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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Thursday 31 October 2013

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

The Speaker read the Prayer and acknowledgement of country.

POLICE INTEGRITY COMMISSION

Report

The Speaker tabled, pursuant to section 103 of the Police Integrity Commission Act 1996, the report of the Police Integrity Commission for the year ended 30 June 2013.

Ordered to be printed.

AUDITOR-GENERAL'S REPORT

The Clerk announced the receipt, pursuant to section 63C of the Public Finance and Audit Act 1983, of the Auditor-General's Report for 2013, Volume Three, received 31 October 2013.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Order of Business

Mr BRAD HAZZARD (Wakehurst—Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Infrastructure NSW) [10.02 a.m.]: I am endeavouring to honour the commitment I made to members that private members' statements and the matter of public importance that were due to be debated last evening would be dealt with sometime today. I can inform the House that the likelihood is that those matters will be dealt with after debate on the petition signed by 10,000 or more persons and before the giving of community recognition statements, but I will confirm that during Government business this afternoon.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Notices of Motions

General Business Notices of Motions (General Notices) given.

CRIMES AMENDMENT (ZOE'S LAW) BILL 2013 (NO 2)

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 17 October 2013.

Mr ANDREW FRASER (Coffs Harbour—The Assistant-Speaker) [10.11 a.m.]: I have listened intently to the arguments on both sides of the debate about the Crimes Amendment (Zoe's Law) Bill 2013 (No. 2). I say from the outset that I have not met with Zoe's parents, Brodie and Nick Donegan. I have read the legislation and I look at it on the basis of the arguments for and against put not only within this House but also by those who have lobbied me and, I would guess, a number of other members. I believe this bill is about justice; I believe it is about closure; I believe it is about third parties. We have heard a lot of arguments made against this legislation, probably because Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile introduced a first draft in the upper House and because of his anti-abortion stance.

I state from the outset that I believe abortion and issues relating to women's health generally should be left to the women of this Parliament and other parliaments in Australia. I do not believe that I as a man have a right to dictate to anyone else what they should do in relation to abortion. No law is perfect. Anyone who

suggests that any piece of legislation is perfect has rocks in their head. Ultimately the member who introduced this bill is trying to give some closure to parents—not only the parents involved in this particular case but all parents. I find it a huge anomaly that on one hand we have legislation that says a foetus of 20 weeks has to be named and given a funeral service yet on the other hand we cannot recognise within a court of law that a life has been lost due to an irresponsible or illegal act by a third party.

I believe that members of this House have an obligation to ensure that there are no grey areas, and I do not believe there are grey areas within this legislation. I draw to the attention of the House what the member for Sydney said in his contribution to the debate. He said:

In overseas law, I understand that recognition of the status of a foetus has been used against pregnant women who have addiction problems.

I say to him and other members of this House: What has overseas law got to do with this bill? This is about New South Wales law. It is about a bill before this House. If members were to look at proposed section 8A, they would see that it clearly states that medical procedures et cetera will not be covered by this legislation. I read the speech given by the member for Monaro in this debate, who stated:

I strongly feel that until a foetus achieves an independent existence it should not be granted legal personhood in its own right. Giving personhood to a foetus may affect the lawfulness and accessibility of pregnancy termination services in New South Wales.

I say to my colleague the member for Monaro—

Mr Jamie Parker: He is a good bloke and a very good member.

Mr ANDREW FRASER: He is a good bloke and a good member. He is a member of The Nationals. He is a good fellow. But how can he make such a statement and at the same time not suggest that we introduce legislation dealing with the naming of a child and the funeral of a child? If we can identify Zoe as a person under the Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Act then why on earth can we not identify a child as a person when his or her life is lost? I have been to Westmead Hospital and seen babies of less than 20 weeks survive given the right medical care. I imagine they would grow to adulthood. I commend the member for Fairfield for his contribution to this debate. He said:

... it is about justice. Not justice for the unborn person, but justice for those left behind who have had their hopes and dreams shattered by another with little or no respect for the real victims.

I think everyone in this House has heard of cases—and quite often we hear about them and read about them in the papers; and we see an example on the front pages of the papers in Queensland at the moment—where people do not believe the judiciary has taken the appropriate action in relation to a crime. If a person drives a vehicle when they are affected by drugs or alcohol then that is a criminal offence. If in taking that action they then take a life, even if it is a foetus of only 20 weeks gestation, I believe that foetus, which would under normal circumstances have been born a healthy baby, has a right to retribution.

As I said, the retribution provided in this legislation should be meted out by the courts not in response to an act of grievous bodily harm on the mother but as a crime in itself. To me this bill is a way of defining that, a way of giving closure and a way of providing justice. We as members of the New South Wales Parliament have an obligation to support this legislation for anyone who may find themselves in this situation. I support the bill.

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Parliamentary Secretary) [10.17 a.m.]: I will not repeat the background to the Crimes Amendment (Zoe's Law) Bill 2013 (No. 2), which I assume by now is well known to the listeners to and the readers of this debate. Initially I was inclined to oppose this bill on the basis that: first, destruction of a foetus is already recognised under the Crimes Act as injury to the mother, whether or not the mother is otherwise injured, so the bill seemed to lack any practical purpose; second, professional groups like the Australian Medical Association and the NSW Bar Association raised objections to, among other things, what were said to be the possible unintended consequences of the bill; and, third, being cautious and weighed up against these matters, any advantages of the bill did not seem to be overwhelming.

But I have now swung around to the view that the bill should be supported, with amendment. Last week I circulated my proposed amendment, hopefully to all members. I now table a new copy of it, with one typo having been corrected in the meantime. If the bill passes the second reading stage, I will then formally

move the amendment, which I understand the member for The Entrance will accept. The amendment aims to do two things. First, it aims to put beyond doubt that the bill will not criminalise anything that is not presently criminal. The amendment does so by the simple, clear technique of expressly declaring that the bill does not criminalise anything which is not presently criminal. So any innocent, negligent or intentional termination of a pregnancy which is presently lawful remains lawful.

Secondly, the amendment aims to make it clear that a court is not to increase the overall penalty that it would have otherwise imposed anyway before the passage of this bill. So the fact that the bill recognises an offence as being committed against an unborn child would not become the basis for a new, greater penalty than what exists now when it is instead an offence against the mother. Likewise, where both a mother and an unborn child are injured the fact that after the bill is passed there would be two offences—one against the mother and one against the unborn child—would not be a basis for a greater penalty than at the moment when there is deemed to be only one offence, namely, against the mother. I am not wedded to any particular wording for the amendment. I am happy to take on board any suggestions for improving the wording of the amendment I have circulated to achieve the two aims that I have described, namely, no extra criminality and no extra penalty.

If the amendment were carried the bill would not have what some would call any practical consequence in terms of extra criminality or penalty. All the bill would do is reclassify in some specific defined circumstances, in a way which could be said to be symbolic, what is presently deemed to be an offence against a mother as an offence against an unborn child instead in the same circumstances in the future. Some will legitimately ask: If that is all you are doing, why bother with the bill? The answer to that question is short and simple. The functions of criminal law include not only punishment, deterrence and protection of the public through incarceration but also helping victims. Recognising the death of an unborn child is likely in some small way to help the grieving process for parents such as Brodie Donegan. It represents a compassionate approach to parents in her predicament. That was best expressed in the words of Brodie Donegan when she said:

Why have we done all of this? Because from a victim's perspective, we wanted to have our loss acknowledged. We held our daughter. She was real and existed. Had she been born in any other circumstances she more than would have likely survived without any lasting complications.

A common theme of the contributions of those speaking against the bill is that there is somehow a consensus of medical and legal experts who oppose the bill. Scratching the surface of these opinions of doctors and lawyers we see that we should not oppose the bill on that basis. Objections from medical professional groups have generally been on the basis that the bill could, at least unintentionally, expose medical practitioners to greater risk of prosecution in performing terminations or other medical procedures. I am grateful to the Australian Medical Association for its prompt and detailed response to my email query about its concerns, but my proposed amendment would make it clear that there would be no such consequence of exposing medical practitioners, or anyone else for that matter, to greater risk of prosecution, because anything that is presently lawful would remain lawful.

There are uncertainties in the law regarding abortion. Abortion in New South Wales is said to be legal if there is "any economic, social or medical ground or reason" that an abortion was required to avoid a "serious danger to the pregnant woman's life or to her physical or mental health". That is open to interpretation. Whether that is too liberal or too strict when applied in practice is irrelevant to this debate. The bill leaves the grey areas in place and has no effect on them because it does not deal with terminations. Critics say that there is uncertainty in the bill about what is covered by the expressions "medical procedure" and "consent" of the mother. But the expression "medical procedure" is already in the Crimes Act dealing with deemed offences against the mother. The bill simply uses the identical expression in relation to offences against an unborn child that would replace or supplement offences against the mother. The bill does not introduce any new uncertainty or expressions. This point was missed in the letter circulated to members yesterday by Women's Legal Services NSW, which commented on my amendment.

The Bar Association, of course, has a long history of fearless and constructive commentary on proposed legislation. The association letter of 6 September 2013 to the member for The Entrance, who introduced the bill, indicates two concerns. The first is that use of 20 weeks and 400 grams as criteria to define an unborn child is "arbitrary". In response, I say that is no reason to reject the bill if amended in the way I propose. The law is full of arbitrary cut-offs, but no-one suggests that we should not have speed limits, prescribed concentrations of alcohol, ages of consent or ages of adulthood because wherever we draw the line is arbitrary. Further, the criteria in the bill are not capricious. My new section 8A (6) answers the Bar Association's concern about injustice caused by differing sentencing outcomes depending on which side of 20 weeks or 400 grams a foetus falls. With my proposed amendment the bill has no effect on sentencing discretion. The

letter from Women's Legal Services NSW circulated to members yesterday raises the existence of a discretion in sentencing but misses the point about my amendment. With my amendment, however else the discretion is to be exercised is unaffected by the bill. Of course, 20 weeks and 400 grams are consistent with the criteria in the Birth, Deaths and Marriages Registration Act 1995.

The Bar Association's second concern is what it calls the "broader implications of the bill". The association puts this in two ways. The first is apparently that it would then be difficult to resist comparable legislative changes to other criminal laws. The Bar Association is predicting what someone might or might not do in this House at some future date. That is a political judgement; it is not a legal judgement. With respect, the Bar Association does not have any greater expertise on that judgment than anyone else. We are not debating possible future changes to legislation. Speculation about what legislators might or might not do in the future is simply irrelevant to this debate and amounts to jumping at shadows. The second way in which the Bar Association puts its concern about what it calls the "broader implications of the bill" is that there is uncertainty for late-term abortions connected with the medical procedures exception and consent. But as I have said, those uncertainties are in the current law and the bill if amended will not increase them. With my amendment, it will be clear that the bill is not about abortion or medical procedures.

Some have referred to the 2010 report of the Hon. Michael Campbell, QC, as an expert view that no law reform is needed. The report carefully addresses what I might call questions of adequacy of prosecution and punishment, and finds that the current law is adequate. But, in my respectful view, the report fails to deal with victim impact. The main motivation for opposition to the bill in some quarters seems to be a fear that this is some kind of slippery slope towards a future legislated change to abortion law. That ignores that in our legal system rights and responsibilities are defined on a case-by-case basis in a detailed way by the courts and ultimately by Parliament, which is accountable to the people, rather than rights generated in a sledgehammer way by a bill of rights. That means we can fine-tune our laws to best deal with conflicting rights and interests in complex circumstances.

For example, despite a general recognition of free speech we can pass laws specifically dealing with defamation, obscenity or vilification. Likewise in this situation, the law does not need to make blanket definitions across the board of when a foetus becomes an unborn child or treat all intentional, negligent or accidental deaths of a foetus in the same way. We can tailor our laws to deal precisely with complex issues without slogans or making sweeping generalisations. I support the bill with my proposed amendment because it helps address victims' needs and does so entirely separately from and without affecting the current law—whatever that is or should be—concerning the role of mothers, medical practitioners and others in terminations.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD (Macquarie Fields) [10.27 a.m.]: I oppose the Crimes Amendment (Zoe's Law) Bill 2013 (No. 2). I do so with a heavy heart out of respect for the loss of Zoe in utero on Christmas Day 2009 and what it has meant to Brodie Donegan and her partner, Nick. I recommend that members read Brodie Donegan's article in *The Guardian* dated 13 September and read or listen to the recent law report on Radio National. We are legislators. It is our duty to produce black letter law which is clear, which follows the intention of a bill and which will not have ramifications that will lead to unforeseen changes in case law for the seven million people of New South Wales. We heard the member for Cronulla outline a second amendment to this major piece of legislation. This bill is a game changer. To amend it not once but twice before it is voted on shows how poorly drafted it has been.

This bill is the first of its kind in Australia. The object of the bill is to amend the Crimes Act 1900 to recognise the separate existence of the foetus of a pregnant woman that is of at least 20 weeks gestation as a living person so that proceedings for certain offences relating to grievous bodily harm may be brought against an offender who causes the unlawful destruction of or harm to any such foetus rather than proceedings for grievous bodily harm to the woman. In effect, this change grants the foetus the legal concept of personhood. The bill expands the concept of personhood to a number of crimes including grievous bodily harm and traffic offences. The current common law concept of personhood is that it commences at birth. That has been the case for many years. This bill is a game-changer. This is a very significant change to New South Wales legislation. The member for The Entrance stated in his second reading speech:

The bill does not, nor does it intend to, have any impact on doctors, nurses or other health practitioners or anyone in the medical fraternity who is involved with or provides assistance to any medical procedures or treatments. The bill does not, nor does it intend to, have any bearing on a woman's right to choose.

If only that were actually so in the black letter law of this bill. That is why the absence of the Attorney General from this debate is so troubling. One of the few areas of agreement among all members in this debate is that this bill may have significant legal ramifications. Under Standing Order 85 the Attorney General still has unlimited time to speak during debate on this bill. He must do so.

We have heard the impassioned words from Government members about the devastating effect of the loss of Zoe Donegan on her family. Now we need to hear from the chief law officer of this State both on why this bill is good law and for guidance in the future to courts on how this bill, if passed, is to be interpreted. As with all bills, future courts need and use the second reading speech of the Minister with carriage of the bill for guidance as to interpretation of the bill. To have the relevant Minister vote for a bill of which he has carriage and not to say a word in debate is unprecedented. This is not discretion being the better part of valour. This is dereliction of duty.

All good legislation involves four things: identification of the risk group, proposal of a clear and unambiguous legal solution, stakeholder consultation on the proposed solution, and widespread support and input from those who will need to implement the changes. This bill should be judged as law on all four counts, and on all four counts it does not provide the solutions that we would all wish, and for which we all hope, for the Donegans. The provisions of this bill were the subject of a Campbell review in October 2010, and a change to provisions concerning grievous bodily harm of an unborn child was expressly not recommended because the conclusion was that the current law was adequate.

The bill before the House, even with its amendment, is revisiting an area that already has been extensively adjudicated by most legal authorities who have said that this proposed law will only make a very difficult decision even more difficult. The application of the definition of unborn child from one context—the Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Act 1995, which stipulates greater than 400 grams or 20 weeks gestation—in a different context, the criminal law, has been raised with concern by all legal and medical experts. Why should a foetus of 19 weeks and six days be regarded differently from a foetus of 20 weeks? The Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Act 1995 does not state that the foetus is alive. Accurate estimation of gestational age is fraught with inaccuracies.

What if the baby dies in utero, is born macerated a week later, and weighs 399 grams? The arbitrary nature of the dividing line will require very different sentences, based on which side of the line created by the definition under this bill the foetus falls. This is before the spectre of further ramifications of the law. How can a procedure designed to aid the mother, such as a late-term termination for inevitably fatal congenital malformations, be allowed—for example, malformations of the heart or head that are incompatible with life—if such a procedure will allow the destruction of another person, even allowing for the exemptions in the bill, which were modified twice—not once, but twice—after the introduction of the bill? This change, which adds the words "medical treatment" to those medical procedures, is significant. This is legislation on the run.

