admirable that the Parliamentary Secretary is committed to that role but he can also update us on the wonderful work being done by the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. The Minister for Police and Emergency Services has been responsible for ensuring that our community in the Bathurst electorate received a 24-hour fire station. That was promised before the 2011 election, and it has now been delivered. That has seen an additional 12 firefighters commence work within that station in Bathurst. On top of that, an extra fire engine has been provided as part of the new 24-hour fire station.

The Minister for Police and Emergency Services recently visited the Bathurst electorate. He announced there would be an injection of about \$800,000 for a new fire station at Wallerawang—a new fire station had been promised time and again under the previous Government. A genuine commitment has been put on the table to ensure that our emergency service personnel are given the equipment and resources they need to deal with all dangers that confront them. These men and women face some difficult times. The Minister's visit was low key. He met with a number of personnel from Wallerawang fire station because there had been a tragic incident in my electorate. The captain of the Wallerawang fire bridge attended a road accident and, unfortunately, his son was involved in the accident and passed away. We send our condolences not only to the fire captain but also to all the members of the Wallerawang fire station because they are like family to one another. Those men and women do an admirable job on behalf of their communities. We need to ensure that we continue to support them. I was grateful that the Minister paid them a visit to let them and their families know that we were thinking about them during this difficult time.

Members are well aware of the outstanding work done by the new emergency services workers, both salaried and volunteer. New South Wales has an enviable record of responding to disasters and emergencies, from storms and flood to domestic and industrial fires and the perennial scourge of bushfires. As we have seen in many countries around the world, the impact of such natural events and emergencies can be vastly magnified by a slow, inappropriate or uncoordinated response. In New South Wales we are fortunate to have not only well-resourced, trained and experienced emergency services to respond directly but also the great benefit of a series of well-developed, practised and tested emergency management plans and arrangements to guide our agencies in ensuring a coordinated, cohesive emergency response.

The bill will implement a number of recommendations from Phil Koperberg's report, "Inshore Water Rescue—A review of procedures". The catalyst for the review was the tragic drowning of a rock fisherman at Little Bay in 2012. Eighteen recommendations were made, including two legislative amendments contained in the bill, which are mainly procedural. The remaining recommendations included a requirement for all emergency services to amend existing procedures and protocols to incorporate common guiding principles, including that the NSW Police Force be recognised as the tasking authority for rescue coordination and that multi-agency notification protocols be exercised on a regular basis. Consultation is critical to ensuring that we get things right, and there have been extensive stakeholder meetings in relation to various views and responses being sought in relation to this matter.

The agencies consulted included the NSW Police Force, the Ambulance Service of NSW, Surf Life Saving NSW, the Australian Professional Ocean Life Guard Association, Marine Rescue NSW, and the Westpac Life Save Rescue Helicopter Service, southern region. The Commissioner of the New South Wales Rural Fire Service was also consulted in his capacity as chair of the State Rescue Board. The committee brings a lot of valuable experience and expertise to the table, and its input was valuable and important in coming to this final decision. The State Emergency Service in my electorate has also been a beneficiary from a number of funding announcements recently. We just received four community first responder vehicles, which cost about \$100,000 each. One is located at the northern end of my electorate, at Sofala, and the other at the southern end of my electorate, Burraga.

This allows the State Emergency Service to respond to call-outs at night to attend road accidents; the personnel are able to respond quickly. I congratulate the regional controlling officer, Craig Ronan, on his hard work and dedication to the State Emergency Service. I congratulate also the volunteers at Burraga and Sofala on providing this invaluable service. To all our emergency service personnel, I thank them for their hard work. They always work hard for their communities, protecting property and lives. As I said, with many incidents they are the first to respond. I am pleased to see that they are being supported by the Minister and the Parliamentary Secretary. This bill reinforces the work that the New South Wales Government is doing to support them.

**Mr DARREN WEBBER** (Wyang) [5.10 p.m.]: I support the State Emergency and Rescue Management Amendment (Co-ordination and Notification of Rescues) Bill 2013. At the outset I congratulate and thank Minister Michael Gallacher, a former police officer and a current active surf lifesaver. This bill demonstrates how important it is to have people with background and active knowledge to achieve real outcomes rather than the endless bureaucracy we sometimes see in this place. I note that the member for Tweed who is in the Chamber is also no stranger to surf lifesaving. I am reliably informed that he was a nipper at Wanda Surf Life Saving Club. Members know my background in surf lifesaving. I commend the member for Tweed for his service; it is shame he did not continue it in his adult life.

This bill proposes to amend the State Emergency and Rescue Management Act 1989. It implements two of the recommendations of the Koperberg review into inshore water rescue procedures which relate to amendments to the State Emergency and Rescue Management Act. The review was conducted in response to the death of a rock fisherman at Little Bay in November last year. The Coroner is holding an inquest into this tragic death. The recommendations of the review suggest the revision of part 3 of the State Emergency and Rescue Management Act to provide a clear legislative foundation for the management of rescue operations in this State. There are two aspects to the amendments. The first is to make it clear that the NSW Police Force is responsible for the overall coordination of rescue operations. The second is to ensure that emergency service organisations notify the NSW Police Force of rescue incidents.

The recommendations are sensible and are aimed at providing a clear legislative framework for the efficient and effective management of rescue operations. It is quite common to rescue people swimming inside or outside the flags when their family members are not present. Often, surf lifesavers are called on by parents to look for a missing child at the beach. It is a grey area whether the police should be notified in such scenarios. As the minutes tick by trying to locate a missing person or to revive a deceased person, the importance of the situation becomes clear. The Ambulance Service is called and, in many cases, police are also called. These clear guidelines will be of great benefit to paid personnel and, more importantly, volunteer personnel. It will mean they will not have to second-guess and fewer problems will occur in the future.

This legislative framework is supported by the State Rescue Policy and current procedures and will provide a solid reference point for their key components. The State Rescue Policy sets out rescue arrangements in New South Wales, including land rescue and marine rescue, and is administered by the State Rescue Board. As the member for Wyong, I am very proud of the fact that my electorate covers some of the most beautiful beaches and coastline in Australia. This beautiful coastline attracts thousands of tourists, particularly over the summer months, as people travel from all over the country to enjoy our beaches. As picturesque as our beaches and coastline are, they present a very real and often ignored danger. Unfortunately, this inevitably results in the need for numerous rescues to be undertaken every year by our many dedicated professional and volunteer rescue organisations.

As an active volunteer with Surf Life Saving Central Coast for many years, I understand the importance of these amendments to the State Emergency and Rescue Management Act 1989. In the inshore areas of Tuggerah Lakes and Brisbane Water on the Central Coast their importance rings true. There are many volunteer and professional rescue organisations on the Central Coast, and the O'Farrell Government provides strong

support to them. I am pleased to have been able to secure numerous State Government grants to assist with their vital lifesaving work. The grants include: \$11,000 to Volunteer Marine Rescue to purchase two urgently needed 60 horsepower outboard motors for its marine rescue vessel; \$120,000 to assist with the construction of emergency vehicle access to Soldiers Beach; and, recently, \$16,000 to construct surf observation towers at Lakes and Soldiers beaches.

Another important initiative that is very relevant to this bill is Project Blueprint, which was launched on the Central Coast last year. The primary objective of Project Blueprint is to develop a strategy to address coastal drowning issues throughout New South Wales in the short, medium and long term. Importantly, Project Blueprint will provide a blueprint for New South Wales from which to develop an effective strategy to prevent drowning in line with the national and State objectives of reducing drowning deaths by 50 per cent by 2020. Project Blueprint is geared towards providing guidance, through education and awareness to reduce and ultimately prevent deaths occurring on our beaches. It is hoped that it will also reduce the number of rescue operations needed each year.

The State Rescue Policy and operational procedures already provide that the NSW Police Force is responsible for the coordination of rescue in New South Wales. The amendments to the Act will provide a legislative basis for these policies and procedures, which can only strengthen them. These amendments also clarify that a marine rescue includes the rescue of a person who has fallen in the water from either a vessel or from land. Many emergency service organisations were consulted and support the bill including: the NSW Police Force, the Ambulance Service of NSW, Fire and Rescue NSW, the State Emergency Service, the Volunteer Rescue Association and Marine Rescue NSW. The Koperberg review made 16 other recommendations. These recommendations suggest enhancements to policies, procedures, training and technology. The O'Farrell Government has moved quickly and is in the process of implementing these recommendations. I thank all paid and voluntary emergency service personnel in this State, and I thank their families for allowing their husband, wife, mother, father, brother or sister give up their time to keep their fellow New South Welshmen safe. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr BRYAN DOYLE** (Campbelltown) [5.16 p.m.]: I have great pleasure in speaking to the State Emergency and Rescue Management Amendment (Co-ordination and Notification of Rescues) Bill 2013, particularly in the presence of the Parliamentary Secretary for Police and Emergency Services. He is a very fine member from the Tweed. The object of this bill is to amend the State Emergency and Rescue Management Act to ensure that the NSW Police Force is responsible for coordinating rescue operations and, in particular, is notified by emergency services organisations of any incident requiring the rescue of a person.

It is important to note that, at present, under section 50 of the Act, the senior police officer present at the scene of a rescue operation is responsible for coordinating and determining the priorities of action of the agencies engaged in the rescue operation. This is well and good when the police officer is actually present at the scene. This amendment creates a responsibility on the part of the NSW Police Force for the coordination of all rescue operations in the State, including responsibility for determining the priorities of action to be taken. I have had the pleasure of being a member of the Police Force for 27 years and a senior police officer involved in the emergency management of this State. This State is very well served by the emergency management processes that are in place to ensure that there is an appropriate response.

In that regard, it is important for people to understand the difference between "control" and "coordination" in relation to emergency management. "Control" means the overall direction of the activities of agencies or individuals, and that relates to the control that senior officers have within their own departments. That must be understood in relation to "coordination", which means the bringing together of agencies and individuals to ensure effective emergency and rescue management. It does not include the control of agencies or individuals in that matter, so that one may have coordination of an event but not the direct control of persons in the agency. Importantly, our system of emergency management takes a comprehensive approach. It considers key principles of emergency management such as prevention, preparation, response and recovery. Prevention is to eliminate or reduce the level of risk or severity of emergencies as they arise; preparation is to enhance the capacity of agencies and communities to cope with the consequences of emergencies; response is to ensure that the immediate consequences of emergencies to communities are minimised; and recovery involves measures that support individuals and communities affected by emergencies.

The bill arises from a review that was conducted into the State Emergency and Rescue Management Act by Mr Philip Koperberg in his report entitled, "Inshore Water Rescue—A review of procedures". The review was the result of the tragic death of a rock fisherman at Little Bay in November 2012. The Koperberg

review identified a number of opportunities for the establishment of more robust protocols for inshore water rescues. These included a requirement for the State Rescue Board to direct all agencies that the NSW Police Force rescue coordinator be notified immediately when a call necessitating a rescue, including an in-water rescue, is received; a requirement for all emergency services to amend existing procedures and protocols to incorporate common guiding principles, including that the NSW Police Force be recognised as the tasking authority for rescue coordination; and that multi-agency notification protocols be exercised on a regular basis.

The Police Duty Operations Inspector, which operates 24/7, has a rescue coordinator on duty at all times and the duties of the officers are to coordinate any rescue operations across the State of New South Wales. Importantly, this bill now requires that officer be contacted so that a police response can be put in place to coordinate rescues. I note that multi-agency notification protocols are to be exercised on a regular basis. The agencies practise their emergency techniques so that when they are called upon in an emergency the system has been tested and officers know and understand what is required. This is important to ensure an effective response to emergencies. People often fail to understand the robust and well-practised emergency management systems that operate when rescues and disasters occur here and overseas. We are fortunate in New South Wales that our emergency management system is based on a State plan, which is then broken up into regional and local plans. Indeed, every area will have a local emergency management plan and local government plays a key role in working with police and other emergency services.

People often think that emergencies happen rarely, but emergencies require responses from a number of agencies and require coordination. For instance, a tanker rolling over on the F3 which results in people being injured will require a response from the ambulance, fire brigade and police personnel. Traffic banks up and all these issues require a coordinated response. A marine rescue also requires a response from various emergency services agencies. A coordinated approach means that people seeking assistance will not have to work out who to call. The system will allocate the call to the correct agency, and require the agency to notify the police so that coordination is undertaken to ensure that, where possible, life and property can be saved. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL** (Northern Tablelands) [5.24 p.m.]: I speak in support of the State Emergency and Rescue Management Amendment (Co-ordination and Notification of Rescues) Bill 2013. I note the presence of the Parliamentary Secretary for Police and Emergency Services at the table.

**Mr Chris Patterson:** A very good member.

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL:** He is a very good member, and very good in his role.

**Mr Chris Patterson:** Exceptional.

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL:** Exceptional, yes. As the Parliamentary Secretary is present at the table it would be remiss of me not to mention the fact that recently he visited the Northern Tablelands with his Rural Crime Advisory Group. The group, which undertakes important work, engaged in excellent discussions at the University of New England about crime and the coordination of emergency agencies. It was wonderful to have the Parliamentary Secretary present to talk to police. This bill proposes amendments to the State Emergency and Rescue Management Act 1989. The bill implements two of the recommendations of the Koperberg review into inshore water rescue procedures relating to amendments to the State Emergency and Rescue Management Act. The report is available on the website of the Ministry for Police and Emergency Services; those interested should visit the website and avail themselves of the material. The review was conducted in response to the death of a rock fisherman at Little Bay in November last year.

The recommendations of the review suggested the revision of part 3 of the State Emergency and Rescue Management Act to provide a clear legislative foundation for the management of rescue operations throughout New South Wales. There are two aspects to the amendments. The first is to make it clear that the NSW Police Force is responsible for the overall coordination of rescue operations. The second is to ensure that emergency service organisations notify the NSW Police Force of rescue incidents. The State Rescue Policy and operational procedures already provide that the NSW Police Force is responsible for the coordination of rescue in New South Wales. The amendments to the Act will provide a legislative basis for these policies and procedures, which can only strengthen them.

I can advise that emergency service organisations were consulted and fully support the bill. This includes the NSW Police Force, the Ambulance Service of NSW, Fire and Rescue NSW, the State Emergency



Service, the Volunteer Rescue Association and Marine Rescue NSW. The Koperberg review also made 16 other recommendations. These recommendations suggest enhancements to policies, procedures, training and technology. I am pleased that the Government has moved quickly and is in the process of implementing these recommendations. The amendments suggested to the State Rescue Policy have already been made by the State Rescue Board. These amendments clarify that a marine rescue includes the rescue of a person who has fallen in the water either from a vessel or from land.

It would be remiss of me while addressing this bill not to acknowledge and praise the dedication and commitment of all our emergency services—sworn officers, volunteers, staff and other personnel who do such a magnificent job to serve the community, protecting property and life, keeping people safe and rescuing them from terrible situations. In the Northern Tablelands we are very fortunate to have a community-focused police force that engages in and practises genuine community policing. They are led by the inimitable Commander Bruce "Bluey" Lyons—the Parliamentary Secretary knows him very well.

**Mr Geoff Provost:** A fine officer.

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL:** He is a very fine officer, who has served this State and various communities with distinction for nearly 40 years. He is ably assisted by inspectors Roger Best and Rod Shoesmith and, before them, Matthew Lynch and Greg Stier. I cannot praise enough our local police. I have had the pleasure of travelling throughout the electorate with the commander and his relevant inspectors to attend a number of community safety precinct meetings. Their relationship with councils, communities and organisations across the electorate is well known and their reputation within the community is thoroughly deserved. Through the work of police, in partnership with the communities they serve, our communities are very safe. I thank the Minister for Police and Emergency Services for introducing this bill so swiftly and trust it serves to enhance the ability of our emergency services to save lives. I thank the Minister for his recent visit to Armidale and for the \$5,000 contribution to the Armidale Police Citizens Youth Club for its important breakfast program which helps vulnerable youth in the Armidale community. This is an important bill and I commend it to the House.

**Mr CHRIS PATTERSON** (Camden) [5.29 p.m.]: I support the State Emergency and Rescue Management Amendment (Co-ordination and Notification of Rescues) Bill 2013. Fishing of any kind is a much-loved sport in Australia. Rock fishing in particular is popular and can provide great catches if done correctly. It can be enjoyable, provide a shared interest among friends and family and allow fisher men and women to enjoy the great outdoors and Australia's wonderful coastlines. I must say that fishing bores me senseless, but that does not take away from those who enjoy fishing, and that is what this bill is about. I am glad that none of my four children has asked for a fishing rod from Santa, and I hope that situation continues.

Regardless of how enjoyable the sport is for those who participate, rock fishermen need to acknowledge that it can be a dangerous activity and one that should be enjoyed with caution, experience, and knowledge of the sea. It should be attempted with care and safety foremost in a fisherman's mind. As with any activity or recreation, there are risks involved. There are many risks involved in rock fishing and even the most experienced fishermen can be caught off guard and have their safety compromised. When the worst-case scenario happens and a rock fisherman, or other person, is thrown into the water, we should have the most efficient and effective process in place between emergency services to ensure that person is rescued as quickly and as safely as possible. That is what this bill aims to do.

Following the tragic death in November 2012 of a 39-year-old man at Little Bay after he was swept off rocks whilst fishing, the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, the Hon. Michael Gallacher, and the Minister for Health, Mrs Jillian Skinner, asked Mr Koperberg to conduct a review of procedures to improve communication between emergency service agencies regarding water rescues. The Minister for Police and Emergency Services has been a big supporter of the Camden electorate and I thank him for that. From memory, the Minister opened the new Narellan police station, site of Camden Local Area Command, in his first official role as Minister. Our local area command does a tremendous job, led by Superintendent Danny Doherty. They are very hardworking police.

**Mr Lee Evans:** Name them.

**Mr CHRIS PATTERSON:** I could—and there are over 100 of them. Yesterday we welcomed two new recruits from the Goulburn police academy. I thank the Minister for his support in committing to fund a Police Citizens Youth Club to be built in the Camden area. It is a much-needed youth facility for the electorate.

I look forward to that ongoing process. The Minister for Health needs no introduction to the people of Camden. She is an outstanding Minister and extremely supportive of our area. I could spend the next six minutes on the virtues of the Minister for Health.

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Gareth Ward):** Order! The member for Toongabbie will stop giving advice to the member for Camden.

**Mr CHRIS PATTERSON:** As I said, the police Minister and the Minister for Health asked Mr Koperberg to conduct a review and make recommendations. Mr Koperberg made 18 recommendations in his report, "Inshore Water Rescue—A review of procedures". The Government is endorsing all of the recommendations. I will commit a couple of the recommendations to the record. The first recommendation that Mr Koperberg made was that the State Emergency and Rescue Management Act 1989 be amended to clearly provide that the NSW Police Force has primary responsibility for the coordination of rescue operations in New South Wales.

The second recommendation states that the State Emergency and Rescue Management Act 1989 be amended to require all emergency service organisations to notify the NSW Police Force of any rescue incidents. The third recommendation states that the definition of "marine rescue" in the New South Wales State Rescue Policy be amended to include the "rescue of persons in water" regardless of whether the incident originated from a vessel or land. The person in the water does not care whether they fell off a rock, a boat or a wharf. Recommendation 4 states that the State Rescue Board directs all agencies that the NSW Police Force rescue coordinator must be notified immediately when a call necessitating a rescue, including an in-water rescue, is received.

That leads to recommendation 5, which states that consequential amendments must be made to the New South Wales Rescue Policy to ensure the rescue of persons in water, regardless of whether the incident originated from a vessel or land, is addressed in all the relevant parts of the policy. Every one of the 18 recommendations made by Mr Koperberg has the ability to save a life. Members in the Chamber may giggle, but every one of the recommendations is aimed at saving lives and that is why it is important to place it on the record. Another important recommendation is that the New South Wales State Rescue Policy notes the potential of Surf Life Saving NSW and the Australian Professional Ocean Lifeguard Association for in-water rescue. Recommendation 8 states that a review should be undertaken of the command and control arrangements within all ambulance communication centres to establish and enhance adherence to notifications and despatch protocols.

There are another 10 recommendations and I am sure my colleagues will relate these important recommendations to the House. These amendments have been approved by the State Rescue Board and the State Rescue Policy is currently being amended to implement the recommendations. As stated previously, two of those recommendations require amendments to the State Emergency and Rescue Management Act 1989 through this bill. The two amendments to the Act are that the NSW Police Force has primary responsibility for the coordination of rescue operations in New South Wales and that all emergency service organisations are required to notify the NSW Police Force of rescue incidents. The key outcome is to bring everybody into the loop to ensure communication between those agencies is improved so that anybody that can help to save a life in the water is notified of the incident.

I commend all the stakeholders and agencies that took part in offering their knowledge and opinions during the review process. I thank the NSW Police Force, the Ambulance Service of NSW, Marine Rescue NSW, the Commissioner of the NSW Rural Fire Service, the Westpac Life Saver Rescue Helicopter Service, southern region, the Australian Professional Ocean Lifeguard Association and NSW Surf Life Saving. I commend the Ambulance Service of NSW for committing \$500,000 to install the InterCAD Emergency Messaging System in the Ambulance Service of NSW computer aided dispatch system. The InterCAD Emergency Messaging System ensures that important information is passed to the key agencies during emergency situations. These amendments are important. They will provide our emergency services with greater clarity and direction during emergency situations where water is involved. I commend the police Minister and the Minister for Health, and Mr Koperberg for his review.

**Mr JAMIE PARKER** (Balmain) [5.40 p.m.]: In speaking to the State Emergency and Rescue Management Amendment (Co-ordination and Notification of Rescues) Bill 2013, I start by thanking the member for Camden. The member for Camden, who is the very good chair of the committee of which I am a member, outlined in significant detail—

*[Interruption]*

When somebody does a good job, you should give them credit. The member for Camden outlined the recommendations in significant detail. That saves me going through the many issues involved. This is a relatively practical administrative step, which I support. It is a small change and I am quite surprised that we are spending so much time debating the legislation when we have many more pressing issues to consider—so many privatisations and staff sackings that this Government has to complete. One would expect to see the Government introducing more of that type of legislation. It is very important, however, that we rest and be present in examining the bill, because there was a significant incident in November 2012 when a rock fisherman was swept away. Sadly, it took about 30 minutes for the rescue helicopter and ambulance service to arrive. There was a Westpac Life Saver Rescue Helicopter Service nearby that could have landed on the beach in five minutes. That was obviously a ridiculous situation. As we can imagine, it was heartbreaking for those involved to know that a service was so near but unavailable because of technical or legislative impediments.

I acknowledge the fact that an inquiry was undertaken and I commend the efforts of Mr Phil Koperberg, who is well known to member of this House, in conducting the review. He examined the procedures for inshore rescues. The bill is important; it can help save lives. It acknowledges the work of Surf Life Saving NSW, which has been pushing for ambulance crews to notify police as soon as they are advised of incidents to try to coordinate a response. Minister Gallacher and Minister Skinner referred the management of such incidents to Phil Koperberg, and he delivered the "Inshore Water Rescue—A review of procedures" report. The 18 recommendations, as outlined by the member for Camden, are all worthy of support and I acknowledge that the Government supports them.