Late changes such as this do not allow all members to pursue due diligence and consult the stakeholders who raised concerns that have led to this change in the first place. This does happen. When a family is told that their 20-week gestation child has an inevitably fatal congenital malformation, such as anencephaly or hypoplastic left heart syndrome, they need to be able to choose their own way of dealing with that devastating scenario, rather than having politicians decide it for them. Many of those malformations are diagnosed only at 16 weeks. This legislation would certainly affect those families, which is precisely why the Australian Medical Association [AMA] opposes this legislation. The Australian Medical Association objects to any legislative amendment or creation of a criminal offence that recognises an unborn child as a legal entity independent of its mother. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

Recently, most members of Parliament received a letter from Right To Life Australia asking members of Parliament to endorse this bill. If this bill is not about abortion law, why are groups such as that one writing to members of Parliament about it in the first place? A medical insurer, MDA National, also has written to members of Parliament to urge them to vote against the bill as this bill certainly will have effects on medical care. Those who say otherwise do so to pursue their case. All the medical experts are quite clear: This bill certainly will affect medical practice. Not one of the medical bodies, the Australian Medical Association, the college of obstetricians or the medical insurers, has expressed any support for this bill. That is because they know the effect that this will have on an already very difficult discussion. The Legislative Review Committee also referred to the need for caution. Its report states:

The Committee refers to Parliament for its consideration matters relating to offences against an unborn child, with particular respect to establishing a separate offence of grievous bodily harm that causes harm to, or the destruction of, that unborn child.

When considering legislation such as this, three things need to be answered: the risks of things going wrong; do viable alternatives exist, and were others saying "Don't do it"? In short, the medical term for this is "First, do no harm". With regard to the risks of things going wrong, the consensus view of the medical professions is quite clear: this change to the black letter law will adversely affect the practice of medicine in this State. The answer

to the second part of things to be considered—do viable alternatives exist?—is yes, the status quo. Both the New South Wales Bar Association and the Law Society have said that the "criminal law in this area is satisfactory". As the Bar Association said, "... the existing law provides protection for the foetus, irrespective of its length, gestation or size, while it is in utero." The Law Society opposes the bill and considers that the law in New South Wales adequately deals with the criminality involved when an offender intentionally, recklessly, or through criminal negligence or through dangerous driving harms a pregnant woman, thereby harming or destroying a foetus.

This bill has been the subject of minimal consultation with anyone involved in this field. In fact, all members should indicate what briefings they have had and by whom, whose advice they have sought, and how they have come to their conclusion. This bill is novel. It has no real precedent in Australia. It has unseen and unknown ramifications that are concerning to professional bodies who expressed their opinions after the introduction of the bill. In fact, the NSW Parliamentary Research Service's briefing note by Lynsey Blayden states:

Although the conceptual change to the criminal law has been specifically limited in a number of ways, it is significant in nature. It is difficult to comment on possible unintended consequences of this change, if any.

The briefing note also states:

Although Zoe's Law Bill (No 2) takes a different approach to the Nile Bill, it raises some similar complex legal, ethical and medical issues. At the very least it can be acknowledged that this is a difficult and contested area of the law.

They are the reasons I will not support a bill that does not even have the support of the Government: The Attorney General has chosen not to say one word in public under any circumstances. It is unprecedented in this Parliament for a Minister not to say a word in relation to a major change to a ministerial bill. This has not happened in the history of New South Wales. If the bill were good law, it would have been introduced by the Minister responsible, in this case the Attorney General, who I understand will support the bill, even though he has not said a word. Those who support or oppose this bill should at least say why. This has been a four-year battle for Brodie Donegan. The least she deserves is that every member of Parliament shows that they have given careful consideration to her family's pain, and explains their position.

With previous conscience votes, such as those on stem cell legislation, the Minister responsible was pivotal in the introduction and conduct of the debate. I support the bringing of a bill on this issue before the House. This is a discussion that needs to be had, and the best place to have it is in the Parliament. If only due process had been followed, a draft bill could have been written by the Attorney General's office with all of the stakeholders having been consulted. As a bill prepared with sufficient consultation, it could have gone to the entire community—general public and experts—before being introduced so that amendments may have been foreshadowed and adopted by the Government. The Government can still introduce a bill that requires a conscience vote, but it must go through the Cabinet process.

This has not gone through Cabinet for a reason—because it would not have got through, because it is dodgy law. It is as simple as that. This is a complex issue, a game-changer with unknown ramifications for each of the seven million people in New South Wales. This should never be left to the resources of a private member. No member of this House has any idea—even those with legal backgrounds—of the ramifications of this bill if it were to be passed. This makes it very different from almost every other piece of legislation in this place. This bill is a significant improvement on the previous Zoe's law, as introduced by the Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile. However, the bill is not the answer that the Donegans or the people of New South Wales need and deserve after the tragic loss of Zoe.

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie) [10.40 a.m.]: I appreciate the opportunity to make a contribution in this House to the debate on the Crimes Amendment (Zoe's Law) Bill 2013 (No. 2). At the outset, like many others, I express my deepest sympathy to Brodie and Nick and acknowledge their remarkable courage and conviction in working closely with their local member, Chris Spence, in bringing this bill before the New South Wales Parliament. As a parent of two beautiful children, Ben and Meredie, who have grown up to become adults of whom I could not be more proud, I cannot begin to comprehend the enormity of the tragedy that Brodie and Nick have suffered. To lose one's child is every parent's worst nightmare. Despite their loss they have, through their shared determination and resolve, advocated to see justice done and to rectify what they consider to be an unfair legal decision.

As a previous chief executive officer of the Sudden Infant Death Association and someone who has had dealings with parents who have also experienced the sudden loss of a child, I do not think we can truly

appreciate the length and complexity of the unimaginable, heartbreaking pain that comes with such a loss. As members of this House we are given opportunities that few in our community have—to represent the people in each of our electorates but, more significantly, to make decisions that will impact on every person who resides in this State as we debate legislation that is presented to us. Therefore, I take very seriously decisions that we make, particularly decisions such as that which confronts us in this bill. In coming to a decision, I have considered the impact it will have on the broader population.

I believe I share the view of many members of this House that this has been a difficult decision. It is a decision where many opinions and views have to be considered—views of professionals, constituents, religious leaders, colleagues, friends and family. These then need to be balanced with our personal views, based on our values and beliefs. In considering the bill over the past weeks I have taken into account the extensive and comprehensive quantities of literature that support arguments for and against the bill being debated here today. Certainly, as the weeks have passed, my concerns relating to the ramifications of our decision have deepened. My concerns are threefold: Firstly, the necessity for these amendments to the Crimes Act; secondly, the unintended consequences of the amendments and the potential impact on women's reproductive rights; and thirdly, the validity of the arguments opposing the bill.

Each of these concerns has already been discussed in detail by previous speakers so I will be brief in my comments. Let me say again that I in no way underestimate the enormity of the tragedy that has led to the proposed amendments but the professional opinion provided to me puts in question the necessity of the amendments. As we know, the Crimes Act was reviewed in 2010 by the Hon. Michael Campbell, QC, to specifically appraise the laws surrounding criminal incidents involving the death of an unborn child. In fact, the executive summary in the final report indicates that the review was initiated as a result of the accident involving Brodie and her unborn child, Zoe, and, in doing so, considered the appropriateness of the response to criminal acts involving the death of an unborn child.

I note that the review received submissions from a broad range of individuals and organisations, including Brodie Donegan. Michael Campbell concluded, however, that amendments to the Crimes Act were unnecessary and that the current offences and maximum penalties responded appropriately. He therefore did not recommend the introduction of any further offences. Whilst I acknowledge that Brodie and others may find these recommendations unfavourable, I believe that the examination of the current legislation has been thorough and in fact focused specifically on the amendments being debated today. Secondly, whether it was the intention of the Crimes Amendment (Zoe's Law) Bill 2013 or not, I believe that it will have an impact on the legal status of abortion in New South Wales. The enormity of Brodie's tragedy is not in question here but what is in question is the repercussions of declaring a foetus of 20 weeks gestation, or 400gms or more, to be a "living person". A decision by this House to affirm such a definition would set an unfavourable legal precedent and negatively impact on a woman's reproductive rights in this State. The very prescriptive nature associated with the definition of a "living person" in itself is concerning and I can imagine us revisiting it when a tragedy occurs resulting in the destruction of a foetus that does not meet these markers.

Finally, whilst I am well educated and have two degrees, I am not for one moment going to profess to have an insight into the legal processes and intricacies associated with these proposed amendments. Therefore, as a member of Parliament it makes sense that I would seek advice from those who are experts in this field in formulating my final opinion. The arguments presented by the NSW Bar Association, which have been discussed at length in this House; the Australian Medical Association; and the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists expound the fact that the bill is unnecessary and all agree, along with many other stakeholders, that the current law suffices. That is, that the term "grievous bodily harm" does include the destruction—other than in the course of a medical procedure—of the foetus of a pregnant woman, whether or not the woman suffers any other harm. Grievous bodily harm carries a maximum prison sentence of 25 years.

For the reasons I have outlined, I will not support the Crimes Amendment (Zoe's Law) Bill 2013 (No. 2) as it is presented. I acknowledge all members for their contributions. It has been a tough decision for all of us but I am proud to be part of a group of people who have shown immense respect for each other throughout this process, who have listened intently to each other's views and who I know will continue to share our mutual intention—to reach a decision about this bill that we believe is right.

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson) [10.46 a.m.]: I have listened to and read a considerable volume of information related to the Crimes Amendment (Zoe's Law) Bill 2013 (No. 2). This includes quite a few submissions from my constituents. While the majority of communications were against the bill, these were

generally of a standard campaign format. Those advocating for the law to be passed were more personal and included an email from a constituent named Bernadette. The following are excerpts from her correspondence and I quote them with her permission:

Like Brodie Donegan, I experienced the still birth of my first born son Francis in 2002 at 36 weeks' gestation. I cradled my son at 3.00 a.m. in the morning after my bloods were stabilised, my lifeless little boy who looked like he was sleeping. I wanted him to wake up so I can feel him move like he did when he was in utero. That never happened

...

Unlike Brodie Donegan my son died from natural causes. Brodie's child Zoe died because of the negligence of a 32-year-old driver who was under prescription drugs on Christmas Day, who hit Brodie and subsequently killed baby Zoe. Brodie's loss of her third child must leave her gutted, like being hit by a daylight robbery of her child, her healthy baby girl. I share her pain of wonder of what Zoe may have become in life, of the love she would have brought into the family, of the joy she would have brought to her siblings, of the care she would have shown in time for her sibling who needs full time care.

I note that under the Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Act 1995, a stillborn foetus at 20 weeks' gestation is required to be registered as a birth in New South Wales. The definition of "unborn child" for the purposes of this bill is identical to the definition of "stillbirth" in the Act. The law states that all stillborn babies post 20 weeks have to be registered on the birth and deaths register as a human being and given a burial or cremation. Yes a human being who once lived in utero, born into a family with a mother, father and with siblings, if any are living at the time of the child's birth. Yet for reasons of legal matters when it comes to charging the negligent driver in Zoe's case, the baby is classed as a foetus without any recognition of the child as a living human being. Why is there a differentiation between the two?

Brodie Donegan and her family are grieving for a child killed in utero from the negligence of a driver under the influence of prescription drugs. Yet the courts will not recognize Zoe as a child, a living human being who deserves the protection of the law that all human beings born alive enjoy. But to be born alive, we must have been living in utero.

I call upon you as my elected representative to vote yes to Zoe's law that will match the definition of a baby killed in utero by the negligence of others for the purposes of criminal law to that under the Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Act 1995, when a stillborn foetus at 20 weeks' gestation is required to be registered as a birth in New South Wales and given the status of a once living human being. Therefore in the courts the baby will be recognized as a living human being, the living human being it was in utero. When babies in utero die due to the negligence of others, the perpetrator needs to be held accountable for their untimely loss of life.

I quote my constituent Bernadette because I have not experienced that situation. This debate needs to listen to the accounts of others, whether it be Brodie, Bernadette or anyone else. I respect and acknowledge that other perspectives and views also need to be listened to, and I have attempted to do that. The Bar Association opposes this bill, arguing that the present law is satisfactory. I do not agree. As Brodie Donegan said:

From a victim's perspective there should be a separate charge for the loss of the baby.

She said also:

Any baby lost in any horrific or violent way due to someone committing a criminal act should count, should be included ... and should be recognised.

In my opinion, it is appropriate to be able to criminally charge an offender with grievous bodily harm to the foetus, not just to the pregnant woman. Importantly, one of the purposes of our criminal legal system is to recognise harm done to victims. Having said that, for me the main issue centres around whether, when and how to recognise a developing child before its birth. Some people argue that there should be no recognition. Should a developed foetus have any independent recognition or legal value in our society before it takes its first breath outside its mother's womb? It appears that society already has answered this in the affirmative, as parents of a foetus that dies from 20 weeks gestation are obliged under State and Federal laws to give that child, like Zoe, a name, apply for a birth and a death certificate, and hold a funeral. A child born prematurely from 25 weeks or before certainly is capable of surviving independent of its mother.

Various women's groups oppose this bill. I attended part of a briefing session from such groups in the Parliamentary Theatre. The New South Wales Bar Association representative indicated that this bill poses no direct threat to women's rights, although he and various speakers representing women's groups identified potential indirect consequences for pregnant women who may not wish to give birth for various reasons. However, as others have emphasised, this bill is not about abortion and does not intend to affect existing legal rights. In addition to the specific protections incorporated in the bill, I expect that if a matter causing hypothetical concern ever reached a court, this debate would be quoted to make clear the legislative intent.

To the extent that unintended consequences of this bill may remain, I am happy to reduce that potential by supporting the amendment foreshadowed by the member for Cronulla. I point out also that women do not currently have unfettered or unlimited reproductive choice in seeking termination of a pregnancy in absolutely any circumstance—presumably because society ascribes some independent value to an advanced foetus pre-birth. It is difficult to understand that the criminal law does not recognise an advanced foetus other than as a

mere appendage of a mother's body; but that is not to say that such a developed foetus should attract exactly the same status as a newborn infant. A foetus should not be entitled to the full range of human rights but, equally, should be afforded some status in its own right pre-birth.

As I said earlier, I acknowledge the various protections in this bill designed to balance those rights and those of a potential mother who chooses not to give birth. These protections extend to a threshold of 20 weeks or 400 grams. That threshold is not arbitrary as it has clear precedent under the Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Act 1995. The legislation specifically exempts terminations performed by medical procedures or treatment. Likewise, a woman is exempt from being charged for any termination with her consent. The rights of women should not be ignored, including those in difficult personal situations; but under New South Wales criminal law it is not appropriate to deny the existence of a new human life in the latter stages of development pre-birth. Despite clear intentions to the contrary, those opposing the bill seem at worst to point to potential indirect and unintended effects on women in certain circumstances. On the other hand, the death of an advanced foetus directly and gravely affects both it and its parents, who lose the opportunity to see their newborn grow. Losing someone such as Zoe in the circumstances in which her life was taken should have some separate criminal recognition. For these reasons, in the exercise of my conscience, I support the bill.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! I ask that the sign be removed from the public gallery. I appreciate that people have strong views about this subject, but the proceedings of the House will be conducted in an orderly fashion. Those who display signs in future will be removed from the gallery.

Mr JAMIE PARKER (Balmain) [10.57 a.m.]: On behalf of The Greens I speak against the Crimes Amendment (Zoe's Law) Bill 2013 (No. 2). I acknowledge the terrible loss experienced by Brodie Donegan and her family. I understand that she seeks this outcome as part of a genuine attempt to remedy a perceived problem in the law. I have given careful consideration to the bill and to existing law, and I have read articles by Brodie Donegan as well as submissions from the Bar Association, the Australian Medical Association, women's groups and many of my constituents. This difficult issue has been born of profound grief and loss. Nevertheless, I simply cannot support this bill. I acknowledge all who have been involved in the campaign to raise awareness and understanding of the worrying implications of this bill. I recognise also many of those people in the gallery today. I highlight the following organisations that tirelessly stand up for the reproductive rights of women, which this bill threatens: Rape and Domestic Violence Services Australia, Women's Health NSW, Family Planning NSW, F Collective, Women's Electoral Lobby, Community Legal Centres NSW, Women's Legal Services NSW, National Foundation for Australian Women, and the many students and others who have been active on this issue.