I conclude by talking about the Westpac Life Saver Rescue Helicopter Service. Many people, including those in my electorate, fundraise for this helicopter. People fundraise for a range of different organisations, including Surf Life Saving NSW, but this rescue helicopter is a service that people in my electorate support. There are several very strong supporters of the Westpac helicopter in my electorate, and they have spoken to me about this matter, advising me that the helicopter undertakes important work. The Government should make use of the helicopter if there is an opportunity for it to be the first responder. I support the bill and I thank all those who were involved in drafting the legislation. I thank the Minister's office and, in particular, Mr Koperberg for undertaking the review.

**Mr LEE EVANS** (Heathcote) [5.43 p.m.]: I note that the Parliamentary Secretary, the member for Tweed, is in the Chamber. It is good to see him here. Mr Acting-Speaker, it is also great to have you in the chair.

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Gareth Ward):** I think so too.

**Mr LEE EVANS:** You know how I look up to you. You are the wind beneath my wings! I sit at your knee.

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Gareth Ward):** The member for Heathcote will return to the leave of the bill.

**Mr LEE EVANS:** I speak in debate on the State Emergency and Rescue Management Amendment (Co-ordination and Notification of Rescues) Bill 2013. The member for Camden has covered all bases. He has probably ticked every box that needed to be ticked. But in my brief outline I will attempt to shed a bit more light on this legislation. I speak in support of the bill, which amends the State Emergency and Rescue Management Act 1989, as recommended by Mr Philip Koperberg in his report "Inshore Water Rescue—A review of procedures". The Act outlines the responsibilities of our front-line emergency services when rescuing a person. I thank the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, the Hon. Michael Gallacher, and the Minister for Health, the Hon. Jillian Skinner, for commissioning this report after the tragic drowning death of a rock fisherman at Little Bay in November 2012.

The report aims to improve the response procedures between our multiple emergency services organisations—including the State Emergency Service, NSW Police Force, the Ambulance Service of NSW, Surf Life Saving NSW, Marine Rescue NSW and the Westpac Life Saver Rescue Helicopter—when a person in water requires rescuing. The Koperberg review found 18 opportunities for improvements to inshore water rescues, many of which are procedural in nature. Some changes include amending the definition of "marine rescue" in the New South Wales State Rescue Policy to include the rescue of persons in water regardless of

whether they originated from a vessel or land, and that the Ambulance Service of NSW amend its Computer Aided Dispatch System to include a category of "person in-water" rescue. I am pleased to advise that those recommendations that require an amendment to the State Rescue Policy have already been approved by the State Rescue Board. I understand that other changes will take place later this year.

I now turn to the bill. The State Emergency and Rescue Management (Co-ordination and Notification of Rescues) Bill 2013 will ensure that the NSW Police Force has responsibility for the coordination of all rescue operations in the State, including determining the priorities of the action being taken. The Act will be amended so that all emergency services notify a member of the NSW Police Force immediately after becoming aware of an incident requiring the rescue of a person, including any in-water rescue. In addition, the multi-agency notification protocols must be exercised on a regular basis. I thank Mr Philip Koperberg for the review, and the agencies that were consulted for the help they provide every day to make the community safer. I take special interest in this bill because of the 14 surf life saving clubs in my electorate. Heathcote has the greatest number of surf life saving clubs of any New South Wales electorate.

I will relay a story that I heard about a rescue attempt at Garie Beach, which is a fairly remote beach in the national park. The surf lifesaving crew was packing up for the day when the alarm was raised that a person was in the surf facedown. The crew sprang into action and got the person back onto the beach and started cardiopulmonary resuscitation. The ambulance was called. The surf lifesaving crew continued with cardiopulmonary resuscitation for 25 minutes before the ambulance arrived, and even after it arrived, to try to save this gentleman's life. There were only two people from the surf lifesaving crew on the beach at the time so they were not able to ring many other services because both were involved in the rescue. After one of them called the ambulance they both took turns trying to resuscitate the man. Unfortunately, that person lost his life. It is an example of how our surf lifesavers try to save swimmers.

There are 14 surf life saving clubs up and down the coast of my electorate. Bulli Surf Life Saving Club has 600 members; it is a strong club. Thirroul Surf Life Saving Club has 350 members. Sandon Point Surf Life Saving Club has just had a new \$3.7-million clubhouse completed. Garie Surf Life Saving Club and Era Surf Life Saving Club are located in the national park and we also have the Burning Palms Surf Life Saving Club. There are also the Helensburgh, Stanwell Park and Coledale clubs, and perhaps others up and down the coast. If I have left any out, I apologise; it is hard to remember all 14 of them. All of those surf life saving clubs are active in their own ways and within their own communities. A surf life saving club is an important part of not only the local community but extended communities. A club the size of Bulli, with 600 members, is more than a surf life saving club; its activities are important to the whole community. Everybody is aware of what the club does and of its activities, and people are constantly raising money for new equipment. The State Government has assisted in that regard over the past couple of years, which has been fantastic for the clubs.

As the father of two boys who have now grown up, it is always a comforting thought that if they go to a patrolled beach and an incident occurs—whether they are hit by a surfboard or are caught in a rip—the surf life saving clubs are there to take over and hopefully protect and rescue them. My electorate has many new visitors to our shores; perhaps they are attending Wollongong University or maybe they are on study visas, but they seem to be attracted by the surf. Many from other parts of the world who have never set foot in the surf seem to want to visit beaches with some of the roughest seas. Garie Beach is probably our worst because you drop off the continental shelf not far from the beach and the surf is quite rugged. Often people come to the beach in a group—that is usually the case with students from Wollongong University—have a great day on the grass and then decide to go for a swim. So they all go into the surf at once, sometimes fully clothed. Obviously, surf lifesavers have to step in, either to try to get them to swim between the flags or to save them if they are caught in a rip and swept out to sea.

While on the subject of rips, I would like relate an incident that happened to me at Yamba Beach when I was a wee nipper. I was walking in the beach shallows with my father when I stepped into a gully and was swept out to sea. I was well and truly heading for New Zealand by the time my father realised what was happening, and he ran out onto the point. I had one of those little yellow Zippy boards—I am sure the member for Toongabbie had one of those, and maybe floaties as well—and all my father could say was, "Keep kicking, mate; keep kicking." I had been ripped out probably about a kilometre and a half before I started to drift back in. All I remember was my father waving frantically at me. I do not know how that helps when you have been swept out to sea; but apparently waving does something.

**Mr Nathan Rees:** He might have been waving you back the other way.

**Mr LEE EVANS:** He might have been saying, "Keep going!" I tell this story because later in life I went to Yamba Beach again and was walking along the beach, in the shallows, with a good mate of mine. And guess what? We stepped in a gully and both of us were swept out to sea.

**Mr Nathan Rees:** You are on a long learning curve.

**Mr LEE EVANS:** I know; it takes a while. Anyway, to make a long story short, surfers came to our aid and we were saved. So, after reminiscing about my childhood, I commend the bill to the House.

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Gareth Ward):** I thank the member for Heathcote for that valuable contribution to this important debate.

**Mr GARRY EDWARDS** (Swansea) [5.53 p.m.]: How do you top that?

**Ms Gabrielle Upton:** Did you have a yellow Zippy?

**Mr GARRY EDWARDS:** No. I had one of those blow-up rubber things—but we had better not go there! I rise today to speak to the State Emergency and Rescue Management Amendment (Co-ordination and Notification of Rescues) Bill 2013. By way of introduction, I point out that this bill is particularly relevant to my sparkling electorate of Swansea, with the beautiful Pacific Ocean to the east, the pristine waters of Lake Macquarie to the west, and very large tracts of national park and bushland in between. So we in Swansea rely very heavily on our professional emergency services, such as the NSW Police Force and NSW Fire and Rescue, and I throw in the Westpac Rescue Helicopter Service too. We also rely heavily on the volunteers of the Rural Fire Service, Marine Rescue for incidents on the lake and in the ocean, and last but not least surf life saving clubs. I have four surf clubs in my electorate: Redhead, Swansea Belmont at Blacksmiths, Catherine Hill Bay and my own fantastic club, Caves Beach. So this bill is highly relevant to my area; in fact, it is personally relevant to me as a former active surf lifesaver. Anything that brings a benefit to surf lifesaving is well worthwhile.

The purpose of the bill is to implement recommendations of the Koperberg report titled "Inshore Water Rescue—A review of procedures". One of the recommendations of that report is that the NSW Police Force have responsibility for the coordination of rescue operations, and that all emergency services organisations must notify police of all rescue incidents. It is important to note that emergency services organisations, including the NSW Police Force, the Ambulance Service of NSW, Fire and Rescue NSW, the State Emergency Service, the Volunteer Rescue Association and Marine Rescue NSW were consulted in respect of this bill—and indeed that all those organisations support the bill.

The bill implements recommendations of the report prepared by the Hon. Philip Koperberg, a former commissioner of the NSW Rural Fire Service and a Minister in this place. The report was prepared following a review commissioned by the New South Wales Government subsequent to the demise of a man who drowned after being swept from rocks in November 2012. That drowning, I understand, is the subject of a coronial inquiry. The Act, as it presently stands, refers to police coordination of a rescue at a tactical level. This does not adequately reflect the corporate role of police, nor the role of the police rescue coordinator, which is a centralised function. The first amendment to the Act provides further clarity to the role of the NSW Police Force in the coordination of rescue operations in New South Wales. The State Rescue Policy and operational procedures already provide that the NSW Police Force is the entity responsible for the coordination of rescue in New South Wales; however, this bill will provide a legislative basis for those policies and procedures.

The second recommendation was that the Act be amended to require all emergency services organisations to notify the NSW Police Force of rescue incidents, be they marine or land-related incidents. The remaining 16 recommendations of the Koperberg report relate to enhancement of policies, including the State Rescue Policy, procedures and training. This Government has accepted all the recommendations of the Koperberg review; and the Government is in the process of implementing those recommendations. The State Rescue Board has already made the suggested amendments to the State Rescue Policy. For example, the definition of "marine rescue" has been amended to include the rescue of persons in water, regardless of whether they fell into the water from land or from a vessel.

The recommendations of the review and the subsequent contents of the bill provide a clear legislative framework for the effective management of rescue operations and will undoubtedly assist rescue agencies in preserving human life during any kind of marine or land-based rescue. I take this opportunity to acknowledge

the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. He is an outstanding Minister and I applaud his initiative in this bill. I also acknowledge the hard work and achievements of his Parliamentary Secretary, the member for Tweed. I wholeheartedly commend the bill to the House.

**Mr GEOFF PROVEST** (Tweed—Parliamentary Secretary) [6.00 p.m.], on behalf of Mr Greg Smith, in reply: In replying to debate on the State Emergency and Rescue Management Amendment (Co-ordination and Notification of Rescues) Bill 2013, I acknowledge the members representing the electorates of Myall Lakes, Riverstone, Granville, Port Macquarie, Newcastle, Coogee, Cronulla, The Entrance, Wyong, Campbelltown, Northern Tablelands, Camden, Heathcote, Swansea and Parramatta. I also acknowledge the member for Toongabbie, the member for Bankstown, the member for Fairfield, the member for Cabramatta, the member for Balmain and the member for Maroubra.

It would be remiss of me not to acknowledge the Opposition spokesman on Police and Emergency Services, the member for Toongabbie, following his fine deliberations and his bipartisan approach to the bill. I acknowledge also the member for Maroubra and make particular reference to his advocacy, his approach to the Minister and the way in which he spoke very highly of the objects of the bill. He supported the Government's views and recommendations and, as a result, we have finally reached this point. Well done to the member for Maroubra and the member for Toongabbie.

The bill aims to clarify existing arrangements by ensuring that the key points of the State Rescue Policy are reflected in the State Emergency and Rescue Management Act 1989. The bill implements the recommendations of the report entitled "Inshore Water Rescue—A review of procedures", which was prepared by Mr Philip Koperberg. The review found that the State Emergency and Rescue Management Act does not clearly identify the NSW Police Force as being responsible for the overall coordination of rescue operations, nor does it require emergency services organisations to notify the police of rescue incidents. The bill proposes to rectify those issues. The bill has been debated thoroughly in this Chamber, so without further ado I commend it 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 Geoff Provest, on behalf of Mr Greg Smith, agreed to:**

That this bill be now read a third time.

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

## **BUDGET ESTIMATES AND RELATED PAPERS**

### **Financial Year 2013-14**

**Debate resumed from 27 August 2013.**

**Mr TONY ISSA** (Granville) [6.03 p.m.]: I make a contribution to the take-note debate on the budget estimates and related papers for the financial year 2013-14. I congratulate the Treasurer on his tireless work in curtailing spending in the State while at the same time planning for the necessary infrastructure improvements needed so desperately by New South Wales. This budget is an example of responsible spending by a Government that is still committed to providing services and infrastructure to keep the State moving forward. We are in the business of making New South Wales number one again. This budget was conceived in a climate of economic restraint. However, its priorities remain part of the essential framework of spending in this State. Those priorities are the key drivers of economic growth, jobs, housing and infrastructure.

This Government inherited a financial disaster from the previous Labor Government. However, in this his third budget, the Treasurer assures us that the State will be in surplus by 2014. The 2013 budget has delivered a promise to the people of the State: better schools, better health care, better roads and better public

transport. Since coming to government more than two and a half years ago, the Government has set about controlling expenses and, at the same time, creating new infrastructure that will bring the State into line with twenty-first century needs. Last year the Government passed important legislation through this Parliament. The Fiscal Responsibility Act 2012 established in law the State's enviable triple-A credit rating. Retaining the State's triple-A credit rating means that the State can minimise its interest expense and, therefore, is able to borrow funds for services and infrastructure. It is a sign of a Government that is committed to responsible spending and responsible management of the State's finances.

For too long the Labor Government wreaked havoc on the State's resources and finances. We are still witnessing the shameful parade of fraudsters fronting Independent Commission Against Corruption hearings. These are the same people who were entrusted with managing the State's finances. It is a terrifying thought. The Fiscal Responsibility Act ensures that this Government and future New South Wales governments live within their means. When the O'Farrell Government came to office in March 2011 the State had a serious infrastructure backlog. A high priority of the incoming Government was to address that backlog by making plans for the North West Rail Link and for roads—such as a much-needed new motorway in Sydney—as well as for hospitals and schools. In this budget the Treasurer has committed a total of \$59.7 billion over the next four years for infrastructure programs. Those programs cover roads, public transport, hospitals and schools. A large proportion of those funds will go towards improving public transport. The North West Rail Link is the largest rail project currently being undertaken in Australia. It is expected to cost \$8.3 billion and it is forecast that trains will be running on it by 2019.

The Government has also promised to bring an end to the massive traffic delays experienced by commuters every day on the M4 and Parramatta Road. The 33-kilometre WestConnex project has received funding of \$1.8 billion, including more than \$100 million in the 2013-14 budget. I am pleased to note that the Federal Opposition has committed funding for this very important project if it wins government at the election. Health has received an injection of \$17.9 billion in this budget. The western suburbs of Sydney, where my electorate is located, have been given \$4.2 million in this budget to expand intensive care services. In addition, \$1.4 million has been allocated to Blacktown Hospital for the expansion of mental health services. In my electorate of Granville about 75 per cent to 80 per cent of the people who visit my office require public housing. The former Labor Government promised them that they would have housing within 18 months to two years but some of them have been waiting for 20 years. These people have nowhere to live and no hope for the future. They rely on the Government to provide them with adequate housing, and that is what this Government is aiming to do in this budget.

In Western Sydney the budget promises the delivery of 178 community housing dwellings for vulnerable clients, at a cost of more than \$32 million. In addition, \$1 million over four years is being invested for the implementation of the Newpin Social Benefit Bond supporting children and young people in out-of-home care to be safely restored to their families or to prevent them from entering care. The budget further allocates funds totalling \$525 million to expand and improve services for people with a disability, their families and carers and older people in Western Sydney. Of this, \$57 million has been allocated for Western Sydney. Capital projects for the area include \$1.3 million for construction of two five-bedroom group homes in Merrylands, \$500,000 for construction of a five-bedroom group home in Guildford, \$800,000 for construction of a five-bedroom villa model in Guildford and \$1 million to commence construction on a 20-bed cluster model in Guildford. Last month I was pleased to launch with the Minister for Finance and Services the project in the Granville area for the senior people.

There has been good news for the many small businesses in the Granville electorate, with the raising of the payroll tax threshold from \$689,000 to \$750,000 while removing indexation. This means that about 1,300 businesses around the State will not pay payroll tax and for those that do the burden will be reduced by more than \$3,000. In addition to assisting business with an increase in the payroll tax threshold, the payroll tax rebate provided under the Jobs Action Plan will increase to \$5,000 from July 2013. Businesses that are eligible will receive the rebate as \$2,000 on the first anniversary of the employment of their new staff and \$3,000 on the second anniversary as an incentive to retain their new staff. This measure also provides staff with a greater degree of job security.

This measure aims to reduce red tape because employers will no longer need to repay the first term rebate if the new staff member is not retained until the second anniversary. This is good news for the many small businesses in my electorate. It is a well-known fact that if business is given some breathing space by not being forced to fork out money for yet more taxes, it opens the doors to allow for the creation of more jobs. As the Treasurer said in his speech:

Business needs the support of Government so that it, rather than Government, can build the economy.

That brings me to jobs. One of the O'Farrell Government's key election undertakings was to create more jobs in New South Wales. For 16 years the Labor Party ignored the demands of small business to reduce overheads. Labor forgot that small business is the backbone of business and that it must be protected and encouraged by all levels of government. This Government has responded to those demands. Since the Government was elected in March 2011 it has recorded the strongest employment growth of any State in the country. The Liberal Party and The Nationals promised a growth of 100,000 new jobs in the first term. In just two years, and halfway through that term, employment has increased by 128,900. This is impressive and has been achieved despite the global economic downturn, the drop in spending and the sharp reduction in revenue received from the GST.

The decision to privatise ports has given the Government much-needed funds to improve infrastructure by shifting proceeds into more worthwhile projects. The \$3.5 billion payout from the leasing of Port Botany plus the \$699 million from Port Kembla will help to fund the urgent WestConnex project. Speaking of easing the burden for Western Sydney commuters, the Treasurer has announced a number of important initiatives. They include \$806 million for the construction of the North West Rail Link—this 23-kilometre line will provide passengers with fast single-deck, high-speed frequency trains; \$353 million for the South West Rail Link to improve access to public transport for this growing population; \$133 million for the Opal card rollout for ferries, trains, buses and light rail; \$1.3 million to boost the community transport program; Parramatta is to receive \$15 million for a new bus depot, which will help to expand services in Western Sydney and surrounding areas; and \$76 million for the Lidcombe to Granville corridor upgrade, which will provide much-needed infrastructure upgrades including bridges and signal work along the rail corridor.

In the past I have worked on the Lidcombe to Granville line and I noticed that not much work was done to it. I am pleased that the Government is spending money to upgrade the rail section between Lidcombe and Parramatta; it needs to be done. More than \$92 million will be provided to roll out more than 200 new and replacement buses across the State to meet increasing demands. More than \$70 million will be allocated to provide bus services across Sydney. I am confident that this budget will bring about further economic growth for New South Wales. It is a key part of the O'Farrell Government's commitment to rebuild the State after 16 years of Labor's neglect. I am also confident that business will find it easier to operate in the State because it has been offered some serious incentives in payroll tax and other benefits. The people have been guaranteed a better future in terms of roads, schools, health and public transport. These are the areas where the Government is spending money to improve services, infrastructure and front-line services.

In my area of Western Sydney the benefits have been enormous. This is one of the fastest growing areas in the State and for years its services and infrastructure delivery have failed to keep pace with growth. This budget is, above all, responsible. While it allows for spending in the right areas, it also works to retain the aim to put the State back into surplus. I congratulate the Treasurer on the fine work he has done on behalf of the State in preparing this budget, and I commend the bills to the House.

**Mr KEVIN CONOLLY** (Riverstone) [6.17 p.m.]: I am pleased to update the House on the good news that the 2013-14 budget offers to the electorate of Riverstone. Before I focus on the electorate I will look briefly at the big picture for New South Wales. The O'Farrell-Stoner Government was elected to make New South Wales number one again and that is what it is doing. Some hard but necessary decisions had to be taken if we were to respond to the mandate given to us by the people of New South Wales. Clearly, the people of New South Wales expect infrastructure which they had missed out on for years—probably for 16 long years.

The people of New South Wales expect services at a level commensurate with the twenty-first century. They expect that the Government can do things as well as private business and respond to their needs in the way that another business would—in many respects the Government is being dragged towards that objective. The Cabinet and the Government are taking seriously the mandate given to them by the people of New South Wales and because of that we are directing the State's resources to the areas the people clearly said they wanted addressed. That has required some discipline in the way we conducted our business internally and required some tough decisions, which were unpopular with some sectors. The people of New South Wales have demanded that this Government respond to their needs. This Government is building infrastructure at a level not seen for decades.

The North West Rail Link is a project unparalleled in scale in New South Wales. We would have to go back to the Snowy Mountains Hydro-electric Scheme to find a project on a similar scale. An amount of \$805 million has been allocated in this year's budget for the first tranche of work, stage 1, of the North West Rail Link. A couple of months ago the Government signed a contract for the tunnel-boring machines and said



that the project was past the point of no return. No longer will people be sceptical or dubious or wonder whether this Government will deliver the project. It is happening. We will continue to push on as fast as we can and the project team is doing a sterling job moving the project along.

The Government has made some difficult decisions, not without controversy, in respect to recycling assets, for instance, the desalination plant and port facilities. A clear case can be made to recycle those assets in order to put the money towards new projects for the people of New South Wales. The assets will remain in place and there will be no loss of performance or service; the people of New South Wales will still benefit from them. But the capital received from them will go towards new assets and meet other needs. For example, the WestConnex motorway will be constructed because this Government has recycled assets and used the funds to provide the missing link in the Sydney motorway system. It is an important step forward. The Government appreciates the assistance of the Federal Coalition and we hope, pending the outcome of the Federal election on 7 September, that we get a firm commitment from the elected government that the project will receive Federal support, as the people of New South Wales deserve.

Apart from those big ticket projects in Sydney, which will affect my electorate and much of the north-west, in my electorate Richmond Road is being upgraded. The project commenced during the past financial year and is continuing apace, with \$34 million having been allocated in this year's budget for the project to continue. Stage 1 is well underway. Stage 2 is already in planning and will be able to commence immediately upon the completion of stage 1. Early design work is being done on stage 3 so that it too can follow smoothly as we progress up the road between the southern end of the Richmond Road project at Bells Creek and the northern extremity of the work at South Creek crossing. It is hoped those three stages will continue seamlessly and the work can be carried out as soon as possible.

Richmond Road will be a four-lane divided carriageway, but provision has been made for an upgrade to a six-lane carriageway in the future should the traffic demand warrant such an expansion and government resources permit. This Government is planning for the future by building a four-lane divided carriageway and allowing for a future six-lane carriageway on this significant road corridor. Schofields Road is also being upgraded as part of the east-west connection across my electorate, which will link the Windsor Road area with Richmond Road, and beyond, in the future. Schofields Road also will be a four-lane divided carriageway with provision for an upgrade to a six-lane carriageway. Work in stage 1 is rapidly taking place and, with planning for subsequent stages already well advanced, Schofields Road will eventually connect to Richmond Road to allow a much better cross-regional flow of traffic in the north-west.