I am very concerned about issues raised by the Australian Medical Association, Bar Association, and Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, all of which oppose this bill. I will address the amendments in the consideration in detail process, but it is important to note that this House has just 19 female members, yet 74 male members. In the other place, there are 13 women and 29 men. The gender imbalance in our governments and, more broadly, our society needs to be addressed urgently. The under-representation of women shames us all every day that we allow it to persist, but especially on days like today. The fact that so many men are deciding the law about a women's body is simply not right. Today I speak on behalf of the hundreds of women who have written to me outlining their concerns about how this bill may affect their reproductive rights. Many parts of the bill have been discussed by members, but The Greens have a number of particular concerns. I will focus on three issues.

It has been said before that this bill is simply not necessary. The current extended definition of "grievous bodily harm" under the Crimes Act 1900 is adequate and does not require amendment. The Crimes Act was amended as recently as 2005 to address the destruction by a person of a foetus of a pregnant woman against her wishes. Section 4A of the Crimes Act 1900, states that the destruction of a foetus other than in the course of a medical procedure constitutes grievous bodily harm against the woman whether or not the woman suffers any other harm, and the maximum penalty is 25 years imprisonment. The 2010 "Review of Laws Surrounding Criminal Incidents Involving the Death of an Unborn Child" by the Hon. Michael Campbell, QC, recommended against creating a distinct offence. The report concluded that current offences do allow the justice system to respond appropriately. This matter does not require further amendment and should be closed. The bill would create a charge of grievous bodily harm to a foetus, which is a measure that has been identified as highly problematic by medical and legal professions. The Australian Medical Association stated:

The view of Australian Medical Association (NSW) is that the current extended definition of "grievous bodily harm" under the Crimes Act 1900 is sufficient and should not be amended. Any further extension of the legislation, to create a charge of grievous bodily harm for a child in utero, in our view, would have unintended consequences and flow on effects in other areas of medicine and, indeed, the law. Further, Australian Medical Association (NSW) objects to any legislative amendment or creation of a criminal offence which recognises an unborn child as a legal entity independent of its mother. Our immediate concern is that such recognition would create unnecessary complications across several of members' specialities, such as genetics and obstetrics.

This clearly highlights the views of the medical profession and the problems associated with this legislation. The second point is that this bill would provide personhood status to the foetus, which is unprecedented in New South Wales. Foetal personhood is a concept that is used to restrict or ban safe abortions. We know this from the experience of other jurisdictions, such as the United States.

There are claims that this bill may not have a direct impact on women's right to abortion, but it will set a precedent in the same way that the Births, Deaths and Marriages Act is being used by members to justify this step to personhood. The bill will be a stepping stone to the foetal legal personhood concept, which is a problem. Similar provisions have been legislated in other jurisdictions that have resulted in mothers being prosecuted when it is determined that they have acted contrary to the "living person" that they are carrying. If this bill is passed by the New South Wales Parliament there is no question that it will establish a point that will be used in future legal arguments regarding attacks on lawful abortion in New South Wales. I do not need to remind anyone that abortion is still unlawful in New South Wales.

There is no doubt that this bill will have flow-on effects to other areas of medicine and of law. We heard the legal debate today between those who support it—for example, the Law Society or the Bar Association—and those who do not. Barristers have argued whether the bill is significant and about its content and implications. It is clear that this matter will be judged in the courts, with barristers putting forward different views. That is why matters such as this should not be brought to the House. A number of representatives of women's organisations and groups have contacted me voicing clear and well-considered concerns about the bill and how it will impact on the reproductive rights of women, including those affected by domestic violence. One of the groups is a women's refuge in my electorate that supports women and children who have experienced domestic and family violence. It wrote:

Whilst we are intimately aware of and have grave concerns for the damage caused to mothers and their fetuses through acts of domestic and family violence, we do not think the Bill is necessary or appropriate. Indeed, our service works with women to empower them and to exercise their rights, including reproductive rights. We have serious concerns that the proposed Bill if passed will impinge upon women's reproductive rights.

The fight for women's rights is not just the responsibility of women. I congratulate the many women and men on campaigning for women's reproductive rights. I am committed to continuing that fight alongside them. The Greens will continue to work towards repealing all laws that restrict the right of women to choose abortion and the laws that restrict access to services. This is part of the process of moving towards an equal and just society. Promoting women's rights helps to create a respectful, just and prosperous community for us all. It is clear that, despite attempts to amend the bill—which do not resolve the problems—it should not proceed.

Those of us who are defenders of women's rights believe the existing laws are not good enough and that women's reproductive rights are not secure. The issues raised in this bill are highly contested in the legal and medical professions, which should send a strong message to all members in this House that we are going down a dangerous path. I speak directly to members who are in the Chamber and to those who are watching this debate. It is clear that, even with the changes that have been made to this legislation, there has not been an adequate opportunity for a full review—an open process, as mentioned by other members—and a draft bill or discussion paper, or an opportunity for people to interact. We are receiving amendments at the last minute that are seeking to resolve clear and obvious problems in the legislation.

If members have a shred of doubt about the implications of this bill, if they have seen the letters from contesting barristers arguing about the definition and impact of this bill, they should vote against it. If members are not sure about any aspect of what this bill does or if members have a concern in their minds, they should vote against it. If members do not think this bill will make a difference, they should look at the contesting arguments. Members have attacked the New South Wales Bar Association. It is a heavily contested legal area. This bill will bring unintended consequences. If members respect the views of the Australian Medical Association and the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, vote against this bill. If members support the New South Wales Bar Association and the Law Society, vote against this bill. If members support women's rights, vote against this bill. If members know what has been fought for and won in the battle for women's rights over generations and do not want to be a party to undermining those rights, vote against it. I oppose the bill.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! I remind visitors in the public gallery to remain silent during the debate. I appreciate that this is an emotional subject and that people have strong views on either side of the debate, but this House expects respect from those in the public gallery.

Mr JOHN WILLIAMS (Murray-Darling) [11.08 a.m.]: Mr Deputy-Speaker, I am aware and accept that my speech could be interrupted. I respect the work the member for The Entrance has done with his constituents Brodie and Nick and acknowledge the tragic accident that resulted in the loss of their child. The member for The Entrance attended The Nationals party room and briefed its members on the Crimes Amendment (Zoe's Law) Bill 2013 (No. 2). When I heard the briefing I could not understand why the bill was contentious. I understand common sense, but understanding the intricacies of law is much harder.

Not long after that I was approached by various organisations who related their understanding of the bill. I then began to receive correspondence from the Law Society of NSW and a number of other organisations. That triggered alarm bells in my head about this process. It is the normal process in this State for developing law to be brought forward by the Attorney General. A draft exposure bill—such as this one—is presented for consideration by all stakeholders. Members must then make a decision, but we do not always reach consensus. Changing the law involves a recognised process and everyone is given the opportunity to express an opinion. Introducing this change through a private member's bill is of real concern to me. The legislation should have followed the normal process; it should have been introduced by the Attorney General and presented as a draft exposure bill. In that way people like me would have some degree of protection.

Backbench members put their trust in the Cabinet process. Ministers introduce legislation in this place in a tried, tested and proven way. The process might not be perfect and not everyone agrees with it, but I am concerned about the introduction of this private member's bill. Regardless of whether that process is right, wrong or different, it has not been handled in the best way. Allowing members a conscience vote is a clear indication of a lack of confidence in this bill. We are seeking to change a law yet I do not understand the bill. One thing is for sure: We cannot control the judicial system. Indeed, some judicial decisions are far from what we would like them to be. Members are aware of the level of public discontent with our judicial system, which finds voice from time to time in public protests. A constituent told me that I have to support this bill, and I told her my views. I cannot support the bill in its current form. I do not believe the process is correct. If the law is worthy of change then it should be done in the correct manner.

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

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! It being after 11.00 a.m., the House will now consider Notices of Motions (General Notices).

RACISM

Mr JOHN WILLIAMS (Murray-Darling) [11.13 a.m.]: I move:

That this House notes the alleged assault on a group of Jewish people in Bondi last week and condemns any form of racism in Australia.

In this country we have assimilated a great range of different ethnic groups. As an Australian I grew up with the principle—as I am sure most members did—of respecting the rights of others to practise their beliefs. The events that played out in Bondi last weekend concern me. But the commentary that members of Parliament are exposed to in the media as a consequence of the actions of one particular Australian political group is more concerning. We do not want to bring the troubles of another country to Australia. Indeed, it is the responsibility of those in the Middle East to resolve the difficult and complex situation in that region—John Kerry and others are certainly working towards that.

But The Greens decided that they would single out the Israeli state and sought to introduce the international Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions campaign to the Australian political scene. That was a retrograde step for this country and those who put it to the Australian community should be condemned. I said yesterday that if Christine Milne were a true leader she would dissociate herself from those who have decided that that sort of campaign should be run in this country. In Australia we leave those sorts of campaigns alone and we let people get on with their lives. Too much of this sort of thing is happening, and Mr David Shoebridge, MLC, is a repeat offender. He says in the upper House that he does not support anti-Semitism but then does something totally different outside. His comments are often concerning.

I will highlight a couple of media articles on this subject. Tim Blair's article in the *Daily Telegraph* last Monday reminded me of some actions in our country that could trigger racial attacks. Unfortunately, they give thugs some sort of legitimacy to carry out such attacks. It does not help the cause if The Greens decide to take

action against the Israeli state, and we must condemn them for that. The Greens member for Balmain is a good member; I doubt he would be part of this campaign. But it is unacceptable for people like The Greens Councillor Cathy Peters on Marrickville Council to move those sorts of motions. The Greens should not associate with people like that; they should control their rank and file. It is totally unacceptable for people to protest against businesses run by Jewish people.

Mr Bryan Doyle: Legitimate businesses.

Mr JOHN WILLIAMS: Certainly. They are legitimate businesses that are part of the Australian culture. It is absolutely disgraceful to single out those individuals. There was a call for Christine Milne to speak up, but no-one is buying that because nothing has changed. We have to put an end to this today. We must say to The Greens: This is unacceptable. They cannot continue to run a campaign in this country against something that is far outside our control. It is an international situation that is being managed a long way away from us. Unfortunately, there are so many different factions involved that there complete confusion. I do not think anyone could achieve a positive outcome, and certainly The Greens are not helping. A serial offender on this issue is Lee Rhiannon, who moved from the New South Wales upper House to the Senate. She seems to be continuing the hatred. We do not need that in politics. We are here to do a job, and it should not involve hatred.

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) [11.20 a.m.]: The attacks that occurred on Friday 25 October 2013 were sickening to the core. In today's modern society we would not expect that anything so heinous could still occur. One expects that in today's society such cowardly acts of hate have been rendered non-existent. After all, it is not a new concept that individuals with different views, faiths, cultures and backgrounds should live closely together in the same community without fear or prejudice. That is the way our modern multicultural society functions. It is unfortunate that, even in today's accepting, multicultural and understanding society, there are still sporadic bouts of racism here and there. They are symptomatic of an archaic mindset that needs to be eliminated. I spoke recently in Parliament in a discussion on a matter of public importance about the "Racism. It Stops With Me" campaign. On that occasion, I said:

Racism often lurks in the shadows of any vibrant multicultural community looking for any opportunity to rear its ugly head

Unfortunately, this is all too true. Unfortunately, there are still cowardly individuals throughout the world, much like those who physically assaulted and racially abused two Jewish families last Friday. And for what? For no other reason than that they were Jewish. Hate crimes are deplorable, and it is a crying shame to see this happening in our local Sydney communities. Something must be done. The "Racism. It Stops With Me" campaign is an example of a viable method of reaching out to our communities to curb racism. The message is quite simple: We must remind every resident of New South Wales that the solution to stopping racism rests with each one of us. Our homes, our schools, our workplaces and our communities are places where the message against racism should be heard. We know that through education, tolerance and acceptance we can stop racism—and it needs to stop.

I recall hearing stories when I was growing up of the racism and intolerance in Sydney during the 1950s. It is something I never quite understood as a young child. During the 1950s there were bouts of what was known as "wog bashing". This occurred throughout Sydney and the greater metropolitan area. My uncle Joe explained to me how he and his relatives and friends had to travel in groups as it was unsafe to travel alone because of wog bashing that targeted Italian migrants. As a child I could not comprehend what this really meant. It was not until I was a 30-year-old adult that I finally understood when my neighbour Gino told me of similar experiences he had upon his migration and settlement in Western Sydney.

Racism has been an ongoing problem for many years, and one expects it would have been eradicated. However, these abhorrent sentiments still exist within dark corners of our society. I have had many opportunities over the years to attend a large number of multicultural functions. I have been privileged to see firsthand the interfaith connections between a large variety of our cultural and religious groups. I have seen firsthand how often the Jewish community spreads the word about interfaith dialogue. I have seen their kindness, friendship and willingness to include everyone, no matter where they come from or what walk of life they follow, in everything and anything they do.

During my time as a member of Parliament, I have had the opportunity to sit down at the Maroubra Synagogue with members of the Jewish community and to speak with Rabbi Elie Farkas. We spent the morning discussing our faiths and our communities, together with the member for Heffron. I have met with Mr Phil Roberts, Principal of the Mount Sinai College. A piece of information that astounded me about his appointment

is the fact that he is not Jewish but is the leader of a Jewish school. That speaks volumes about the level of acceptance and inclusion that this community exhibits and highlights the community's welcoming nature and ability to see past what so many others still cannot. The Jewish community in Sydney are constantly reaching out not only to members of their community but also to anyone else who is willing to accept the hand of friendship offered.

I recall sitting down and sharing a meal with the member for Cabramatta, Nick Lalich, the member for Heffron, Ron Hoenig, and member of the Legislative Council, Shaoquett Moselmane. During the meal, Ron Hoenig said with a grin, "Isn't this great? A Jew, a Serbian Orthodox, an Italian Catholic and a Lebanese Muslim can all sit down, break bread and discuss our beliefs, our communities and our cultures without any worries whatsoever." What a shining example of a multicultural dinner in today's society—if I do say so myself. Since the incident on 25 October, I have conversed with Mr Vic Alhadeff from the New South Wales Jewish Board of Deputies and offered my thoughts and prayers to the Jewish community. Vic advised me that the attack last Friday was incredibly vicious and gave me a few details about what the attackers said to their victims. The words exchanged during this vicious attack are not fit to be repeated in this Chamber.

It is evident that this hate crime was unprovoked and has shocked the community. Members on both sides of the House are involved with a number of community and multicultural groups. They attend their functions and actively engage in celebrating their holy and significant commemorations. The fight against racism has received, and will continue to receive, bipartisan support. We must continue the fight to eliminate racism throughout our State and to ensure that every person enjoys the gift of diversity that has made this State and this nation the greatest places on earth.

Ms GABRIELLE UPTON (Vaucluse—Minister for Sport and Recreation) [11.27 a.m.]: I acknowledge the presence in the public gallery of my good friend Vic Alhadeff, the Chief Executive Officer of the New South Wales Jewish Board of Deputies. I also acknowledge Yair Miller, the President of the New South Wales Jewish Board of Deputies, with whom the Government and I have been in constant contact since the attack on Friday. I join the member for Murray-Darling, the Premier and the Minister for Citizenship and Communities, the Hon. Victor Dominello—who is in the Chamber—in strongly condemning the alleged anti-Semitic attack in Bondi in my electorate last Friday.

Yesterday in Parliament I gave notice of a motion strongly condemning the incident, and that motion is now on the *Business Paper*. It is important for us all to speak up on this issue. I am very proud to represent New South Wales electorate with the largest Jewish community. It is a vibrant and inclusive community. It continues to make a vast and valuable contribution to my electorate, the State and our broader community. I have many dealings with the Jewish community, and they are close and warm dealings. The Jewish community—in a way that other communities would aspire to—reach out beyond their own community and work with other community groups to show them ways they can be better. They also take stories of the Holocaust to rural and regional communities and educate them about other dark aspects of history. In this way they make communities aware of racial and religious discrimination and prejudice at a broader level. They open the eyes of young people in our schools to the danger it can present. I commend them for their strong communal work outside the Jewish community.