Those projects have had real funds committed to them in this year's budget: Richmond Road received \$34 million and Schofields Road \$38.5 million. This Government is serious about providing the infrastructure that the people of New South Wales need, in particular the people of the Riverstone electorate. An amount of \$32 million has been allocated in this year's budget for the replacement of Windsor Bridge. The replacement of Windsor Bridge has often been raised in this House and a decision was made by the previous Labor Government to replace it. This Government has advanced the project to a point where it is on the cusp of being approved. It is now up to the Department of Planning and the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure to make a decision. Funding for this project is in the budget. Should approval be given, construction will begin in the not too distant future.

In relation to transport, I welcome the introduction of new bus route 748 which serves the people of Colebee, a new suburb in my electorate. This is great news for the people in that area, who have not had adequate access to a bus service and public transport. The Government has also extended a bus route in The Ponds to reach out to the new fringe areas as The Ponds expands. The Government will continue with such projects, which come on the back of new buses introduced in the previous year's budget to service the people of Kellyville Ridge and The Ponds. This Government is responding to the needs of growth. It is meeting the needs of people in the Riverstone electorate and throughout New South Wales.

In relation to health, I am extraordinarily proud that this Government has committed \$324 million—\$82 million in this year's budget—for a major upgrade of Blacktown and Mt Druitt Hospital. This is the largest amount of funding the Government has committed to a health facility in the State. The funding is based purely on need; there is nothing political about it. We are not sandbagging marginal seats by moving a fleet base to electorates of members who may be in danger of losing their seat. We are putting hospital resources and people on the ground where they are needed—totally blind to political implications. I am proud that the O'Farrell Government has taken that step, unlike the actions of its predecessor.

This Government has employed additional nurses in wards across New South Wales, a headcount of more than 4,000. Since this Government came to office there are more than 2,700 full-time equivalents, 128 of whom are in the Western Sydney Local Health District. This Government has provided \$1.4 million in this year's budget for the expansion of mental health services at Blacktown Hospital. These are great commitments that have been made possible by the discipline exercised by this Government in its husbandry of the resources of the people of New South Wales.

In relation to police and emergency services, the Government has put additional front-line police on the beat. Just last week 161 officers were attested at the Goulburn Police Academy. The total number is a record in the history of New South Wales, and for once it is a real number. Far more police are active on the front line than there were under the system operated by the previous Government. Not only are the numbers greater but they are genuine numbers: we have more police out there serving the people. In this year's budget \$10.9 million has been allocated for the new Riverstone police station, a project costing \$17.3 million in total. Again, it is close to commencement once a tailoring of the budget and the tenders are undertaken. An amount of \$1 million has been allocated in the budget for the purchase of a site for a new Windsor area fire station, a project that is estimated to cost \$3.1 million.

In relation to planning and infrastructure, it might sound a little unexciting, but this Government is building sewers and wastewater piping with the provision of \$4 million from the Housing Acceleration Fund. The first Ponds Creek wastewater project has been allocated \$14.7 million, also from that fund. The key is that new housing cannot be provided without the provision of sewerage. The previous Government rezoned a number of areas in the north-west but did not provide the infrastructure. Land can be rezoned on paper but development goes no further if services are not provided. The failures of the planning system under the previous Government meant that there was a logjam. We all know that housing starts declined to the lowest level in decades under the previous Government. However, this Government is addressing that situation.

I will briefly refer to housing starts and construction figures which show the gains that have been made under the policies of the O'Farrell Government. They will go even further, higher and faster because of the work being undertaken under the Housing Acceleration Fund in building wastewater facilities in the north-west sector which will bring about development. A significant number of the housing starts are in my electorate. In 2012-13 there were 28,500 approvals, an increase of more than 4,000 from the previous year and the highest level since 2002-03. There were 21,097 completions, an increase of more than 5,500 from last year and again the highest level since 2003-04. Housing approvals at 73 per cent are higher now than in the last two full years under the former Government. Housing completions are 53 per cent higher than the last two full years of the former Government.

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

#### **TOTALIZATOR AMENDMENT (EXCLUSIVITY) BILL 2013**

**Message received from the Legislative Council returning the bill without amendment**

*[Acting-Speaker (Mr Lee Evans) left the chair at 6.30 p.m. The House resumed at 7.00 p.m.]*

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

#### **ORANGE TIGERS AFL CENTRAL WEST GRAND FINAL WINNERS**

**Mr ANDREW GEE** (Orange) [7.00 p.m.]: I pay tribute to the mighty Orange Tigers, who clinched the Central West AFL Premiership last Saturday with a victory for the ages. They were up against raging hot favourites, the Bathurst Bushrangers, and it was a titanic struggle. The Bushrangers were clear favourites after being undefeated in the season. In fact, they were the benchmark all season. However, the win by the Orange Tigers managed to cause what was the upset of the season by clinching the grand final. Only a fortnight ago the Bushrangers beat the Tigers by 82 points. As I have said, what a titanic struggle the grand final was. In the grand final the lead changed six times in the first two quarters and the scores were all square at half-time. Early in the game, Andrew Nelson and Tim Barry both found the mark as the Tigers forged a 13-point lead after four and a half minutes. Then Bathurst struck back by kicking three straight goals. Sebastian Matheson's effort after nine minutes ensured the Bushrangers just edged ahead in this seesawing struggle. The Tigers had the last word in the first quarter and went to the break with a narrow lead. As I indicated earlier, at half-time the scores were all square.

In the third quarter, the Tigers opened up what proved to be a winning 12-point lead, but the Bushrangers with their never-say-die attitude, for which they are renowned, came back and led by six points with 25 minutes left to play. The Bushrangers went further ahead, but full forward Tim Barry responded with two quick goals and finished with six for the game. Jayden Phillips, who plays forward pocket, put the Tigers four points in front with nine minutes left to play, with the Bushrangers able to respond with only a one-pointer. Other goal scorers were forward pocket Dale Hunter with two, half-forward flanker Travis Bertram with two, rover Josh Bubnich with two and centre half-forward Andrew Nelson. Player of the Match was the Tigers half-forward flanker, Joel McKenzie, in a game in which any number of players could have claimed that honour. I congratulate all the players of the Orange Tigers team: wingers Matthew Norris and Ben Monaghan, centre Michael Rothnie, half-back flanker Daniel Bruce, centre half-back Clint Grambeau, back pockets Jesse McKenna and Matt Reyholds, full-back Nick Goudie, ruck Jack Rogers and ruck-rover Simon Kay. The team's bench comprised Kirk Phillips, Ryan Scentrine, Ash Broughton, Daniel Sadler, with Jake Hannus, Simon Ewin and Chris Rothnie on stand-by.

By winning the grand final, the Tigers coach, Nathan Pearce, was able to achieve something that had eluded him during his playing days. I know that he was very proud and delighted at what his team had managed to achieve in this historic victory. The Tigers committee also must be acknowledged: President Simon Kay, Vice-President Andrew McIntyre, Secretary Jemma Kenneally, Treasurer Nicole Pearce, Publicity Officer Jamaya Luck who lives in Bathurst, Social Coordinator Andrew Nelson, equipment manager Paul Willoughby, and senior registrar Mark Byrne. I also thank all the Tigers supporters who have supported the team so well throughout the season. The Tigers under-18s also were grand finalists and certainly did their club proud. I congratulate all the players of both the Bathurst and Orange teams who took part in this titanic grand final struggle. True sportsmanship was exhibited throughout the match. The contest was conducted in keeping with the greatest sports traditions of the Central West. Both clubs can be very proud of what they achieved. But I pay particular tribute to the Orange Tigers for their wonderful effort in securing a 92-89 victory. The whole city of Orange is very proud of their efforts. I am very proud to draw the team's great sporting achievement to the attention of the House.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE** (Bathurst—Parliamentary Secretary) [7.05 p.m.]: I thank the member for Orange for his sports commentary. His minute-by-minute rendition made us almost feel like we were there too. I place on record my congratulations to the Orange Tigers because they won a well-fought grand final. As I represent the home city of the Bathurst Bushrangers, I inform the House that they were the minor premiers. They had 16 consecutive wins but grand finals bring out the best in players and the crowd saw a fantastic grand final on this occasion. It was wonderful to see the sportsmanship shown by all the players.

I congratulate also Mark Kennedy, coach of the Bathurst Bushrangers. He has done an incredible job with the guys throughout the year. In addition, I congratulate the under-11s, under-13s, under-18s and reserve grade teams because those teams made it to the grand final and won. The Government gave a \$10,000 grant to the Bathurst Bushrangers through the Community Building Partnership program. The club installed a new scoreboard on the weekend and it was great to see the scores displayed in colour quarter by quarter. It even showed the names of the players and their profiles as they were running out on the field. It is pleasing that the Government is supporting sport in regional communities.

### **MANCHESTER UNITED AND SPECIAL OLYMPICS NEW SOUTH WALES**

**Mr GUY ZANGARI** (Fairfield) [7.06 p.m.]: On 16 July 2013 the Manchester United legends Bryan Robson, Dwight Yorke, Andy Cole and Denis Irwin held a training session with Special Olympics New South Wales at Parramatta Stadium. This was, of course, in the lead-up to the Manchester United versus the Australian A-League All Stars game at Stadium Australia on Saturday 20 July 2013. On a picture postcard day the Manchester United legends humbly interacted with the 40 footballers—all adults and children with an intellectual disability. The day comprised an exclusive football clinic. It was a chance for the rising stars from Special Olympics Football to rub shoulders with the Manchester United legends. Also on hand was the famous Manchester United mascot "Fred the Red", who was a hit with not only the footballers but also the wider community on hand to celebrate the day. The Special Olympics global mission states:

The global mission of Special Olympics is to provide year-round sports training and athletic competition in a variety of Olympic-type sports for children and adults with an intellectual disability, giving them continuing opportunities to develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage, experience joy and participate in a sharing of gifts, skills and friendship with their families, other Special Olympics athletes and the community.

It was evident from the organisation of the event that a partnership has been forged between Manchester United and the Special Olympics. This partnership reflects the will to foster a plan to increase the participation of

athletes with an intellectual disability in the sport of football. All present were in awe of the soccer legends. For two solid hours the footballers facilitated the drills and skills-building exercises. In amongst the group being trained were 21 footballers who have been selected to represent Australia at the Special Olympics Asia Pacific Games to be held in Newcastle from 1 to 7 December 2013. The Special Olympics aims to give people with an intellectual disability opportunity, choice and the possibility to reach their personal best.

The training session was a great opportunity for the selected representatives to fine-tune and hone their footballing skills prior to the tournament. I, along with many local, State and Federal representatives, absorbed the special atmosphere. All the footballers had the chance to talk and take photos with the legends. Full credit should be given to the legends for displaying their genuine concern and care for the participants. No request was a problem for the legends, who posed for photographs and signed shirts and caps for well over an hour after the training session. The Barclay's English Premiership trophy and the legends were very popular with the photographers of the day. The NSW Police were on hand to support the day and facilitated the lighting of the police torch. The NSW Police Force is a big supporter of the New South Wales Special Olympics. As part of the Law Enforcement Torch Run Australia, the NSW Police community supports grassroots fundraising for the Special Olympics. Police cooked up an afternoon barbeque for the footballers, their families and the legends. Special congratulations to the NSW Police Force for its continued support of the Special Olympics and the Bryson Anderson Memorial Fund.

The Bryson Anderson Memorial Fund held a combined football gala day at Colo Soccer Football Club on 30 March 2013 to raise money for both worthy causes. It is through grassroots fundraising that Special Olympics athletes can reach their full potential and dreams via the competition pathways. The Special Olympics supports pathways for athletes in regional games held regularly in local communities, State games held annually and national games held every four years, and 2013 will see the inaugural Special Olympics Asia Pacific regional games for participants from countries in the Asia-Pacific region. The Trans-Tasman competition is held annually between Australia and New Zealand. Finally, the World Games are held every four years for summer and winter sports for athletes who have excelled in their training and progressed through various stages of competitions. I commend the Special Olympics for their outstanding support for people with an intellectual disability. The work of the Special Olympics committee is truly remarkable. I extend congratulations to all involved in making the Manchester United and Special Olympics training day a success.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE** (Bathurst—Parliamentary Secretary) [7.11 p.m.]: I thank the member for Fairfield for bringing to the attention of the House the importance of Manchester United and congratulate the Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Hospitality and Racing, the Hon. George Souris, because I know that Destination NSW undertook considerable work to ensure that the most successful football team in the world came to Australia's shores to play. It has been 14 years since that team was last in Australia and its popularity was self-evident. The match was a sell-out. Even though the Australian All Stars suffered a 5-1 loss, it was wonderful for the crowd to experience the thrill of the game. It was pleasing to hear the member for Fairfield talking about such experienced players meeting and assisting people with disabilities, and talking about their lifetime achievements.

### TRIBUTE TO JUNE CAUSLEY

**Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS** (Clarence) [7.12 p.m.]: I pay tribute to June Causley, who passed away at St Vincent's Hospital in Lismore on Thursday 27 June 2013 after losing her traumatic battle with cancer. June was the wife of the Hon. Ian Causley, a former member and Minister of this place and the colleague of some current members. I know he was a very close friend of the member for Coffs Harbour, Andrew Fraser, and his wife, Kerry, who both attended June's funeral. Ian Causley was also a member of the Federal Parliament and the Deputy-Speaker of that Parliament for two terms. Ian and June were married for 51 years.

June was born in Coraki on 18 June 1943 to parents Roy and Nellie Patch. She was one of 11 children, with two not surviving infancy, making June the youngest in the family. June was raised on a dairy farm and developed a deep understanding of rural life and working the land, something she never forgot. She finished her schooling and joined the Bank of New South Wales in Woodburn. It was at this stage in her life that she met Ian. They were married in St Andrew's Church, Lismore, on 4 February 1962 and moved to Ian's farm on Warregah Island. Within 10 years they had four children—Craig, Marcelle, Derek and Shane. They also have seven grandchildren. June always got involved in her children's lives and community activities. She was particularly active in the Country Women's Association [CWA], remaining a member for 30 years, as well as

the United Protestant Association [UPA], View Club, Meals on Wheels and the United Hospital Auxiliary, where she was patron for 20 years. When her daughter Marcelle joined the Girl Guides, June became a leader and then for a while served as the district commissioner.

June supported Ian in every endeavour he undertook, whether it was working on the farm, growing their own vegetables and looking after the cane, or helping him to run the pub he bought in Lismore, the Ryan Hotel. She really did not want to work in a pub, but always pitched in to help the family when needed. Ian always said she was the charmer and he was the enforcer. When Ian took on more parliamentary responsibilities, June was always by his side. You did not get one member of Parliament but two. June was always there to provide assistance to Ian and the community he served. She had enormous respect for the role that Ian held and for the electorate he was elected to represent. She often filled the role of a member of Parliament when Ian was unable to attend an event. She brought sensitivity, compassion, humour and dignity to the role of the member's wife. She was, without doubt, Clarence's first lady.

Ian vividly recalls the night when June came home after having an ultrasound at Grafton and advised him that she had cancer. But, like everything she did, June took this news in her stride and was determined to do whatever it took to beat this insidious disease. Unfortunately, it was a very aggressive form of cancer and the chemotherapy treatment could not stop it. Whilst the cancer may have taken over her body, her mind was still very strong and, true to form, she joined care groups to help support others afflicted with the disease. The last time I saw June was in April this year at New Italy, the Carnevale Italiano. She was not having chemotherapy at that stage because the treatment was not impacting on the cancer but its side-effects were severely impacting on June. She was there with Ian, in the company of many friends she had made over the years, enjoying the singing of Tony Pantano. She looked terrific, dignified as always, with a smile on her face.

My last memories of June are from her funeral at St James Church in Maclean. It was an enormous funeral with family and friends coming together to say goodbye, but it was Ian's line about what June meant to him that has stayed with me. He quoted a line from English poet Robert Herrick, which encapsulates the profound impact that June had on him when he first met her:

I did but see her from afar and yet I love her till I die.

On behalf of the members of this House, I extend my sincere condolences to Ian and the family. May June rest in peace.

### **VIETNAM VISION PROJECT AUSTRALIA**

**Mr NICK LALICH** (Cabramatta) [7.17 p.m.]: On Friday 24 May 2013 I had the pleasure of attending the annual fundraising event for the Vietnam Vision Project Australia at the Crystal Palace restaurant in Canley Heights. The Vietnam Vision Project is a humanitarian project which gives those who suffer from cataracts the opportunity to see again. The project has been operating for more than 10 years and I congratulate the team on its commitment to this cause. The project provides free cataract operations, but over time its services have expanded to include medical examination, special medical care, dental care and education. The project is also involved in distributing food parcels, and visiting orphanages and mental health institutions, as well as providing financial assistance to rural villages in Vietnam.

Cataracts are a major cause of blindness for individuals who are over 50 years of age. It is reported that in Vietnam more than 500,000 people suffer from bilateral blindness and more than 900,000 are blind in one eye. The Vietnam Vision Project has been successful in conducting over 5,000 cataract operations since its formation and the project will continue this wonderful work as many people in Vietnam do not have access to such facilities or the finance for this type of treatment. As I have said, the Vietnam Vision Project Australia expanded its role into dental care, and that has been extraordinarily successful with more than 2,000 procedures carried out. As members know, dental care is ongoing and it is great to see the project dedicate its time to this necessary support service.

It is my great pleasure to inform the House that this year the field trip undertaken by the project expanded into other provinces in Vietnam, including Phu Khanh province and Lam Dong province. In 2012 Vietnam Vision Project Australia celebrated its tenth anniversary here in Sydney, with volunteers across Australia travelling to our great city to commemorate this achievement. Planning and organising the field trips undertaken by Vietnam Vision Project Australia is hard work. It is also time consuming and volunteers are required to give up their time to arrange the trip. In December 2012 the team visited more than six villages. They also visited medical clinics and hospitals and successfully reached their goal by providing 470 food parcels to the villages they visited.

The project conducts bimonthly fundraising barbecues at Freedom Plaza in Cabramatta where hardworking volunteers give up their time and support this great cause. The volunteers ensure that their fundraisers are successful while raising public awareness about what Vietnam Vision Project Australia does and educating the community about the project. I am proud of my Vietnamese community in Cabramatta and the great humanitarian service they provide, not only in Vietnam but also in Australia. To enable it to continue, the project relies on financial donations from the community and sponsors, and I urge all people to assist this cause by donating at [www.vietnamvision.org.au](http://www.vietnamvision.org.au). May the good Lord Buddha smile down upon the doctors and nurses who perform these operations and may he guide their hand so that all operations are successful. There is so much more to be done but the project should be recognised and commended for its decade-long contribution. I wish the project and the volunteers all the best in the future.

### GOULBURN ELECTORATE WINTER EVENTS

**Ms PRU GOWARD** (Goulburn—Minister for Family and Community Services, and Minister for Women) [7.22 p.m.]: Winter down my way is a season of cold and darkness, but the electorate of Goulburn has nonetheless remained a hive of activity. The parliamentary winter break allowed me to spend more time with my many communities and enjoy some of the local events. June to July is changeover time. The changeover dinners for the Bowral-Mittagong, Goulburn and Berrima District Rotary clubs were all great nights. As a Rotarian myself, I know firsthand the wonderful work that Rotary does and changeovers provide the perfect showcase for a club's annual achievements and great fun for members. Each year I find myself very impressed by the spirit of volunteerism and devotion to the community.

I was also fortunate to attend the Moss Vale Red Cross annual general meeting where I presented six of their members with long service badges. Pam Hall received the 30 years gold bar; Maria D'Adam, Daphne McPherson and Colleen Drake received the 40 years gold bar; Zelda Williams, my dear friend, received the 50 years gold bar, and Iris Clout received the 53 years laurel wreath. The commitment of each of those women is something to be admired and I take this opportunity to once again congratulate them on their awards. It is comforting to know that there are so many service clubs working hard for their local communities. We all reap the benefits of their great work.

The area's youth also showed off their impressive performing talents at the Goulburn combined schools concert in late July as part of Education Week. It was a pleasure to attend and hear the many young thespians and singers perform for their families and friends. As the school year begins to wind up, I look forward to meeting more of our future leaders at school events throughout the electorate. The Goulburn Strikers masquerade ball, Goulburn rugby White Ribbon Day and the Bowral Trefoil Guild luncheon were also great occasions to be part of.

Over the winter period I have also had to say a number of goodbyes and I conclude my statement this evening by acknowledging them. Our Goulburn Local Area Commander for the NSW Police Force, Gary Worboys, has been promoted to Assistant Commissioner-Commander Southern Region based in Wollongong. Assistant Commissioner Worboys, as he is now known, has been a credit to the New South Wales Police Force during his time with the Goulburn Local Area Command, leading the way with proactive community policing throughout the southern tablelands and southern highlands. Gary's advice, at least to me, was always straightforward and his great local knowledge is evidenced by improving crime rates. I take this opportunity to publicly thank Assistant Commissioner Gary Worboys for his years of service to the Goulburn community and I wish him, his wife Deanne, and their family all the very best for the future. I imagine they will stay living in Goulburn and we will occasionally have time for coffee.

June this year saw the departure of my long-serving electorate officer, Rebecca Reid, who has worked for me since my election to Parliament in 2007. Rebecca also worked for the former member for the Southern Highlands, Peta Seaton. Rebecca was an outstanding employee. Her intelligence and intellectual capacity enabled her to grasp complex local issues, provide direct and succinct briefs to me, respond appropriately and in a heartfelt manner to a vast range of interest groups and to prioritise my electorate program. She handled electorate constituents and stakeholders in a very direct and sensitive way, providing a high level of creative and strategic input; as is required in the electorate office of a Government Minister. I will miss her badly, but I know that Rebecca and her husband Henry are looking forward to many overseas adventures in the coming months. I am pleased to have Peter Oliver join my staff.

This is also a fitting opportunity to acknowledge the passing of Alma Florence Kettle, the mother of Goulburn Mulwaree Mayor Geoff Kettle. Councillor Kettle is well known by many Ministers because of his lobbying on behalf of the residents and council of Goulburn Mulwaree. Mrs Kettle, who was 92, lived a happy and fulfilling life. I extend my condolences to Geoff, his sister Janice, and their families. I am sorry I could not make it to the funeral yesterday, but I know that Geoff is well supported.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE** (Bathurst—Parliamentary Secretary) [7.27 p.m.]: I thank the Minister for Family and Community Services and member for Goulburn for raising a number of important issues. The Minister is a very good friend of my electorate. She has visited the Bathurst electorate on a number of occasions to meet with my constituents and she works hard for the people of New South Wales. The Minister spoke about Rotary change-over dinners. People from all walks of life join organisations such as Rotary and they have a spirit of voluntarism in common. It is beneficial for members to see the charitable works being done and the money being raised by those different groups. The Minister also raised the importance of parliamentary staff. They are our backbone as we perform our duties on behalf of the people of New South Wales. The Minister also mentioned the importance of building strong relationships with the police commissioners and I thank her for raising those important issues in the House.