I am proud to be the chair of the New South Wales Parliamentary Friends of Israel. Until about two months ago when I became the Minister I was co-chair, with the member for Davidson, of the Jewish Ministerial Consultative Committee. That is a policy-based group that acts as a liaison to government and is made up of Government members. The Parliamentary Friends of Israel is a bipartisan group. The Hon. Walt Secord from the upper House is the deputy chair. Through our bipartisan membership we seek to build an understanding of Israel and the Jewish people and have undertaken two study tours. In January we spent five wonderful days in Israel building an understanding of the people and the challenges faced by a democratic nation in the Middle East. The Minister for Citizenship and Communities joined us on our second and most recent trip.

I am saddened and concerned by the incident at Bondi and the claims that the victims were targeted because of their religion. New South Wales is a proud State. Many cultures make up the fabric of our State and that diversity is one of our greatest assets. Our communities thrive on living harmoniously together. We value our peace and harmony, so racial and religious hatred has no place on our streets. Let me make it absolutely clear: New South Wales will not tolerate anyone being attacked on the basis of their beliefs, religion or racial background. We have zero tolerance for discrimination of any kind and everybody has the right to feel safe here. My thoughts are with the victims and the Jewish community at this difficult and distressing time. I commend the motion to the House.

Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron) [11.31 a.m.]: The recent anti-Semitic attack in Bondi has bewildered Jews around the world and received considerable publicity. Jews in Australia have known anti-Semitic acts before; however, the attack in Bondi in which five Australian Jews were wounded was distinguished by its extreme violence and ferocity. The world knows Australia is a safe country that values the Jewish community. The attack last Friday will not change those views, but it has caused many Jews to stop and think about the tragedies that we as a people have suffered in our history.

It is easy to forget that anti-Semitism occurs all too frequently around the world. At the same time that five Jewish Australians were attacked in Bondi, there were massive anti-Jewish protests in Denver, Colorado, where people yelled out the slogan, "Long live the intifada". In other words, they were calling for continued violence against the Jews of Israel. Unfortunately, there has been a massive surge in anti-Semitism around the world, including in South America, North America and Europe. It is often not as crude as the event in Bondi; sometimes other terminology is used or other acts are committed such as those that have occurred during Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions campaigns.

Australia is a tolerant country. When I am walking through East Lakes in my electorate wearing a kippah on my way home from Shabbat dinner it is not unusual for me to pass members of the Muslim community who greet me in a friendly fashion. Save for one exception when I first sought to gain political office, I have not experienced any form of threat or anti-Semitic attack. I am aware that they happen, but they do not happen frequently. However, I can tell members of the House that many people in the Maroubra Jewish community with whom I associate, particularly on Shabbat, are now concerned about wearing a kippah in the street. As a result of last Friday's attack they are wearing baseball caps to try to disguise that they are Jews who are on their way home from Shabbat dinner. Friday's attack in Bondi is a reminder that although Jews might be dispersed across many nations, we are also part of a single Jewish nation that is continuing to struggle for a legitimate place in the world. We seek a world of peace rather than persecution.

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson) [11.35 a.m.]: Last night I represented the Premier at the annual dinner of the Jewish National Fund. The fund has earned international respect for enhancing the quality of life of many people in Israel and for its environmental initiatives. Her Excellency, Governor Marie Bashir, and Shlomo Ben-Haim were among the guests at last night's event. Shlomo was one of the six Australian Jewish community members who were attacked in Bondi last Friday night. I saw his facial injuries and spoke with him about the incident. While it appears the vicious attack was not planned, there is no doubt in my mind that the group was targeted in substantial part because of their race or religion. The situation has understandably prompted calls for justice and tolerance.

While there have always been unprovoked and seemingly senseless attacks, incidents such as this and that involving Tom Kelly in Kings Cross last year cause us to reflect upon how we can better promote peace and understanding in our society. I commend the recent second annual Harmony Walk, initiated by Ernie Friedlander, the launch of which I was pleased to support earlier this month. As my former co-chair and now Minister for Sport and Recreation mentioned, I am chair of the Jewish Ministerial Consultative Committee. In large part the committee represents the portfolio of the Minister for Citizenship and Communities, who will speak soon in this debate.

In my capacity as chair of the committee, member of the New South Wales Parliamentary Friends of Israel group and the local member for a substantial Australian Jewish population in my electorate of Davidson, particularly in the suburb of St Ives, I strongly condemn vilification of Jews or any minority group in our community. I acknowledge the excellent work of groups such as the Jewish Board of Deputies in promoting better interfaith and intercultural understanding and tolerance. The board's "Respect, Understanding, Acceptance" Program annually brings together about 1,500 students of multiple backgrounds with the aim of generating respect for diversity and emphasising the need to speak out against racism. I congratulate the Jewish Board of Deputies on the program, which is run under the excellent leadership of President Yair Miller and Chief Executive Officer Vic Alhadeff, who, as has been acknowledged, is in the gallery today. I offer my sympathy to the victims of Friday's attack and lend my personal support to calls for appropriate justice and tolerance.

Mr NICK LALICH (Cabramatta) [11.39 a.m.]: My contribution to debate on the motion relating to the Bondi attack will be brief. I thank the member for Murray-Darling for moving the motion. The attack needs to be aired and we need to speak about such issues when they occur. I also acknowledge the presence in the gallery of Mr Vic Alhadeff, who is the Chief Executive Officer of the Jewish Board of Deputies. It is very nice of him to be here, and I thank him. Together with other members I offer apologies to the people who were attacked in Bondi last Friday. I am very sorry for that. I have to say that on behalf of my fellow Australians because what happened last Friday was not Australian. That is not the way we operate in this country.

I was a refugee who came to this country in the late forties with my family. We lived in Bonny Rigg in the Cabramatta electorate, and I still live there. My electorate is a multicultural society comprising 130 different nationalities that speak 70 different languages. We also have 50 different religions. We get along so well together that we have no racial problems. It is terrible to see racist attacks such as the attack on Asian people on a Melbourne bus, the abuse of a French woman on a Melbourne bus in 2012, violence directed at Indian students in Harris Park in Parramatta in 2009, and Chinese students being attacked last year on a CityRail train going to Hurstville. It is terrible to hear about those attacks.

I agree with earlier comments that the attacks were spontaneous and not targeted. Some people behave differently when they are in a group. They might notice that someone looks a little different and will racially abuse them. Bibbys Place, Bonnyrigg is probably only about 150 metres long but it has a mosque, a temple, a Vietnamese community centre and a Christian church side by side. The tolerance that exists in our area is obvious when those four community groups hold their religious festivals and community get-togethers and they share car parking spaces. How could we get any more love and friendship coming from a community than that?

We do not see that in many other countries, but in Australia we do. We have so much unity in Cabramatta because we all know what each community went through to come to this country: We all went through it. In the fifties we were racially abused as wogs and whatever else, and we suffered that; but that stopped happening after a couple of years. Anyway it was usually done at school by young kids because something was said to them or they simply got upset. It was not really meant in an angry way; it was simply what children normally do. Children do not understand that they could be hurting people's feelings. I am terribly sorry about what happened last Friday. I do not have a great number of Jewish people in my electorate, but I have many Jewish friends. They are beautiful, friendly and kind people and they have done a lot for this country, and those who live in my electorate have done a lot for my local area.

For the sake of all of our multicultural communities, the incident that occurred last Friday at Bondi should not be tolerated or accepted. What happened was un-Australian and we should ensure that it never happens again. If necessary, we should strengthen our laws against racial discrimination and racial attacks. Despite these attacks, our Australia is a beautiful country that displays tolerance and acceptance of multiculturalism.

Mr VICTOR DOMINELLO (Ryde—Minister for Citizenship and Communities, and Minister for Aboriginal Affairs) [11.43 a.m.], by leave: I join the member for Murray-Darling in condemning the alleged anti-Semitic attack on two families that took place in Bondi. I also offer my support to those families and the broader community. When we are young, we are idealistic; we think in absolutes. As we age and as we bear the struggles of our human journey, we realise that life is increasingly more grey than it is black and white. However, there are some absolutes that we must carry with us throughout our collective journey. Arguably, the most important absolute is to be completely intolerant of racism.

The deepest scars of humanity were caused by the blade of racism. Our history book is stained with such scars. We need only peruse recent chapters in the book of our history to understand the depth of those scars. We all know of the traumatic circumstances and the huge loss of life during World War II from 1939 to 1945 when more than six million Jews perished. As we move forward from that point, we see that from 1975 to 1979 more than two million people were killed during the Cambodian genocide under the Khmer Rouge regime. Even from the 1960s to the 1990s, more than 3,000 people were killed in Northern Ireland as a result of its religious troubles. Again in the 1990s, up to 500,000 perished in the Yugoslav wars. Regrettably those scars are not limited to history.

Today as I speak we are creating history and, while the ink is drying, we are still creating scars. For example, we see conflicts in Egypt where last year more than 1,000 people perished, in Iraq where more than 6,000 people perished last year, in Sudan where more than 2,500 people perished, and in Nigeria where more than 1,000 people have perished in 2013. There can be no doubt that politics and a lust for power lie in the inner sanctum of those conflicts, but it is the ugly face of racism and discrimination that is used by those in power to mobilise and manipulate the masses to achieve their ends. It is extremely disappointing to see racially motivated incidents occurring in a great country such as Australia. But the reality is that in our country we are blessed because those attacks are random and rare. When they do take place our sense of community causes us to stand up in unison to condemn them.

The strength of a community cannot so much be measured by whether those incidents occur because they will always occur. Whenever we get a population the size of New South Wales', which is seven million, a

city the size of Sydney with a population of 4.5 million and a country the size of Australia with a population of 24 million, we will always have outliers from the community who do terrible things. We do not necessarily measure our society by those attacks but, rather, by how we respond to them. In the circumstances we are discussing, the manner in which we responded is particularly laudable.

I particularly mention community organisations that immediately condemned the attacks. Apart from political leaders across the breadth of this country, including the Premier, the Leader of the Opposition and their ilk, we heard from organisations such as the United Muslim Women Association Incorporated, Cricket Australia, the Together For Humanity Foundation, the Australian Chinese Community Association, the Exodus Foundation, the Lebanese Muslim Association, the Ethnic Communities' Council NSW, the Australian Baseball Federation, the Columban Mission Institute, the Australian Hellenic Council, the Refugee Council of Australia, the Australian Federation of Ukrainian Organisations, the Australian Rugby League and the NSW Federation of Community Language Schools, to mention just a few. They all stood up within 24 to 48 hours to universally condemn those attacks. That is truly a sign of the strength of our society—that we stand up together to condemn errant attacks.

I particularly pay tribute to the Jewish Board of Deputies, especially to the board's president, Mr Yair Miller, and to Mr Vic Alhadeff, who is the chief executive officer and who is present in the gallery today. As the Minister for Citizenship and Communities I am often engaged with community organisations, but I can say openly and proudly that there are not many organisations such as the Jewish Board of Deputies which has such a fine reputation and which works so hard to encourage interculturalism and interfaith activities. I often say, and have said it publicly before, that they are a shining light—a beacon, if you wish—for other communities to aspire to. The Jewish Board of Deputies continually works hard at promoting interfaith and interculturalism in an attempt to build the bridges of understanding between communities. These are the bridges that will help to ensure that attacks such as this do not occur again.

Mr JAMIE PARKER (Balmain) [11.47 a.m.], by leave: I speak on behalf of The Greens and join with all members of this House in supporting the motion and condemning the clearly anti-Semitic attack that happened in Sydney's eastern suburbs last Friday. I acknowledge Vic Alhadeff, the Chief Executive Officer of the Jewish Board of Deputies, who is in the gallery today. I also acknowledge the excellent work the board does, particularly its campaigns against racism and its interfaith work. I join with members in condemning this attack because it highlights that racism and anti-Semitism are alive and are something that we must condemn at every opportunity. That is so not only because we condemn racism against anybody but also because we know the history of the Jewish people. In this case, more than any other, it is important that this House agrees to a motion condemning the brutal attack on the Jewish family in Bondi.

I highlight a few of the comments of The Greens' spokesperson on multiculturalism, Senator Richard Di Natale, who joined with the Australian Race Discrimination Commissioner to condemn the attack. Senator Di Natale's words were clear and I agree with them:

Violence of any kind is unacceptable but racist violence is particularly abhorrent.

This type of hatred and violence has no place in our society. All people are entitled to live their lives in an environment without fear of intimidation or violence.

The Greens express our deepest concern for the welfare of the family who were assaulted.

This incident highlights the ongoing importance of anti-vilification legislation.

The Greens NSW multicultural spokesperson, Dr Mehreen Faruqi, condemned these attacks, as do all members of The Greens. This violent and abusive attack on members of our community—not just the Jewish community but our collective community—is disgraceful and absolutely unacceptable. I extend my personal sympathy and best wishes to the victims and their families. The Greens condemn all forms of violence, racism and bigotry and proudly support a multicultural Australia.

The incident on the weekend shows that there is more work to be done. We need to ensure that we continue the hard work of protecting the rights of all people to live in safe surroundings, free from harassment and vilification. It shows that we must redouble our efforts to work towards building a more cohesive society by promoting the everyday practice of peaceful and equitable dialogue, mutual understanding, respect and social justice between people from different cultures and different faiths. I note that there is a discussion at the moment about the role of anti-vilification legislation, particularly section 18C of the Racial Discrimination Act, which has been used by the Executive Council of Australian Jewry to take on anti-Semitism and Holocaust deniers.

I am a supporter of section 18C of the Racial Discrimination Act. The Federal Government needs to rethink its plan to repeal that Act because it is important that we act against racial discrimination and vilification in all areas and that we support legislative arrangements to give weight to that in the courts. However, it should be done in a sensitive way that takes account of freedom of speech. I will not address some of the nonsense raised by the member for Murray-Darling, but I wanted to express my sympathy to the family, to support all members in this House who support this motion and to recognise the importance of condemning this anti-Semitic attack.

Mr BRYAN DOYLE (Campbelltown) [11.51 a.m.], by leave: I support the motion and condemn those who peddle hate, prejudice, racism and violence in our community. We live in the land of the free. We all have a migrant history in this country and at every citizenship ceremony I address, when I welcome people I tell them that they are now Australian of whatever background. We are fortunate that we live in the land of the free where everyone is subject to the rule of law, where we can live in peace and where no-one needs to live in fear. I have had a 27-year career in the police force, dedicated to the protection of life and property. The purpose of the NSW Police Force is stated as being: "Police and the community, working together to reduce violence, crime and fear." There is no reason for anyone to live in fear in our great nation. I urge anyone who has been subjected to this sort of crime to contact police and Crime Stoppers on 1800 333 000.

I am pleased that my friend Vic Alhadeff, Chief Executive Officer of the Jewish Board of Deputies, is here today because resting on the table is the parliamentary mace—the symbol of justice, peace and good order in our community. That mace was donated to this Parliament by that wonderful group, the Jewish Board of Deputies. The board knows how important it is to live in a land where the rule of law applies, where people can live in peace and harmony, where they can raise their families, run their businesses and enjoy the Australian way of life.

The fact that this motion is being debated today highlights a very important fact: that we will remain vigilant in protecting our way of life and the values that we hold dear. Evil can prosper only when men and women of goodwill do nothing and say nothing. That does not happen in this place. The fact that my good friend the member for Murray-Darling has moved this motion and that so many members have sought leave to speak indicates that men and women of goodwill stand in this Chamber and will speak up, speak out and protect our way of life. I commend the motion to the House.

Dr GEOFF LEE (Parramatta) [11.55 a.m.], by leave: I condemn the recent attacks at Bondi and I express my personal best wishes to the victims of those hate crimes and their families. I acknowledge Vic Alhadeff, the Chief Executive Officer of the Jewish Board of Deputies. It is great to see you, Vic. The condemnation from both sides of the House is truly testament to our disgust at the incident last Friday. Members in this House recognise the need for zero tolerance of racial discrimination. That attitude extends throughout my electorate of Parramatta, where more than 50 per cent of the population was born overseas. We have people who were born in Thailand, India, Lebanon, Taiwan, the Philippines, Korea, Vietnam and many other countries. There would be no better example of a harmonious community than that of Parramatta. Many of those people came to Australia and chose to live in Parramatta because it is such a harmonious place to live, offering an Australian way of life, a good way of life where we can be Australians but where we can also enjoy and celebrate our heritage. Parramatta has areas such as Little India at Harris Park. We celebrated the Deepavali Festival in Parliament last night and the member for Campbelltown was part of those celebrations. I commend him for bringing that to the attention of the House.

Certainly, those who choose to come to Australia do so because they want to contribute to Australia, and can achieve that in many ways—by raising a family, starting a business or getting a job. Australia has been built on migration over its 200 years of European settlement, and that will be essential for what can best be described as our future modern culture building blocks. There is no better example of that multicultural approach than Parramatta with its temples, churches and mosques representing a huge diversity of religions. The Parramatta community lives together after having worked out a few problems in the past. I agree with the Minister for Citizenship and Communities that we all should work together to stamp out discriminatory and vilifying behaviour. People from more than 200 countries have settled in Western Sydney. Nowhere was that more evident to me than in the many first-generation students at the University of Western Sydney. I commend the university for its multicultural approach. I condemn last Friday's attacks. I agree with the Premier's zero tolerance for racial discrimination in New South Wales.

Mr MICHAEL DALEY (Maroubra) [12.00 p.m.], by leave: I support the motion, which states:

That this House notes the alleged assault on a group of Jewish people in Bondi last week and condemns any form of racism in Australia.

It is right and necessary for people of good conscience to remain vigilant regarding this and similar issues because it is a good and proper thing to do. There should be no tolerance for racial vilification, racial difference or associated violence in this country or anywhere in the world. But more than being just good and proper, it is necessary. We have no choice. On 12 October I went to Dolphin Point, Coogee, and on 13 October I went to Cromwell Park, Malabar, as I have done every year for the past 11 years, to commemorate those we lost in the Bali bombings—a horrific act of intolerance and violence. Whilst that bombing was infinitely more violent than the alleged attacks on the Jewish people in Bondi last week, it was carried out by the same behaviour species—it lives under the same roof; it crawled out of the same dark swamp.

To those who think there is no room in Australia for people of the Jewish faith and community I say: Get over it because they are going nowhere; they have been here for a very long time. The Jewish people form a very peaceful, necessary, productive and integral part of Australian society, as do people from whatever background of the Islamic faith who choose to live here in peace amongst those who may be from the Catholic, Anglican, Sikh, Hindu or Buddhist faith. We are all here together; we are not going anywhere. We all form part of one of the most racially tolerant international communities. History shows what happens when people disagree with those propositions and act to move against them. History also shows what happens when people of good conscience become complacent about these vital issues. Those who ignore history are bound to relive it—a great saying that I love. Today in this place we say that we will not ignore history. I do not want my children, or the children of my children, to be forced to relive history. That is why I support this motion, and I am sure I speak for not only other members but also all the people in my electorate of Maroubra, which is a peaceful melting pot of people from all backgrounds, races, creeds, religions and beliefs. That is one reason I am so proud to represent them in this place.

Mr BRUCE NOTLEY-SMITH (Coogee) [12.04 p.m.], by leave: I thank the member for Murray-Darling for moving this motion condemning the attacks on the Jewish people in Bondi a few nights ago. Last night I attended the Jewish National Fund gala dinner with the member for Davidson. Once again the Jewish community came together to promote not only their faith, but also their sense of community to further protect their ideal of the home of Israel. I know of no other community in my electorate of Coogee that spends more time and effort in interfaith understanding. Last Sunday I attended the Harmony Walk just down the road from here in Cathedral Square. Harmony Walk was the vision of Ernie Friedlander, a very proud and respected member of the Jewish community. I was fortunate that last year he came to me to assist him in founding that walk. Ernie brings together people of all races and faiths to condemn violence and vilification of any significance—sexuality, race or religion.

None of that is acceptable in our country. The Harmony Walk aims to overcome the inclination to violence of so many in this world. We all should be able to respect one another and sort our differences to live harmoniously. I welcome Vic Alhadeff, the Chief Executive Officer of the Jewish Board of Deputies, which hosted my visit a few weeks ago to Israel. After a 23-year absence from that country, it was great to return to see its culture affirmation to pursue peace, harmony and respect from all and for all. Violence has no place in this country. Racism has no place in this country. Victimisation has no place in this country in whatever form. Often I visit the synagogues in the Coogee and Vaucluse electorates and am welcomed with open arms by attendants and rabbis, with whom I am in frequent contact and discussion. The substantial Jewish community in Coogee, many of whom are my close friends and associates, are shocked and horrified that anti-Semitism broke out in Bondi. We should all be disgusted that that seed of hatred, the results of which have been seen over many years, most disgustingly during the Holocaust, could take root in a gorgeous beachside suburb such as Bondi, so near the Coogee electorate. Members who have spoken to this motion condemning this act of violence, hatred and discrimination are right to air their disgust and to seek to promote a more harmonious and respectful Australia.

Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa) [12.09 p.m.], by leave: I am pleased to offer bipartisan support for this motion with my parliamentary colleagues and condemn with one voice the anti-Semitic attacks that were inflicted on Jewish families in Bondi last week. I acknowledge Vic Alhadeff, Chief Executive Officer of the Jewish Board of Deputies, who is in the gallery, and his colleagues for their continued efforts and strong work to promote tolerance, understanding and celebration of the Jewish people and their faith in New South Wales.

A few weeks ago I had the great honour of visiting Israel for the first time with a number of other parliamentary colleagues. I had the experience of seeing Israel, the only nation in the Middle East that is a truly democratic state, yet it continues to suffer undeserved attacks from its neighbours. Its citizens in New South Wales have also been attacked. It is incredibly distressing. The violent attack in Bondi was perpetrated a few hours after an anti-Israel protest that was held in Denver, Colorado, and others that were held in France and Belgium.

It is extremely important that the New South Wales Parliament, representing our great State, is united against the anti-Israeli protests. We should stand firm in support of tolerance and acceptance and rejoice in and celebrate diversity. As people we are not called to agree with each other. That is not a sign of a healthy democratic nation. We are called to respect each other's views and the freedoms and rights that we each hold but, most importantly, to respect religious freedom and expression of speech.

The people and Parliament of New South Wales, including the community that I represent in Western Sydney, condemn these anti-Semitic attacks. The Australian people condemn these anti-Semitic attacks. One of the victims of the attacks has called for education, which is critically important. I draw the attention of the House to a website that I was introduced to when I visited Israel—www.palwatch.org. It was set up to monitor and report information that is distributed on Palestinian television, radio and other media and through its education system. I urge all members to take five seconds to look at that website, because it reveals what sort of information the Palestinian authorities are propagating to their communities and young people. It is alarming and scary. It is time that we urged the leaders of all nations to stand up and say enough is enough. We want to live in a harmonious world in which we respect each other. We need to stop the indoctrination of our young to hate the people of Israel.

Mr ANDREW FRASER (Coffs Harbour—The Assistant-Speaker) [12.13 p.m.], by leave: Coffs Harbour is a diverse community that has in excess of 45 nationalities—Sudanese, Jews and others from across the world. The Jews have been persecuted since time immemorial. Any student of the *Bible* will understand that. What has happened in the past couple of weeks is an absolute disgrace. It is abhorrent. Our society should not tolerate it. We should not tolerate vilification of any ethnic minority group, or majority for that matter. We have seen acts of violence across the world for centuries in the name of religion, which is bizarre. There is one God. I suggest all members have a look at the tenets of the 10 great religions of the world and they will find among them the Ten Commandments, which are practised by all faiths. Those tenets teach us to be tolerant of one another.

Thirty years ago a company by the name of Bacharat Nominees was set up in the Coffs Harbour community. Max Normberger was one of the principals of the company. His son Rodney now runs it. When Max came to town, he built the Park Beach Plaza, a magnificent shopping centre. I was the service director for Apex and I approached Max to ask whether the club could run raffles. The manager of the centre told me in no uncertain terms that it was not allowed. Max came from the outer office, asked who I was, introduced himself, and said, "Yes, I want to help this community." The Jewish people have always helped the communities in which they live. Max allowed raffles to be run every Saturday morning. It has been happening for the past 30 years. Hundreds of thousands, if not millions of dollars, have been raised for charitable causes within the Coffs Harbour community thanks to the generosity of Max Normberger. Recently I attended Max's funeral, which was my first Jewish funeral. It was a dignified service that did not make mention of the generosity of Max and his family to our community or to their community. He was involved in education within his own community of eastern Sydney. That is the humble nature of the Jewish people.

I cannot relate to these louts—they are scum. Their recent actions are totally unacceptable. An Indian friend of mine is married to a woman of Scottish descent and their daughter has married an Aboriginal—a mix that is second to none. Is there vilification? No. They are a family. I urge all members to support this motion. However, I point out that any political party, such as The Greens, that promotes vilification against a race by way of trade or in any other manner will only incite hatred. I cannot accept it. I suggest that The Greens look hard at their policies with regard to different races within the Australian community. We all come from different nations. That is what makes us Australians and we should be proud of that fact.

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON (Blacktown—Leader of the Opposition) [12.17 p.m.], by leave: I make a contribution in support of this motion. Everyone in this Chamber agrees that the recent alleged events are abhorrent and completely unacceptable in our society, which we believe embraces and celebrates multiculturalism. One of the great opportunities we have as members of Parliament is to attend many different multicultural events. I often make a contribution at those events. I talk about how wonderful our multicultural society is and that it ought to be celebrated, but I also talk about its fragility. It requires us to be ever vigilant. As wonderful as our multicultural society is, there will always be those who seek to tear it down and carry out acts such as those that allegedly occurred recently.

Each of us—not just those in this Chamber—has a responsibility, whenever those opportunities arise, to not simply talk about multiculturalism, but to speak up when we see actions that are inappropriate and inconsistent with the values we say are the values of this nation. Often people will use the guise of "these people

are destroying our culture". My view of the Australian culture continues to evolve. Unless we are descendants of the first Australians, we have brought a culture with us. The great thing about the Australian culture is that it embraces so many different cultures from a wide diversity of backgrounds. The real Australian culture continues to evolve and grow and because we have embraced those many and varied cultures we are the envy of the world.

This week, for example, I have attended two Deepavali festivals and last night a movie was shown in the Parliament Theatre about the 153-year history of the Afghan cameleers and the contribution that the Afghans have made to our nation. Holding two of those events at Parliament House demonstrates that this place embraces multiculturalism. Each of us has a responsibility to be ever vigilant and to be ever prepared to make our voices heard against those who would seek to vilify others based only on their religion or ethnic background. We have a responsibility to intervene and ensure that no-one is allowed to find themselves in circumstances like those that are alleged to have occurred last weekend at Bondi.

Last Sunday I attended the Harmony Walk—a one-kilometre walk that commenced at St Mary's Cathedral Square. That great event, which was organised by Ernie Friedlander, allowed the community to come together. People of Sikh faith, Jewish faith, Catholics, those from the Uniting Church and people of no faith joined together in support of harmony. Events such as this allow us to continue to publicly declare that we want a harmonious society—a society that does not just tolerate but celebrates the great diversity that makes New South Wales the great place it is.

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) [12.21 p.m.], by leave: Many people would be aware that the electorate of Kiama is not necessarily one with a significant Jewish population. However, I have been involved with the Parliamentary Friends of Israel since becoming a member in this place—as was my predecessor, Mr Matthew Brown. I am sure that the constituents of my electorate would want me to join with the member for Murray-Darling and record my strongest feelings about racism and the recent attack at Bondi. And whilst I condemn that attack, I also celebrate our diversity and multiculturalism in this Chamber. As I grew up multiculturalism was encouraged in my community. My mother immigrated to this country. It is my belief that people who have come to this nation from overseas have made this nation truly great—they are part of the tapestry of cultures that we embrace.

Tragically, times and events are recorded in our history where Australia has not demonstrated its multiculturalism and embraced other cultures as we should have. The attack at Bondi is a stain on our society but it is not what should be considered as the norm. I note that Vic Alhadeff is seated in the gallery; I know him well. My connection with the Jewish community came about when I was secretary of the student council at the University of Wollongong. My friend Doran Katz, who was a member of the Jewish community, came into my office on one occasion quite distressed. The far Left on campus had been holding a rally condemning Israel and making anti-Semitic statements. I encouraged him to form the Wollongong chapter of the Australian Union of Jewish Students. We got together with a number of Jewish students and formed that chapter. When I attended the annual general meeting I was surprised to be nominated as their honorary vice president. That began my involvement with the Australian Union of Jewish Students.

Every year I enjoy participating in the Illawarra Israeli Film Festival, which is run by Yoke Berry and a number of others, including Greg Rose from the University of Wollongong. There is no doubt that those opportunities remind me of the important place that God's first people, the Israeli people, play in our society. When we hear of events such as the attack at Bondi one thinks of how difficult it still is to be Jewish today—Munich, the intifadas, Yom Kippur, the Six-Day War. How many times must these people suffer atrocities? In a country such as Australia that prides itself on liberty, diversity, democracy and freedom it is not only appropriate but also incumbent upon this House to pass this motion and condemn those responsible for the terrible attack that happened at Bondi.

I want every community across New South Wales to know that law-abiding citizens, people who embrace our values of liberty, freedom, hope and opportunity are welcome in New South Wales every day of the week. We will stand behind those who embrace those values. So much of Israel's existence is like a canary in a coalmine—they are surrounded by other nations that oppose their existence. I stand with Israel in supporting its right to exist. I condemn the actions of councils such as those we saw from Marrickville Council and those that engaged in the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions campaign. This particular incident reminds me of the threat that Israeli citizens still face. They should not face those threats. The Parliament should support them and we should condemn any racist attack on any community, including the Israeli residents of our State.

Mr STUART AYRES (Penrith—Parliamentary Secretary) [12.25 p.m.], by leave: I support this incredibly important motion. If we do not use opportunities such as this to speak out against this behaviour we

are as bad as the people who participate in it. We must use the voice that we have been given in parliaments such as this to proclaim loudly the values that we hold dear in our country. If we do not take opportunities to proclaim those values loudly we forgo the opportunity to stand up when someone comes after us.

In Australia in the middle of the 1800s a group of people stitched stars and a white cross on a blue background and stood underneath it in a stand against oppression. They did it as a group of immigrants on the goldfields of Eureka. Those people embedded in our nation the ability to stand up for something we believe in. The fire that burnt in the souls of those people was about embedding into our nation the ability to say to people that we do have boundless plains to share and that the radiant Southern Cross will guide us at every turn when we see trouble. Those people who walked on the streets of Bondi the other night found themselves brutally attacked by people who have turned their back on the Southern Cross and their fellow countrymen, and they deserve our unequivocal condemnation.

If we do not take this opportunity then we will be saying to them that their actions are okay and will be condoned. With the strong voice of my colleagues from across the political divide, I say that we will never tolerate that type of activity. So often we hear people ask: What is un-Australian? A definition of that is coldly and callously bashing someone on the streets of Bondi because you think they look different. If we cannot speak out against that we are not doing our jobs. I proudly stand in this House as a representative of the people of Penrith and as a representative of the values of all Australians and I will always speak out against these types of atrocities.

Australia has the ability to open its doors and say to people, "If you want a better life, if you want an opportunity, you can find it here. If you need to tie it up with wire to keep the show on the road, we will find a way to make things happen." That is exactly what this motion is about. I cannot think of a more important debate on a motion in which I have participated in this Chamber. We have the opportunity to draw a line in the sand and tell people what it really means to be an Australian—that is, for people to look after their family, their brothers and sisters, but never turn their back on an opportunity to tell someone when they have stepped out of line. We need to let people know that our community will not tolerate this activity. That is why this motion is so critically important.