### **BULAHDELAH LIONS CLUB**

**Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD** (Myall Lakes) [7.28 p.m.]: I recently attended the Bulahdelah Lions Club 2013 change-over dinner. Bulahdelah is a friendly country town set on the banks of Myall River near its junction with the Crawford River. Bulahdelah is an Aboriginal word and is said to mean "the meeting of the waters". It is in the heart of the Great Lakes on the Mid North Coast of New South Wales. Bulahdelah is the gateway to Myall Lakes and has a unique historical background of mining and timber cutting. Its major features include Myall Lakes National Park, Bombah Broadwater, Myall River, the town of Bulahdelah itself, Myall River and Wang Wauk State forests, Alum Mountain, O'Sullivan's Gap Flora Reserve and The Grandis, the tallest known tree in New South Wales. Bulahdelah is an ideal destination for family, adventure or boating holidays and romantic escapes, allowing time-out from the hustle and bustle of everyday life.

I congratulate the 2013-14 incoming board of directors for the Bulahdelah Lions Club: president, Rob Kent; past president, Arthur Baker; first vice president, Glen Dafter; second vice president, Pam Gardiner; secretary, Roger Dixon; minute secretary, Robin Gregor; treasurer, Ruth Butler; first year director, Les Tattersall; second year director, Russell Chapman; tail twister, Ian Mason; lion tamer, Rob Williams; membership, Roger Dixon; and public officer, Rodney Lansdowne. I congratulate the Lions Club on the fantastic work it is doing. Bulahdelah has been bypassed by the Pacific Highway and the Lions Club has been working extremely hard with the council and the State Government to ensure that the town does not die as a result.

Over the past 12 months, the Bulahdelah Lions Club has donated just over \$30,000 to many local organisations and causes, including \$3,500 for picnic shelters in Lions Park. Lions Park is being developed as a grey nomad stop and for people travelling the Pacific Highway to pull off the road and rest. Bulahdelah Lions Club has also invested \$6,000 into a dump point at the showgrounds to encourage the grey nomads to stop in Bulahdelah. The club has also made donations to other organisations, including the Bulahdelah Scouts, and has donated \$1,000 each term to the Central School for the Red Cross Breakfast Club. It has also made donations to the Bulahdelah Preschool, the Bulahdelah playgroup, the Bulahdelah Tennis Club, the Bulahdelah Shotokan Karate Club, the Bulahdelah Country Women's Association, the Lions Save Sight Foundation and other Lions causes. The wonderful thing about the Bulahdelah Lions Club is it works hard and the funds raised are donated to worthy causes within the Bulahdelah community. It is true to say that without the Lions Club in Bulahdelah the community would not be as rich as it is today.

I congratulate each member of the Bulahdelah Lions Club: Kay Aitken, Kevin Aitken, Helen Amendoila, Arthur Baker, Betty Baker, Patricia Baker, Louise Barry, Wayne Barry, Carolyn Burrows, Kenneth Burrows, Ruth Butler, Ailsa Jane Carryer, Jeffery Carryer, Paula Chapman, Russell Chapman, Glenn Dafter, Helen Dafter, Judy Dixon, Roger Dixon, Katherine Dorney, Jean Frater, Pamela Gardiner, Phillip Gardiner, Paul Gregor, Robin Gregor, Nicky Hammerl, Jack Ireland, Thora Ireland, Rob Kent, Robert Lansdowne, Ian Mason, Maria Mason, Phillip Mason, Sam McCorriston, Kate Milford, Andrew Moncrieff, Rod Reddie, Bill Onley, Graham Rowell, Stephen Smith, Thora-Lou Smith, Gary Suckling,

Patrice Suckling, Colleen Sumner, Laurie Sumner, Carol Tattersall, Les Tattersall, Robert Williams and Yvonne Williams. They all do a fantastic job. I would like to close with a poem, *Ode to Bulahdelah Lions*:

To the townsfolk and the local bloke Bulahdelah is their home town  
It's settled in a special place - no one can put it down  
But there's many changes coming - there's little they can do  
When the highway finally does go pass, the tourists they will too

So those who cared rolled up their sleeves to stand and to fight  
They'd "build their town" and they'd do it with all their might  
They knew they needed some help - and wanted something with clout  
Rotary and Apex all okay but Lions Clubs International won out

So they're improving the park and chopping some wood  
And they know their time on Driver Reviver does lots of good  
They are working hard, doing all they can and giving it all they've got  
They're refusing to let their lovely little town become a parking lot.

I commend the Bulahdelah Lions Club for the work they do for their community.

### DAFFODIL DAY

**Mr MATT KEAN** (Hornsby) [7.33 p.m.]: I pay tribute to the hundreds of people in Hornsby who made donations or supported Daffodil Day on Friday. Daffodil Day is an important national fundraising event for the Cancer Council that aims to raise research funds while also assisting cancer sufferers and their immediate family members who are affected by this terrible disease. Some members are aware that each day more than 100 Australians will die from cancer. It is a shocking statistic that needs to be addressed. Last year my family experienced first-hand the devastating impact of cancer when my dad was diagnosed with prostate cancer. I am happy to report to the House that dad has overcome cancer and is tracking well. That is because of the efforts of government and the community to fight this disease and to invest in research. I know that this is an issue close to the heart of many members in this House. I acknowledge the member for Oatley, who is in the Chamber and who I know has been personally affected by this disease. The member has used his time in this House to advocate for more funding for research into cancer and I pay tribute to him and his family tonight.

With more funding, the Government can work together with the Cancer Council to provide better treatments options, give renewed hope for more survivors and eventually find a cure. This long-term aim to eradicate cancer was helped last week by the generous residents in my electorate who donated their time and money to support the Daffodil Day cause. On Friday the Rotary Club of Hornsby led the community by example by setting up a merchandise stall at Hornsby train station. I joined the Hornsby Rotary Club representatives to sell products to raise money for cancer research in support of Daffodil Day. It was a cold morning, but I was delighted to see many residents generously support a great cause; it makes a tremendous difference across the State. These dedicated volunteers braved the cold weather to meet the morning commuters at 7.00 a.m. and continued their Cancer Council sale until 6.00 p.m. that evening. I joined the volunteers at the merchandise stall for my second successive year and thank the Rotary members for their ongoing charitable efforts and dedication.

Hornsby Rotary Club is ably led by a wonderful and indefatigable individual, Gail Farr. She is a tremendous friend to me and many people in our community. I take this opportunity to pay tribute to her tireless work in our community. She was well supported by Stephen Bruce and Robert Caldwell, who is a great Rotarian, great Hornsby resident and all-round great bloke. He has been a wonderful friend to me. I acknowledge his tremendous work for Hornsby Rotary for many years. Gail Farr was ably supported in her efforts not only by Rotary club members but also by a variety of other community representatives, including Hornsby RSL TPI Branch President, Ray Davis, Crosslands Rotaract Club President, Nick Webb and Billy Hestor of Mount Colah Probus Club. Ray Davis was unaware we were promoting Daffodil Day, but being an avid Facebooker he saw it on my Facebook page and met us in the morning. So I give a big shout to Ray for when he reads this later on Facebook.

The group of volunteers warmly welcomed me into their team and offered me my very own Rotary apron to start selling. I thank them for their kind hospitality and much-needed sales advice to grab the attention of busy morning commuters for a donation. As an honorary member, I am well aware of the great charitable initiatives of Rotary throughout our local community and abroad. Through Rotary's efforts, last Friday the Cancer Council raised \$6,870, which is a big achievement for the volunteers and the club. Charitable not-for-profit groups such as Rotary need to be recognised for these achievements and applauded for their outstanding community work every week of the year.



I share with the House a few of Rotary's other major international projects and programs. Rotary's best known international project is its global polio campaign, which has had huge international success and has reduced the number of polio-affected nations to just three countries. This is a remarkable achievement and proof of what can happen over time when organisations like Rotary work towards a set goal. Another program I recently learned about is Rotary's Shelterbox initiative. This is a transportable emergency survival kit and gives displaced people a box of essential supplies and lifesaving equipment. The contents are specifically tailored to the local environment and type of disaster. This means that a greater number of people can be helped much more quickly and efficiently.

I applaud Rotary for its ongoing efforts. It is greatly appreciated by all levels of government and goes a long way to assist our nation's foreign aid funding programs. I recognise the many other community groups who sold Daffodil Day merchandise last week, including Lions Club Australia, Probus Clubs New South Wales, View Clubs of Australia and the NSW Police Force. To all these clubs and groups, and any I have missed, the New South Wales Parliament says thank you. In closing, I remind the House that Daffodil Day merchandise remains on sale for the rest of August and donations can also be made online on the Cancer Council's website.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE** (Bathurst—Parliamentary Secretary) [7.38 p.m.]: I thank the member for Hornsby for praising those involved in Daffodil Day. We all know cancer is a dreaded disease. Many of us in this place know someone or have a family member who has been touched by this dreaded disease. Daffodil Day is an opportunity for us to raise awareness, raise funds, promote and talk about prevention programs, support patients and help with research. I commend the member for Hornsby for also giving up his time last Friday to be involved in this important charitable event. When we achieve a cancer-free future, we will truly know that we raised funds from all tiers of government, individuals and service organisations to combat this dreaded disease.

### EDUCATION WEEK

**Mr MARK COURE** (Oatley) [7.39 p.m.]: On 29 July 2013 I had the great pleasure of welcoming the Premier of New South Wales, and Minister for Western Sydney, the Hon. Barry O'Farrell, and the Minister for Education, the Hon. Adrian Piccoli, to Georges River College Penshurst Girls Campus to officially open Education Week this year. Along with the director general of Education and other dignitaries, we witnessed a showcase of what makes the New South Wales public education system one of the best in the world. Education Week is an opportunity to acknowledge the achievements of students, staff, parents and community members at each of our 2,223 State public schools. I was delighted to have Education Week begin this year in Penshurst at the Georges River College. The dedication, tireless work and high-standards of our many teachers and educators across our public schools provide our students with opportunities the envy of other Australian States.

The New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Government is working tirelessly to equip our schools, teachers and students with the resources they need. It is a great honour to be part of a government that is doing such wonderful work within our school system. I am very proud to be a strong advocate for our local public schools within my electorate. In particular, I am working hard to improve infrastructure and safety for all our students and local communities. I have worked hard already and successfully lobbied for a number of outstanding projects. Of course, the first is the approximately \$5-million replacement of the dome at the Georges River College Peakhurst Campus with a brand new purpose-built school gymnasium and hall. The current dome was built in the early 1960s and is one of only five such domes that remain around the State; from memory, the Hunter Valley has one. The domes are old, outdated and are being replaced slowly. This Government is definitely honouring its commitment to replace the Peakhurst High School dome.

Approximately \$5 million will be provided for a new school building at Hurstville Public School, which is one of the largest public schools in the State. I am a regular visitor to the school, which has more than 1,000 children and a large multicultural community. We are building a brand new building to replace the demountable rooms to house the students. Of course, over the past 2½ years I have lobbied strongly for school crossing supervisors for some of our schools. Community and school safety is important for any community. We have successfully provided a number of school crossing supervisors—lollipop ladies—over recent years, including at St Declan's Primary School, Penshurst Public School and Hurstville Public School. Many schools have campaigned for school crossing supervisors for many years. It is a great win for the community and for me to have lollipop ladies appointed last year and this year.

Another project is a new school security fence for Peakhurst South Public School, which I spoke about last week in giving the House an around-the-grounds update of what is happening in my electorate. The entire community was behind our campaign for a new and improved school fence for Peakhurst South Public School. The school community has campaigned for that fence for more than eight years, and this year's State budget

included the required funding. That is a big win for our local community and all involved. I am very proud of the multi-campus high school that covers the majority of my electorate—the Georges River College with campuses in Hurstville, Penshurst, Peakhurst and Oatley. Many students who enter the Oatley Senior Campus for years 11 and 12 achieve some fantastic results in their Higher School Certificate. On Monday this week I presented many school awards to the students. I was especially proud to present awards to two students for services to the community. This shows the amazing results of many of our schools. Being married to a schoolteacher, who has taught for more than 15 years, I hear many stories about and see the outstanding results her school and many others in my electorate are producing.