Too often behaviour like this goes unaddressed. Too often incidents like this continue to happen, and we allow them to infiltrate our community. That must stop. If it is the Jewish people who bring us to this realisation then so be it. They have shown so much courage and borne so much pressure over such a long time that we cannot stand by silently while they are attacked again. The behaviour of the Jewish persons in this incident is not the issue; the issue is the behaviour of the persons who have flagrantly disregarded what it means to be Australian by attacking someone in this racist incident. That must be condemned and that is why I support the motion.

Mr ROB STOKES (Pittwater—Parliamentary Secretary) [12.29 p.m.], by leave: I make a brief statement in support of the motion. I have listened to the contributions of other members and I am reminded of the words, which have stayed with me for a long time, of Martin Niemöller. He was an interesting man, a flawed man, but a man who spoke the truth when he said:

First they came for the Trade Unionists, and I did not speak out—
Because I was not a Trade Unionist.
Then they came for the Gypsies, and I remained silent—
Because I was not a Gypsy.
Then they came for the homosexuals, and I said nothing—
Because I was not a homosexual.
Then they came for the Jews, and I remained silent—
Finally they came for me and there was no-one left to speak for me.

Mr JOHN WILLIAMS (Murray-Darling) [12.31 p.m.] in reply: I acknowledge the presence in the public gallery of Vic Alhadeff, the Chief Executive Officer from the New South Wales Jewish Board of Deputies. He has listened to the debate this morning and I ask him to take the best wishes and thoughts of all members to the victims of this attack. The debate gives an indication of the support of this Parliament for the Jewish community. The member for Balmain in his contribution criticised me for attacking The Greens. But I still say that words and actions can have unintended consequences. If The Greens continue this type of behaviour then it will have unintended consequences, and that is my greatest fear. I followed the history of the State of Israel as I was growing up. I grew up during the 1960s and remember watching television reports about the Six Day War. I followed the struggle of the Jewish people to establish the State of Israel. I have read

much about it and am conscious of actions taken against Jewish people worldwide. It is of great concern to me that such a strong group of people can be continually subjected to this type of oppression. It is totally unacceptable.

I thank members representing the electorates of Fairfield, Vacluse, Heffron, Davidson, Cabramatta, Ryde, Balmain, Campbelltown, Parramatta, Maroubra, Coogee, Mulgoa, Coffs Harbour, Blacktown, Kiama, Penrith and Pittwater for their contributions to this debate. I was motivated to move this motion when I read the article by Tim Blair in the *Daily Telegraph* on Monday morning entitled, "Take the pro-chocolate approach to fighting anti-Semitism". Members of this Chamber will be well aware of the protests outside the Max Brenner chocolate stores. I was interested to read that Kevin Rudd took appropriate action and went into a Max Brenner store to demonstrate his support. He opposes the boycott. I say to Mr David Shoebridge and other members of The Greens that they should demonstrate their support in the same way—they should get out there and demonstrate their support for these businesses. The Greens claim to be a peaceful group and say that they are not the antagonists in this situation. To be true to their word, they should get out there and demonstrate by their actions that they will cease this campaign. It is unacceptable.

I think this motion is important as a way of saying, "This is it. We have drawn a line in the sand and this Parliament is not going to accept that kind of behaviour from this group of people. It has to stop today." Such behaviour cannot continue. We have seen today a clear demonstration that members of this House will not continue to accept these actions. We are going to stop what could well be the unintended consequences of, and the fallout from, the words and actions of The Greens.

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

Motion agreed to.

TRIBUTE TO SAM TATSIS

Mr TONY ISSA (Granville) [12.35 p.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) Congratulates Mr Sam Tatsis for his initiative to raise the Greek flag for Parramatta City Council.
- (2) Thanks Parramatta City Council for the opportunity for Greek-Australians to celebrate their rich heritage and culture.
- (3) Commends Mr Tatsis for his 35 years of loyal service to Parramatta City Council in numerous roles.
- (4) Acknowledges the contribution of Mr Tatsis to Parramatta since 1979 and wishes him a long and happy retirement.

I have moved this motion today to recognise Mr Sam Tatsis. He is a very loyal employee of Parramatta City Council whom I have known for 28 years. Sam took the initiative to organise for Parramatta City Council to fly the Greek flag to celebrate Greek Independence Day. I thank the council for the opportunity for Greek Australians to celebrate their rich heritage and culture. I commend Sam for his 35 years of loyal service to Parramatta City Council in many different roles. I acknowledge the contribution that Sam has made to the council since 1979, and I wish him a very happy retirement.

This motion is about someone who is a loyal employee who contributes in a positive way to the community. Sam loved the community, particularly the Greek community, and he worked hard to help the council to recognise the contribution of the Greek community in Parramatta. When I was chairman of the sister city committee for Parramatta City Council Sam asked me if it was possible to recognise the Greek community, like other communities, by holding a flag-raising ceremony for Greek Independence Day and flying the Greek flag. He did not stop there. When it came to organising the Greek Independence Day celebrations, Sam played a very important role. He organised the dancing performances and the food. He invited the large Greek community, including members of the local church. We attracted more than 400 people to celebrate Greek Independence Day.

Sam was employed by the council for 35 years—and I shared 25 years of my working life with Sam when I worked with the council. He was a great supporter of the councillors. In particular, he did a lot of work for me when I was the Lord Mayor and he always went beyond the call of duty. He went out of his way to help everybody. He showed his loyalty to the community and to the council. He was honest in everything he did.

I remember when the council would sit late, until 2.00 a.m. or 3.00 a.m., to get through items on the agenda. Sam would stay until the end, and clean up after the councillors had had their refreshments. He even drove councillors home if they could not wait for a taxi.

In acknowledging Sam today I also acknowledge all other people who have made positive contributions to multiculturalism in Australia. We can learn a lot about loyalty from Sam. To spend 35 years with one employer shows how loyal he is. I understand that he started work with the cleaning gang, then moved on to be a supervisor, then to work in services and ultimately become assistant to the lord mayor. He was also a caretaker and a truck driver and performed many other jobs for the city. In every role Sam undertook his duties with a heart full of love, understanding and compassion.

I am happy to have the opportunity to thank Sam publically for his contribution because not many people who make great contributions are thanked. It is important for us to acknowledge the people who spend their lives working hard but who receive no recognition from the community—and sometimes not even from their bosses. After 35 years of serving his community, Sam has now reached retirement. I am pleased to say that Sam has always considered me a best friend and has shared many of his stories with me, particular those relating to his community. He visited me before his retirement and I was very happy when he told me that he was taking his wife, Nina, on a long-overdue overseas holiday.

Sam spent three months visiting his family in Greece. When he returned the first thing he did was call me to say, "I'm back, Tony. Is there anything I can do to help you?" Even though he is no longer working and I am no longer a Parramatta councillor, he is happy to support me as a friend and do anything he can. Today this House recognises the important role that Sam has played. I also want the House to recognise that all people who work hard should be acknowledged at some time during their life, with or without their knowledge. I am sure that Sam does not know I am standing here recognising his loyalty and contribution to the community.

Sam is well respected in the Greek community—especially now following the flag-raising ceremony. At the event I was surprised to see every person from the community come up to Sam and thank him for his hard work. It indicated to me the important role he plays in the larger community and in his church. I have had the privilege and honour of meeting many people from the Greek community in my electorate and working hard with them. A couple of weeks ago I was arranging the Partnership Building Program with the Premier's department and I noticed that they have made an application for funding. I am pleased to look at it because it is a positive way to contribute to and promote the community. It gives me a great deal of pleasure to move this motion.

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) [12.42 p.m.]: On behalf of the Opposition I am pleased to acknowledge someone who has worked tirelessly within the Western Sydney community. I thank the member for Granville, Tony Issa, for bringing this motion to the House for debate. I use the word "debate", but can we really hold a debate about someone who was given so much to Western Sydney and Parramatta, Parramatta City Council and the Greek Australian community in this great city? The first part of the motion congratulates Mr Sam Tatsis on his initiative to raise the Greek flag for Parramatta City Council. The motion also thanks Parramatta council for the opportunity for Greek Australians to celebrate their rich heritage and culture, and commends Mr Tatsis for his 35 years of loyal service to Parramatta City Council in numerous roles. Finally, it acknowledges the contribution he has made to Parramatta since 1979 and wishes him a long and happy retirement.

The member for Granville said unequivocally that Sam showed complete loyalty as an employee of Parramatta City Council over the past 35 years. In particular, Sam showed great initiative in organising the Greek flag raising ceremony in Parramatta. Our Western Sydney community is culturally diverse. The member for Granville and all members know how much the Greek community has contributed to this State and this nation. But what epitomises Sam is that he has brought his love of where he comes from and integrated it with Parramatta. This morning in the Chamber we discussed the importance of extending the hand of friendship to others. Sam has done that in a great way.

Sam has done many things in his role behind the scenes. It has been brought to our attention how he stayed back late to tidy up after council meetings and went the extra mile to take councillors home late at night. That was not on the job description, but it shows the love Sam had for his job. He would also pick up visiting dignitaries at the airport and greet them as the public face of Parramatta City Council. I have a great photo here of Sam that shows him in his kitchen having a nice cup of Greek coffee. The funny thing is, having seen the photo, I realise that I have met Sam on a number of occasions.

Mr Tony Issa: Have you?

Mr GUY ZANGARI: I have. I may not have known the name but I certainly recognise the face. I hope I will not be called to order for using a prop.

Mr Tony Issa: That is him.

Mr GUY ZANGARI: Yes, this is him. We can see from the face in the photograph that Sam is a warm and loving man. His love of family is certainly strong. He has been with his wife, Nina, for 42 years and has raised two wonderful daughters and four grandchildren in Granville. Sam epitomises the migrant success story that comes from seizing the opportunities that this country offers. There are a number of migrants in my electorate and the Granville electorate. It is wonderful to see people like Sam seizing their opportunities.

The member for Granville said that Sam's hard work on the council did not go unrecognised. Upon his retirement, the council acknowledged the wonderful contribution Sam made for 35 years. That length of service is an achievement in itself. Like so many people from the Greek community, Sam brought his love of family, his work ethic and his spirituality to our community. Such people have made our community a better place as a result of their love and their extension of friendship to all people. On behalf of members on this side of the House, I salute Sam Tatsis and support the motion moved by the member for Granville.

Mr JAI ROWELL (Wollondilly) [12.49 p.m.]: It is a great pleasure to support the motion moved by the member for Granville that this House congratulates Mr Sam Tatsis on his initiative to raise the Greek flag for Parramatta City Council, thanks the Parramatta City Council for the opportunity for Greek Australians to celebrate their rich heritage and culture, commends Mr Tatsis for his 35 years of loyal service to the Parramatta City Council in numerous roles, acknowledges the contribution of Mr Tatsis to Parramatta since 1979, and wishes him a long and happy retirement. One way of knowing that someone is very special is when the member for Granville commends them. Every time I visit his electorate with the member for Granville, it takes only 30 seconds before everybody comes up to him to say "g'day". When the member for Granville says that someone in his community is special, it is quite an acknowledgement.

This morning the member for Granville told me a little about Sam and his contribution over 35 years of service to Parramatta City Council—a council with which I have had a long association, particularly when the member for Granville was the first Liberal Lord Mayor. It was such a proud moment, not just for him and his family but also for the city of Parramatta as he did so much work in that role before being elected as a member of this House. Sam's 35 years in one role is nothing short of miraculous. We do not very often see a person in one role for more than 35 years. In most cases, people have a multitude of jobs and careers but 35 years—particularly in local government, which is not always the easiest sector to work in—is incredible. I can think of only one other person who has spent a similar period in one role in local government and that is Councillor Col Mitchell from the Wollondilly Shire Council. Col began work in the finance section and later became the finance director. He served for more than 30 years as an employee. He was then elected to the council and served a number of times as the mayor.

The stories that Sam can tell about carrying out his role in supporting the community throughout the terms of councils of various political persuasions over a span of 35 years would show how much Sam has Parramatta in his heart. We certainly recognise not only his contribution to Parramatta but also his contribution to the Greek community. In my electorate many fine people from the Greek community roll up their sleeves and work extremely hard. The member for Granville told me this morning how much Sam has played a positive and significant role in the Parramatta community. As we heard from the member for Granville and the member for Fairfield, Sam was instrumental in establishing the flag-raising ritual at the council. This motion has given members a fantastic opportunity to recognise Sam, who is so special. On behalf of the Liberal-Nationals Government, I recognise his massive contribution to our community and certainly wish him all the best for his future endeavours. I look forward to catching up with Sam and saying g'day the next time I visit Granville and the member for Granville.

Mr TONY ISSA (Granville) [12.52 p.m.], in reply: I thank the member for Wollondilly and the member for Fairfield for contributing to debate on the motion. The city of Parramatta in the Granville electorate is a very special place. The multicultural community in my electorate comprises approximately 120 different nationalities of people who live with each other in love and harmony. People talk to each other every day with love and passion. Sam is proof that his community has integrated with Australian society and with the Australian lifestyle in a real and respectful manner. It has been important for the people of Parramatta to learn

from Sam about the Greek culture and how important Australian multiculturalism is. During my speech, I did not mention that Sam continued to work hard on Saturdays and Sundays. Sam has never been there just for the money. He has been there because of the love he wanted to show for his community, but above all because of his love for his family.

As the member for Fairfield said, Sam thinks the world of his two daughters and his grandchildren. Sam's love of his community is no surprise to me, but he has ensured that his grandchildren learn about the importance of Greek culture to Greek communities in Australia. Today we honour a person who has contributed in a positive way to this great nation, in particular to the great city of Parramatta, which I have had the privilege of serving for 25 years. For that quarter of a century, Sam was a part of my journey as I served as an alderman, a councillor, a member of committees, and finally as mayor. There was not one day when Sam hesitated or rejected a request. There is one thing I know about Sam and it is that he would never say no to anyone. He is always ready to work, regardless of the time or the day, and for any span of hours. After council meetings concluded at 2.00 a.m., on the same day at 6.00 a.m. Sam would return to the council to organise everything in readiness for the council's activities during opening hours—business as usual.

Sam's dedicated service demonstrates how important it is when a normal person in our community makes an enormous contribution to our community. Today I raise my hat, figuratively speaking, in admiration and respect as I say: Thank you, Sam, for your friendship, your honesty, your loyalty, your hard work, not only on behalf of me but also on behalf of many people who live in Parramatta, many councillors, many lord mayors, mayors—Sam was working at the council even before Parramatta was proclaimed as a lord mayoral city—and many general managers you served. Today I honour a hardworking man. I say "thank you", with utmost respect. Let this House recognise an important person in our community.

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

Motion agreed to.

HUNTER AMBULANCE RESPONSE TIMES

Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend) [12.56 p.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) Notes that ambulance response times to critical emergencies in "Hunter Zone 2", including Scone, Dungog, Singleton, Rutherford and Nelson Bay have been the worst in the State for two consecutive years.
- (2) Notes that two significant contributing factors to these unacceptable response times are a lack of paramedic staff, and existing paramedic staff being delayed at hospitals waiting to unload patients.
- (3) Urges the Minister for Health to review the budget cuts that have impacted adversely on frontline health services and to take immediate action to decrease ambulance response times in the Hunter.

My motion focuses on an issue that has a massive impact on the people of the Hunter. I feel that this issue has not been given the time it deserves in this place, despite being a matter of utmost importance. For two consecutive years, ambulance response times in what is termed "Hunter Zone 2"—a broad area encompassing population centres including Scone, Dungog, Singleton, Rutherford and Nelson Bay—have been the worst in the State. Two significant contributing factors are causing unacceptable response times: a lack of paramedic staff in Newcastle and surrounding areas, and staff being delayed at hospitals as overworked, understaffed emergency rooms, such as that at John Hunter, ultimately create a bottleneck of ambulances waiting to unload their patients.

The *Newcastle Herald* reported that the Central Coast, with a population of 300,000 people, has three full intensive care crew units whereas only two crews service the Hunter, which has a population of more than half a million. Stephen Hogeveen, who is a former director of the Central Coast health board, was quoted as identifying a need for dedicated six-man intensive care crew units at the western section of Lake Macquarie and the Rutherford-Thornton area, which will allow for two paramedics to be available for each shift. Mr Hogeveen's assertion was supported by the Health Services Union ambulance sub-branch president, Mr Peter Rumball, who said that, ideally, the Hunter would have four or five such units. More troubling still is that Mr Rumball was quick to note that there had been no increase in specialist paramedic units in the Hunter since 1981. Indeed, recent opportunities to lighten the load led to Newcastle being overlooked.

When the Government provided a \$3 million funding injection for an extra ambulance officer at stations in the Upper Hunter and New England areas, Newcastle was passed over. While the injection of funds is

laudable, it is incumbent upon us to remember that Newcastle is the sixth largest city in Australia and home to more than half a million people. Although there has been a 25 per cent increase in workload for the city's ambos each year over the past four years, there has not been a staff increase since 2009. Mr Rumball was quoted as saying, "At this stage we need about 70 new paramedics in the Hunter alone, just to cope with the current workload." Considering the projected future growth of Newcastle and the surrounding areas, I am sure this number is set to rise. On 11 October this year it was reported in the *Newcastle Herald* that a Murrurundi man had died.

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

**COMMITTEE ON THE OMBUDSMAN, THE POLICE INTEGRITY COMMISSION AND THE
CRIME COMMISSION**

Report: 2013 General Meetings with the Police Integrity Commission, the Inspector of the Police Integrity Commission, the NSW Crime Commission, the Information and Privacy Commission, the NSW Ombudsman, the Child Death Review Team

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

Mr LEE EVANS (Heathcote) [1.00 p.m.]: As deputy chair of the Committee on the Ombudsman, the Police Integrity Commission and the NSW Crime Commission, I am pleased to have the opportunity to comment on the report entitled "2013 General Meeting with the Police Integrity Commission, the Inspector of the Police Integrity Commission, the NSW Crime Commission, the Information and Privacy Commission, the NSW Ombudsman and the Child Death Review Team", which was tabled on 17 October 2013. This report contains the annual report reviews for all the bodies that the committee oversees; namely, the Police Integrity Commission, the Inspector of the Police Integrity Commission, the NSW Crime Commission, the Information and Privacy Commission, the Ombudsman, and the Child Death Review Team.

This joint statutory committee was established on 4 December 1990 and re-established on 22 June 2011. The committee's statutory oversight responsibilities require it to monitor and review the work conducted by these bodies, which it does through the review of annual reports and other publications, as well as through general meetings. The agencies overseen by the committee employ a total of 463 staff and have total funding of \$71.151 million. This includes \$19.285 million allocated for the operational work carried out by the NSW Crime Commission with its 108 staff. These figures highlight the importance of the contribution made by the agencies we oversee in maintaining the integrity of the New South Wales public sector.

This is the first year in which the committee has combined the individual reports into one volume, which has allowed it to identify overlapping themes and common issues more easily. Some of the themes considered over the course of the meetings with each agency are compliance obligations, how complaints are handled, the management of relationships between agencies and the challenges presented by information technology. I will provide a brief overview of each agency. The committee has been particularly interested in the way complaints are assessed by the Police Integrity Commission and took the opportunity at the general meeting to discuss internal commission procedures for doing so in more detail. Understanding the nature of complaints, especially those made by police against police, and the manner in which these complaints are dealt with can provide valuable information about trends and complaint outcomes. The committee discussed in some detail with the officers of the Police Integrity Commission the relationship between it and the NSW Crime Commission. In the past there have been some serious issues involving litigation and the committee is keen to see some guidance developed which would help to avoid such issues in the future.

The committee held a useful discussion with the Inspector of the Police Integrity Commission at the general meeting and had the opportunity to discuss in detail developments with regard to Taskforce Emblems. The committee understands that this is a significant and complex matter that has been referred by the inspector to the Ombudsman for thorough investigation. As part of his review of the Taskforce Emblems matter, the inspector recommended that section 217 of the Police Act 1990 be amended to prevent the police Minister making referrals to the inspector that are outside his jurisdiction. With the commencement of the Crime Commission Act 2012, the committee gained oversight of the Crime Commission, its management committee and the Inspector of the Crime Commission. This was the first general meeting since this legislation was introduced. The committee met with the commissioner and assistant commissioner and discussed a range of issues relating to the structure and governance of the commission.

The committee has oversight of the Information and Privacy Commission and met with both the Information Commissioner and the Privacy Commissioner. The commissioners outlined for the committee a number of challenges the commission has faced since the Office of the Information Commissioner and the Office of the Privacy Commissioner were merged in 2011. These include the challenge of effectively integrating its systems to provide a uniform approach to its policies and work and the review of the agency's organisational structure. The committee's role under part 4A of the Ombudsman Act 1974 includes the monitoring and review of the exercise of the NSW Ombudsman's legislative functions. The committee took the opportunity to discuss some of the Ombudsman's current work in detail, including Operation Prospect. The committee also met with the Ombudsman in his capacity as the convener of the Child Death Review Team. This meeting provided the opportunity to discuss the team's current work and future priorities. I thank the members of the committee for their contributions: the Hon. Catherine Cusack, the Hon. Adam Searle, the Hon. Sarah Mitchell, Mr Kevin Anderson, Mr Paul Lynch and Mr Ryan Park. They have worked together over the past year in a collegial and well-mannered fashion.

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth) [1.06 p.m.]: I commend the report of the Committee on the Ombudsman, the Police Integrity Commission and the NSW Crime Commission entitled: 2013 General Meetings with the Police Integrity Commission, the Inspector of the Police Integrity Commission, the NSW Crime Commission, the Information and Privacy Commission, the NSW Ombudsman, the Child Death Review Team. On 22 February 2013, the Committee on the Ombudsman, the Police Integrity Commission and the Crime Commission held the fourteenth general meeting with the Police Integrity Commission, the thirteenth general meeting with the Inspector of the Police Integrity Commission, the first general meeting with the NSW Crime Commission; the second general meeting with the Information and Privacy Commission, the eighteenth general meeting with the NSW Ombudsman; and the second general meeting with the Child Death Review Team.

Over the course of conducting these general meetings, the committee heard of issues common to several of the agencies it oversees, such as complaints handling, compliance obligations, relationship management between agencies, and technological and information technology challenges. The committee acknowledges the work that each of the agencies does in dealing with these complex overlapping issues as well as the specific operational issues particular to each agency's jurisdiction. The committee continually reviews its effectiveness and this year has focused on how it can improve its own reporting to Parliament in discharging its statutory oversight responsibilities. Changes include consolidating six separate reports on the general meetings into a single report, so that key themes and common issues can be flagged and commented upon. Also, for the first time, the committee is reporting on individual and consolidated budget allocations across the agencies it oversees. Staffing profiles across agencies are also reported. This year's report provides a benchmark for future years and will enable the committee to monitor changes in financial resources and staffing over time.

The work of the agencies the committee oversees is crucial to the integrity of the New South Wales public sector as a whole. To ensure more meaningful recognition of their work, the committee is working with agencies through its current Inquiry into Performance Measures and Accountability of Oversight Agencies to find new ways to inform Parliament of the progress being made. That was the foreword of the chair, the Hon. Catherine Cusack, MLC, in the other House, who has done an excellent job in chairing a crucial committee in the New South Wales Parliament. The committee made six recommendations as part of its findings. I will not detail them now. I congratulate the Hon. Catherine Cusack on her work, and the committee secretariat and the committee members, who have worked collaboratively on many sensitive issues.

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

Report noted.

COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Report: Review of the 2011-2012 Annual Report of the Commission for Children and Young People

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

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

COMMITTEE ON THE HEALTH CARE COMPLAINTS COMMISSION**Report: Review of the 2011-2012 Annual Report of the Health Care Complaints Commission****Question—That the House take note of the report—proposed.**

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie) [1.11 p.m.]: I appreciate the opportunity to update the House on the recent report by the joint Committee on the Health Care Complaints Commission and its review of the 2011-12 Annual Report of the Health Care Complaints Commission. The committee has responsibilities under section 65 (1) (c) of the Health Care Complaints Act to examine and present to the Parliament each annual and other report of the commission, and report to both Houses of Parliament any matter appearing in, or arising out, of any such report. Examining the commission's annual report is a key function of the committee under the Health Care Complaints Act and is the principal means whereby the committee exercises its oversight responsibility. This is the committee's second review in the Fifty-fifth Parliament. As part of the process, the committee held a hearing with the commissioner and his senior staff earlier this year. This gave the committee an opportunity to explore matters which arose in his report or which had been topical throughout the year and had piqued the interest of committee members.

One matter raised was overall complaint trends and relative complainant satisfaction rates regarding the commissioner's processes and outcomes. The committee noted that earlier changes in complaint-handling practices had previously led to a decline in complainant satisfaction rates—largely due to an increase in the volume of complaints and a decrease in staffing numbers. The committee noted during its previous review that changes simplifying complaint assessments, even those of a less serious nature, may have potentially undermined public confidence in the commission's work. This issue was explored further in the report of the committee's recent Inquiry into Health Care Complaints and Complaint Handling in NSW. The committee is pleased to now note that recent budgetary increases should assist in relieving the impacts on existing resources. In turn, the committee trusts these changes will lead to an increase in complainant satisfaction rates.

The committee was interested also in new powers afforded to the commissioner to initiate his investigations. These new powers enable the commissioner to investigate the delivery of health services, not only if it directly affects the clinical management or care of an individual, but also now if it is likely to affect that management or care. This change was prompted by a recent Supreme Court decision unfavourable to the commission. The committee has taken an active interest in the progress of this reform, especially in light of the Supreme Court decision, and is on record as supporting these new amendments. The committee will continue to monitor the use and effectiveness of these new powers, especially through the committee's current Inquiry on the Promotion of False or Misleading Health-Related Information or Practices.

The committee noted also in its review and supports the commission's ongoing outreach and community liaison activities to maximise awareness of the commission's purpose and functions. This includes new online activities, considerable personnel visits to local health districts in which there was direct engagement with health staff at the ground level, and engagement with diverse language communities. The committee welcomes these approaches of the commissioner, especially given the committee's interest in furthering community understanding of health grievance avenues for health care consumers. Finally, I thank the commissioner and his senior staff for their ongoing assistance to the committee, especially with respect to their informative and timely responses to committee inquiries. I thank also my fellow committee members for their involvement and interest throughout the review.

Question—That the House take note of the report—put and resolved in the affirmative.**Report noted.****COMMITTEE ON THE INDEPENDENT COMMISSION AGAINST CORRUPTION****Report: Review of the 2011-2012 Annual Report of the Inspector of the Independent Commission Against Corruption****Report: Review of the 2011-2012 Annual Report of the Independent Commission Against Corruption****Motion by Mr Dominic Perrottet agreed to:**

That in accordance with Standing Order 306 (7) the reports of the Committee on the Independent Commission Against Corruption, being Orders of the Day (Committee Reports) Nos 4 and 5, be considered together.

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

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET (Castle Hill) [1.16 p.m.]: I shall speak first on the report of the Inspector of the Independent Commission Against Corruption. At the outset I thank the inspector, His Honour Harvey Cooper, whose term ended on 30 September 2013. I ask the House to note my recent appointment as committee chair. I thank the previous chair, the member for Cronulla, for his work over the past two years and in the preparation of these reports. As part of the review the committee examined a number of issues, the first of which was the impact of the Independent Commission Against Corruption's increased workload. The report notes that the committee was satisfied that the commission's increased workload has not led to a significant increase in the inspector's workload, and that he has been able to satisfactorily maintain his performance since the previous report. The committee will continue to monitor whether the inspector requires additional resources, particularly regarding audits.

Under the memorandum of understanding, the inspector and commissioner were to meet monthly, which, I understand from the report, has not happened. The committee's view is that when the new inspector and commissioner are appointed the monthly meetings will resume, where possible. Part of the review considered the relocation of the inspector's premises from Redfern to the central business district. This proved quite successful as it provides greater access for complainants, better access to the Independent Commission Against Corruption and results in rental cost savings. Finally, minor legislative changes will enable a number of agencies, including the inspector, to simplify security vetting procedures of potential employees. The committee encourages the Department of Premier and Cabinet to ensure the inspector is consulted regarding future amendments to the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act. I now turn to the annual report of the Independent Commission Against Corruption. I acknowledge Commissioner David Ipp for his work during one of the commission's busiest periods. We heard last week that he intends to retire on 24 January 2014. The Premier of New South Wales said:

David Ipp has reinvigorated ICAC and, through his efforts and leadership, restored public confidence in the Commission and reminded anyone thinking of doing the wrong thing that they will be found out.

The committee reviewed a number of legislative changes to the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act. The first amendment removed any doubt that the commission could access registers of disclosures as part of its investigations into mining tenements. The Act was also amended to improve the ability of public sector organisations to take disciplinary action where corruption findings have been made against employees. This amendment implemented a recommendation made by the previous committee. The final amendment enabled the Independent Commission Against Corruption to simplify security vetting procedures for potential employees. I note that the committee is satisfied that each of these amendments will enhance the commission's ability to perform its statutory functions.

The committee also conducted a review into the reporting of travel expenses. It stated that it was preferable for the Independent Commission Against Corruption to note where part or all the travel expenses of its staff are paid for by other organisations. In respect of investigating corruption, the committee was satisfied that the increased funding and refinement of investigation procedures has enabled the Independent Commission Against Corruption to continue to investigate and expose corrupt conduct in a satisfactory manner despite the fact that we have seen an increase in investigations. Prevention is an important role of the Independent Commission Against Corruption that may not get the media attention it deserves. A number of projects have been implemented since the last review. They have involved procurement, anti-corruption safeguards in State planning, non-government organisations and information and communications technology contractors. I thank the committee for its work and commend the report.

Mr RICHARD AMERY (Mount Druitt) [1.22 p.m.]: I congratulate the member for Castle Hill on his recent appointment as chair of the Committee on the Independent Commission Against Corruption. The committee has operated well. For most of the time it was chaired by the member for Cronulla, who has been a balanced chairman, giving all members an opportunity to participate, irrespective of their party allegiance. The member for Cronulla ceased to be the chair following his promotion in a recent reshuffle of government responsibilities, and I wish him well. He chaired the meetings extremely professionally and worked cooperatively with committee members and the staff, who provided excellent support in conducting background briefings and the like.

The first report of the committee by resolution of the House relates to the Inspector of the Independent Commission Against Corruption and the Independent Commission Against Corruption. The inspector and the commissioner were involved during the most recent period and at the time of this annual report. During my time

as chair, I found the role of the inspector to be helpful to the committee. His Honour Harvey Cooper, AM, appeared before the committee with the attitude that he was there to answer questions frankly and openly. He assisted the committee both formally during the hearing and informally once it had concluded. The report before the House expresses the committee's best wishes for his retirement. I join with all members in wishing him well for the future and thank him for his efforts.

There may be an opportunity in future when extensive reports are considered by the Parliament for more members to speak in debate in the committee's reports. I acknowledge the new chairman's reference to the issue of officers from the Independent Commission Against Corruption who travel and that the names of the organisations that contribute to their travel should be released. I raised that issue at one of the committee's first meetings after the election. I am pleased that the committee and the Independent Commission Against Corruption have been cooperative in ensuring that future annual reports will identify those organisations and corruption authorities in other parts of the country or other countries that have contributed funding to the commission. There is nothing untoward in that, but in the interests of public scrutiny and openness the requirements that apply to commission staff should be consistent with those that apply to local government officers and members of Parliament.

I refer members to page 52 of the report, which mentions the number of convictions arising from corrupt findings. The public will always judge the Independent Commission Against Corruption. Whilst it may not be the legislative goal of the Independent Commission Against Corruption, the general public will be looking at its success in the courts and in criminal prosecutions. I draw members' attention to page 65 of the report, which refers to questions about a former Minister of the Government and whether when these matters are raised in Parliament the Independent Commission Against Corruption should intervene. The commissioner said that he had the authority to do so, but that it was a rare event. I commend the chairman for presenting these reports to Parliament.

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

Reports noted.