**Private members' statements concluded.**

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans):** Order! Private members' statements having concluded, the House will now proceed to discussion of the matter of public importance.

**NATIONAL SKILLS WEEK**

**Matter of Public Importance**

**Ms CARMEL TEBBUTT** (Marrickville) [7.52 p.m.]: I ask the House to note as a matter of public importance National Skills Week. National Skills Week is now in its third year and is dedicated to raising the status of vocational learning, dispelling the myths and showcasing the opportunities for young and old. More than 400 events are occurring across Australia that showcase the vocational education and training sector. These events highlight the talents and skills of apprentices through things like the WorldSkills competitions. They focus on the achievements of Indigenous people and women in non-traditional trades, and they also celebrate all the dedicated teachers and trainers who are involved in the vocational education sector. In short, the week seeks to highlight the diversity that is our vocational education and training sector. That sector has been the foundation of Australia's strong and vibrant economy. We all know that the path to improved productivity and a stronger economy is through a more highly skilled population. Numerous studies demonstrate the need to increase the number of people with vocational qualifications. For example, Skills Australia estimates that Australia will need an additional 2.4 million people in the workforce with qualifications in certificate III level or higher by 2015 to meet projected industry demand and to replace skilled workers. It also estimates that funding at an additional 3 per cent a year will be required to meet this need.

In New South Wales we are fortunate to have had a very strong vocational education and training sector within which TAFE has had a preeminent role. TAFE plays a critical role both in delivering the skills training needed by the New South Wales workforce and in providing second-chance education. TAFE in New South Wales is, of course, an institution. It can trace its establishment back to a decision by a committee of the Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts in 1978 to form the Sydney Mechanics' School of the Arts Working Men's College, which became known as the Sydney Technical College. Numerous studies have highlighted the value that TAFE adds to our economy. For example, the 2006 Allen Consulting Group report found that TAFE NSW will provide a 640 per cent return on government investment. So for every \$1 invested by government the sector returns more than \$6 to the New South Wales community. Just today the Minister for Education referred in his press release to the results of extensive stakeholder and community consultation that shows the people of New South Wales clearly value the contribution TAFE NSW makes, with 96 per cent of respondents who were aware of TAFE saying its services are valuable to the State. The same study found that 94 per cent of respondents say it provides a valuable contribution to training people for business and industry, while 97 per cent feel that TAFE is very important in providing apprentice training.

All of this tells us that investment in TAFE pays significant dividends over and above the actual value of the investment. It is good for business, the community and the economy of New South Wales. Importantly, we know that vocational education and training provides for the whole community. It meets the needs of industry and business by providing skills training. It provides skills recognition services and training for people who are unemployed. It delivers training for young people who did not complete year 12 and do not have a job or who, for other reasons, are disengaged from education. It also provides an opportunity for mature-age people who missed out on education earlier in life to return to study and learn valuable skills. So the people of New South Wales are rightly proud of TAFE, and in National Skills Week we celebrate all of this. We must also acknowledge that this is a time of tremendous change in the vocational education and training sector, and that not all of this change is good. Many people in New South Wales look south to Victoria, see the disastrous impact of the Victorian Training Guarantee and fear that we are heading in the same direction with the O'Farrell Government's Smart and Skilled reforms.

We have already seen TAFE's budget cut, and 800 teaching and non-teaching jobs slashed. We have seen the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal release a report that recommends massive increases to fees for vocational students, and the Government has made clear that Smart and Skilled means increased contestability. This will mean a diversion of funds from TAFE. So while we celebrate National Skills Week let us also commit ourselves to a strong and vibrant public provider of vocational training in New South Wales. National Skills Week is a great opportunity to focus on the importance of the vocational education and training sector to our economy and to our day-to-day lives. Every day we depend in some way on the services and support of someone who has vocational qualifications—whether it be the electrician who makes sure that our lights are working, the plumber who fixes the toilet, the hairdresser who cuts our hair, or the mechanic who fixes our car. And let us not forget the tremendous contribution that people trained in the vocational education and training sector—the artists, the designers and the book illustrators, to name a few—make to our creative and cultural life. I pay tribute to the students and staff in National Skills Week.

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL** (Northern Tablelands) [7.57 p.m.]: It is a great pleasure to speak on this matter of public importance about National Skills Week. I thank the member for Marrickville for initiating this discussion. National Skills Week is an opportunity to showcase the important role of vocational education and training in this country, and to highlight the key connections in New South Wales between training, skill development and jobs. New South Wales needs a strong and responsive training system to lift workforce participation and deliver the skills that industry needs to grow our economy. New South Wales industry is well served, as the member for Marrickville said, by TAFE NSW and a range of private and community training providers. However, we know we need to build on this capacity to ensure that more people are engaged in training. So on the occasion of National Skills Week it is appropriate to reflect on the vocational education and training sector, our achievements to date and the challenges in the future.

There is no better example of the achievements of vocational education and training in New South Wales than our recent efforts on the world stage. The Australian Skillaroos participated in the WorldSkills International Competition in Germany last month. Sixteen participants—half the national team—were trained and supported in New South Wales. The Skillaroos managed to come away with an impressive haul of 19 medals. New South Wales achieved one silver medal to Jessica Martin for restaurant service, one bronze medal to Lachlan Mayled for welding and seven medallions of excellence. I was very proud recently to attend a function in Inverell to congratulate Lachlan on this achievement. He is a very proud and valued employee of Bindaree Beef in Inverell. He studied his trade at the Armidale campus of the TAFE New England Institute. He is a top young man and has a huge future ahead of him. Well done, Lachlan!

The skills sector continues to evolve and grow. Almost two decades ago there were 1.1 million vocational education and training students across Australia, with around 390,000 in New South Wales. Last year there were more than 1.9 million students and nearly 600,000 of those were in New South Wales. The profile of learners has changed dramatically. In the early 1980s, one in three vocational education and training students was a young male. Apprentices and trainees were overwhelmingly young men under the age of 25. Today more than 15 per cent of apprentices and trainees are 45 years and over, and that figure is steadily rising. Our skills and training sector has to be especially agile to adapt to new job roles and new skills, especially in areas such as sustainability, and new approaches to energy and technology. The sector is always in a state of evolution. To cater to our diverse range of students, the skills and training sector has been exploring innovative and flexible ways of delivering training. Technology has now completely reshaped our learning style, not just our lifestyle.

On Monday this week I was pleased to be able to join the Premier and Minister for Education to open the new \$7.9-million facilities at Armidale TAFE to support delivery in fitness, allied health, hospitality, and screen and media—including simulated work environments and industry-standard facilities. Having walked through the facilities and talked to the students there, I know that they feel lucky to have world-class facilities, and are enjoying it. I pay tribute to TAFE New England Institute Director Alison Woodland and Campus Operations Manager Peter Fahey on this fine addition to TAFE in our region. I also thank the Premier and the Minister for Education for opening those facilities. Over time, the nature of our skills sector has changed and so too should the way we deliver these services change. We are undertaking major reforms in New South Wales to enhance the capacity of the skills and training sector.

From July 2014 Smart and Skilled reforms will introduce: an entitlement for eligible individuals to entry level training; better targeting of government funding to ensure that the skills of individuals in industry are met; support for disadvantaged groups in regional and remote areas; strengthened quality standards for publically funded training providers; and enhanced consumer information to support informed decisions about training. We will build on our achievements so far to ensure that the skills and training sector continues to grow and evolve to meet the changing needs of business and industry. Events such as National Skills Week help to

raise the profile of the skills and training sector in the eyes of all Australians. It is an opportunity to celebrate and acknowledge the central role that skills play in our community and economy. I thank the member for Marrickville for bringing this important issue to the House tonight.

**Mr CLAYTON BARR** (Cessnock) [8.02 p.m.]: I also speak with pleasure about National Skills Week and thank the member for Marrickville for bringing this matter of public importance to the Chamber. This year the theme of National Skills Week is "Hands and Minds—The DNA of skills and trades". It is dedicated to raising the status of vocational learning, dispelling the myths and showcasing the opportunities for young and old. My electorate of Cessnock is extremely fortunate to have a number of TAFEs that have been the backbone of vocational education and training. Unfortunately, according to data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics, the electorate of Cessnock also has the least educated population in New South Wales, coming last out of the 93 State electorates.

The other reality is that we have the lowest number of people who continue training beyond school. With that in mind, I bring to the attention of the House that only 40 per cent of my constituents in Cessnock continue with training after their school years. An enormous 80 per cent of that 40 per cent get their training through one of the TAFE providers in my local area. Indeed, Kurri Kurri TAFE is one of the leading national trainers in the heavy vehicle industry, which services the coalmines, which service the electricity industry and provide royalties for this great State. The popularity of Kurri Kurri TAFE is so great that students are being turned away. Teachers work exceptionally long hours and extra days through their holiday periods to educate more students. Classes are being scheduled one after the other to get as many students through as possible. The teachers feel the need to give their students the best possible training.

This is well supported by industry groups that ensure the heavy machinery, equipment and vehicles are located on site at TAFE for the students to work on. The State Government is in the process of redeveloping an extension wing so that the number of classes can increase. Representatives of the mining industry regularly tell me that apprentices from Queensland, Victoria and Western Australia are flown in to train at Kurri Kurri TAFE because it provides the best education and training in Australia. With that in mind, I hope we do not go down the path of Victoria, where TAFEs have been completely decimated. Industry groups hold the education provided at Kurri Kurri TAFE in high regard. National Skills Week is an opportunity for us to celebrate premier training venues such as the Kurri Kurri TAFE.

**Ms CARMEL TEBBUTT** (Marrickville) [8.05 p.m.], in reply: I thank the member for Northern Tablelands and the member for Cessnock for their contributions to this important debate. The member for Northern Tablelands spoke about the Australian Skillaroos. I congratulate the medal recipients, particularly those from New South Wales. We can be forgiven for being partisan on this occasion because, as the member for Northern Tablelands indicated, half the team trained here. There is no doubt that the Armidale TAFE campus and the Kurri Kurri TAFE campus—both of which I have visited—are extremely well-recognised campuses that contribute enormously to their local communities. I concur with the comments of the member for Cessnock regarding the important role that the Kurri Kurri campus plays in respect of the local economy and the local businesses. As the member for Cessnock indicated, there is certainly a need in his electorate to increase the number of people who have post-school qualifications. We all recognise, and research clearly demonstrates, the link between improved educational qualifications and better incomes, better employment opportunities and improved quality of life.

I take issue with one of the comments made by the member for Northern Tablelands regarding the entitlement to training. This is important. There is a lot of discussion about how Smart and Skilled will give people an entitlement to training. The reality is that the people of New South Wales already have an entitlement to training: They can attend their local TAFE campus and undertake a whole range of vocational education and training opportunities, just as they can attend other vocational institutions. What is concerning is that Smart and Skilled will limit this entitlement because people will be able to attend and undertake training only in courses that are on the skills list. Fine arts is not on the skills list, and therefore the people of New South Wales will no longer be able to train in this area. They will have an entitlement to one Government-subsidised training course. It is particularly important that as we celebrate National Skills Week the people of New South Wales understand that Smart and Skilled could lead to fewer opportunities to undertake vocational education and training. That would be a great loss. As I said at the outset of this discussion, it is National Skills Week so let us reiterate our commitment to a strong public provider in TAFE and the importance of vocational education and training in New South Wales.

**Discussion concluded.**

**The House adjourned, pursuant to standing and sessional orders, at 8.08 p.m. until  
Thursday 29 August 2013 at 10.00 a.m.**

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