LEGISLATION REVIEW COMMITTEE

Report: Legislation Review Digest No. 47/55

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

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) [1.26 p.m.]: I appreciate the opportunity to update the House on the comments made by the Legislation Review Committee in its most recent digest, which was tabled on 29 October 2013. This is the forty-seventh digest prepared by the Legislation Review Committee of the Fifty-fifth Parliament. Of the nine bills introduced in the sitting week commencing 22 October 2013, the committee commented on eight. It was a huge digest. The bills under consideration were significant in scope and represented comprehensive reforms in the areas of planning, the administration of cemeteries and crematoria and the regulation of combat sports. As these were principal bills, they were lengthy in detail and the committee had a considerable volume of work to consider at its most recent meeting.

I will briefly touch on some of the issues raised in the bills. In regard to the Building and Construction Industry Security of Payment Amendment Bill 2013, the committee referred to Parliament the matter of self-incrimination. In particular, it noted that the bill required a person to provide information that could potentially incriminate that person, and that the bill was silent about the extent to which the self-incriminating information could be used against that person. The committee considered a similar provision relating to self-incrimination in the Cemeteries and Crematoria Bill 2013, but given certain safeguards provided for in the bill, the committee made no further comment. The committee did, however, comment on a provision that enabled the regulations to prescribe certain offences and set the applicable penalties. The committee considered that this may be an inappropriate delegation of legislative power.

Turning to the Combat Sports Bill 2013, the committee commented on an increase in the penalties for individuals who participate in combat sports without serological clearance and canvassed the appropriateness of an increase in the maximum penalty. Given the public health interest at the heart of this provision, the committee did not make any further comment. On the Crimes (Domestic and Personal Violence) Amendment Bill 2013, the committee flagged issues with respect to impacts on the privacy and liberty of an individual for a breach of an apprehended violence order, together with new offences for the making of a false statement in

applying for an apprehended violence order. However, given the bill's overarching objective to protect vulnerable individuals, together with certain safeguards to ensure that the making of a false statement must be intentional, the committee made no further comment.

On the Motor Dealers and Repairers Bill 2013, the committee canvassed a wide range of issues and commented broadly on matters relating to the lack of a requirement to give any reasons for refusing an application for motor dealer or repairer's licences or taking disciplinary action against a person, the exclusion of a judicial review of those decisions, and the potentially ill and widely defined powers afforded to the head of the agency that administers the motor dealer and repairer's scheme. While the committee ultimately made no further comment beyond raising these items the committee referred to Parliament a provision of the bill that allows authorised officers entry, search and seizure powers without the requirement to obtain a warrant. In particular, the committee noted that these powers may be used without the need for authorised officers and police officers to have a reasonable suspicion that a contravention of the bill or another law has been committed by a person connected with the premises so entered. The committee also referred to Parliament a provision relating to self-incrimination, in particular, a requirement that a person answer the questions of an authorised officer, and to otherwise furnish information, without providing an exception for information that may incriminate the person.

The committee made a number of comments on the Planning Bill 2013 and its cognate Planning Administration Bill 2013 with respect to retrospectivity, denial of compensation, the penalties for ancillary offences, search and seizure powers, self-incrimination, and matters set by regulation. While none of those matters were referred to Parliament, a full analysis of each of those issues is provided in the digest should members require further information. As always, the digest exists to provide material for members when discussing bills before Parliament. With its emphasis on identifying issues for consideration, I trust that the digest fulfils its objective in being a useful parliamentary resource. I thank the staff for their diligence, particularly as this is the third week of a three-week sitting period, which again meant a short turnover. A voluminous digest was produced because of the huge number of bills that were dealt with this week and in the previous two weeks. I commend the digest to the House.

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

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

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

The SPEAKER: I welcome to the Speaker's gallery Mr Tony Stewart, a former member of the Legislative Assembly, who served between 1995 and 2011. He represented the electorate of Lakemba from 1995 to 1999 and the electorate of Bankstown from 1999 to 2011. Mr Stewart is accompanied by senior delegates from the Australian Workers Union.

MINISTER FOR FINANCE AND SERVICES

The SPEAKER: I inform members that today is the fortieth birthday of the Minister for Finance and Services, and member for Bega. If the member thinks he is getting old, he is not. Happy birthday!

REPRESENTATION OF MINISTERS ABSENT DURING QUESTIONS

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I advise honourable members that during the absence from the Chamber today of the Minister for Primary Industries, and Minister for Small Business, the Deputy Premier will answer questions relating to her portfolio.

ASSENT TO BILLS

Assent to the following bills reported:

Adoption Legislation Amendment (Overseas Adoption) Bill 2013
Child Protection Legislation Amendment (Offenders Registration and Prohibition Orders) Bill 2013
Crimes (Sentencing Procedure) Amendment (Standard Non-parole Periods) Bill 2013
Crimes and Courts Legislation Amendment Bill 2013
Explosives Amendment Bill 2013
Fines Amendment Bill 2013
Strata Schemes Management Amendment (Child Window Safety Devices) Bill 2013

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**Notices of Motions**

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

QUESTION TIME

[Question time commenced at 2.22 p.m.]

COALPAC MINE EXTENSION PROPOSAL

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: My question is directed to the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure. What communication—including meetings, conversations, emails or phone calls—has the Minister or his staff had with the Department of Planning and Infrastructure in relation to the Coalpac mine proposal?

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: Getting a question from those opposite about planning is an absolute delight. Those opposite are the experts when it comes to making the long walk to the Independent Commission Against Corruption.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition will come to order. The Minister will be heard in silence.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: I have read the article in the media today about this with great interest. Honourable members will be well aware of the approach taken by this Government to the issues of planning. After 16 years of Labor Government, I, as Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, implemented the strictest policies around probity, transparency and integrity in the planning system. The essence of a planning system is that it must weigh up competing interests whenever a development application is being considered and determine the merit of the proposal.

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

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: Under the former Labor Government the application by Coalpac for an extension of its mine—and this was the focus of the media reporting today—was lodged under the infamous part 3A of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979. Under the former Labor Government decisions would have been made as a matter of course by the Minister, and a few of those decisions got them into a pickle.

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

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: I suspect that Coalpac would like to see that system continue. Coalpac heavily lobbied the former Government and sought to lobby the current Government to achieve its own ends.

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order: I refer to Standing Order 129, relevance. The question was clear: What communications did the Minister's office have?

The SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. The Minister is being relevant to the question asked. I will rule that points of order are vexatious if Opposition members do not cite the relevant standing order that has been breached.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: Today's media report is not accurate. Under the Liberal-Nationals Government planning decisions for mines are made either by the Director General of the Department of Planning and Infrastructure or, where there is significant community concern, the independent New South Wales Planning Assessment Commission. So no-one in my office has ever had any role whatsoever in the decision-making process. If my staff are not involved in the decision-making process and I am not involved in the decision-making process there can be no conflict of interest.

Furthermore, the insinuation in the article today is that my chief of staff attended meetings with Coalpac and failed to disclose that she has a property in the area. The media report claims this property is adjacent to or overlooks the Coalpac mine or the proposed extension. Let me address the issue of the location of the property by giving the facts, as verified by the Department of Planning and Infrastructure this morning. I am

advised that the property is located approximately eight kilometres north of the existing mining operations at Invincible Colliery and approximately four kilometres north of the proposed Coalpac consolidation project boundary.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition rises on a point of order. He will cite which standing order he believes has been breached.

Mr John Robertson: Point of order: I refer to Standing Order 129, relevance. The question in no way related to the process of planning permissions. The question was very much about communications between the Minister's office.

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

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: I have been advised that, far from being adjacent to or overlooking the mine, the Rowans Hole property is completely surrounded by the Gardens of Stone National Park and there is a large ridge or hill approximately 100 metres high between the property and the site of the proposed Coalpac mine that would block even the most distant views of the mine. Furthermore, there is already an existing mine, the Baal Bone Colliery, located between the Coalpac site and the property owned by my chief of staff. I am advised that, based on the department's assessment, the project would not result in any impacts on the Rowans Hole property.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition will come to order. I call the Leader of the Opposition to order for the first time.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: What about the meetings? This morning I asked my office to search our records. We found three records of meetings involving Coalpac and my office. The first meeting was on 24 February 2012. It was held in the boardroom of level 31, Governor Macquarie Tower. Attending that meeting was Dr Ian Follington, the man who has made the assertions; Michael van Maanen, a registered lobbyist and director of Kreab Gavin Anderson; Simon Manowski, departmental liaison officer from the Department of Planning and Infrastructure; Howard Reed, from the Department of Planning and Infrastructure; Tim Koelma, from the office of the Minister for Energy and Resources; and a staff member from my office. Was the staff member from my office present at that meeting my chief of staff? No, absolutely not. It was Mr Tim Robertson, who many members would know as a result of his active involvement in the review of the Planning Act.

A record of the meeting was kept, which is what my office always does. During the meeting the departmental officer advised that the key issues in the assessment were biodiversity and potential impacts on stone pagodas. He raised various other issues. The next meeting was on 23 April 2012. It was held in the Premier's boardroom and was held at the request of the Premier's staff. Was my chief of staff in attendance at that meeting? No, she was not.

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

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: Was my chief of staff at any of the meetings involving this company? The answer is no.

The SPEAKER: Order! I call the Leader of the Opposition to order for the second time.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: I am happy to lay the documents related to these meetings on the table for the information of members. [*Time expired.*]

STATE BUSHFIRES

Mrs ROZA SAGE: My question is directed to the Premier. How is the bushfire recovery process progressing for the Blue Mountains, the Central Coast and the Hunter?

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I thank the member for Blue Mountains for her question and for her extraordinary efforts on behalf of her community during the bushfire crisis. She and the member for Wollondilly, the member for Port Stephens and other members from electorates affected by the fires did a great

job. The large-scale mobilisation of our bushfire fighting resources was extraordinary to behold. The job people did was magnificent. I praise the State's exemplary emergency services and the retained members and volunteers, who worked in a calm, methodical and coordinated fashion during the crisis.

Tragically, a resident of Lake Munmorah and the pilot of an aircraft that crashed on the South Coast lost their lives. More than 200 families lost their homes completely and more than 100 lost parts of their homes in the fires. The thoughts and prayers of all members are with the families of the victims and those who have suffered significant property losses. On a number of occasions I visited the fire grounds and saw firsthand just how ferocious the fires were. I know that the community support for those who have lost their homes has been uplifting. As we saw last Sunday, the visit of the Danish Crown Prince and Princess provided an extraordinary boost to the volunteers and the nine members of community fire units who lost their homes during the fires that ravaged Winmalee and Springwood.

When I travelled around and saw how close the fire came to Heatherbrae, Catherine Hill Bay and the rest of Wyong shire as well as the area around Lithgow and the lower Blue Mountains it became clear to me how much had been saved, preserved and protected through the extraordinary efforts of our emergency services. But for their professionalism, courage and coordinated attack the damage and the loss of life could have been significantly worse. I can advise that the declared state of emergency has been lifted. While the immediate threat has passed, fire crews are still busy with about 50 fires burning across the State, 14 of which are uncontained. The efforts are now well and truly focused on the recovery phase. The loss of so many homes means that a large number of families and their pets are living with friends or family or in alternative accommodation, and livestock has been relocated. The fires have also had a huge impact on a number of businesses.

In the middle of the crisis we swiftly got on and appointed former Rural Fire Service commissioner Phil Koperberg as the recovery coordinator for the Blue Mountains and former senior assistant police commissioner Dick Adams as the recovery coordinator for the Hunter and Central Coast region. Today both men have reconfirmed that the recovery operations are progressing well. One of the most immediate tasks is managing the asbestos risk at the destroyed and damaged properties. I am delighted to say that the State Government will pay \$1.1 million for stage one of the Make Safe Asbestos Program. That will come as a great relief to families in the Blue Mountains where I understand that, as usual in the midst of a tragedy, some tradespeople have tried to rip people off on the cost of asbestos clean-up. I commend the Minister for Fair Trading for his work on that problem.

Multi-agency teams led by Fire and Rescue NSW conducted rapid impact assessments of fire-affected properties. Signs and notices were placed on the properties advising people of the risk of asbestos. With so many people needing help in the Blue Mountains, the disaster recovery centre is also in operation at the Presbyterian Church hall in Springwood. When I visited the centre last Friday I was impressed by the range of government and non-government agencies that professionally dealt with people as they came through. I thank the volunteers there for their work.

I thank the Salvation Army for, as usual, keeping people fed and watered and providing comfort. I also thank the Red Cross and Anglicare. Those three organisations have visited almost 2,500 properties in affected areas to provide information, advice and referrals to relevant services as required during this crisis. We could not respond and rebuild after bushfire events without the hard work and dedication of our volunteers, and I pay tribute to them again today. I am delighted to say that the Rural Fire Service has been inundated with new volunteer applications to join brigades across the State. The Australian Defence Force has offered to assist in the recovery effort, which is an offer we graciously accept. *[Extension of time granted.]*

Natural disaster declarations have been made in 19 local government areas from Wollondilly to Port Stephens to Lithgow and across the Blue Mountains. The Government has taken practical action to assist in the clean-up such as waiving water, tip and Roads and Maritime Service fees and delaying government payments for WorkCover to assist business. After events such as these there are always lessons that can be learned and applied to the future. We are determined to do that. Several investigations are underway into the fires and the Government will closely examine the findings. In particular, we are determined to promote responsible home ownership in bushfire-prone areas for the age-old issue that comes up every fire crisis—that is, proper protection and pruning and maintenance of trees on properties. The Government will continue to examine how best to deliver that for people across this State.

We will listen to fire authorities to see what, if any, changes are needed to our existing legislation or regulations to ensure that we are fully prepared for disasters like this in the future. We know these fires have

caused distress and upheaval to families and businesses. We also know that agencies are doing everything they can. We recognise that this has been an early massive mobilisation at the start of the fire season. We have a long fire season ahead of us, but the Government is determined to do all it can to assist.

COALPAC MINE EXTENSION PROPOSAL

Ms LINDA BURNEY: My question is directed to the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure. How can the Minister claim that the process for the Coalpac mine proposal was conducted at arm's length when the assessment and recommendation for the project was done by his department and signed off by his director general?

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: The member for Canterbury is not just a pickle, she is well and truly a dill pickle. The people in the gallery might be interested to know that the lady who asked the question was the shadow Minister for nearly a year. She does not know the first thing about the processes under the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act, nor does the current shadow Minister.

Mr Ryan Park: Point of order: My point of order is relevance under Standing Order 129. The Minister is straying from the question.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister has just begun to answer the question. There is no point of order.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: The process should be merit based.

Ms Linda Burney: I do understand.

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

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: I will release some of the questions the member for Canterbury has asked me to show that she does not know a thing about planning.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister will return to the leave of the question.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: For 33 years in New South Wales planning has been carried out under the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act. It requires that the matters under section 79C and similar matters under State-significant development be considered. They are the environmental, social and economic issues. They are difficult to weigh up and it is done at arm's length from government. By the way, they were not done at arm's length before the last election. The Labor Party's Ministers are now stars of stage and screen as they regularly take the walk to the Independent Commission Against Corruption because they did not understand the need to be objective on planning.

The system we have now allows all significant applications to be considered on merit under the provisions of the Act. It is in the State's interests to get these things done properly. When a major development comes in the director general issues what is called the Director General's Requirements. That goes to the proponent company and the company eventually comes back with an environmental assessment. The environmental assessment should address the concerns the director general has highlighted and that the community would expect to be highlighted.

It took Coalpac quite a long while to do that. The first time it made the effort the environmental assessment was not up to speed. The director general told Coalpac that it was not what the community would expect. Coalpac was sent away and eventually came back with an appropriate environmental assessment that went out on public exhibition. It received 900 submissions, 750 of which said that they had some concerns about the extension of the mine near Lithgow. The result was that the Department of Planning analysed the concerns and expressed the view that it should be referred to the independent Planning Assessment Commission. That is entirely proper, and that is what was done.

Mr John Robertson: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition will cite which standing order has been breached.

Mr John Robertson: My point of order relates to Standing Order 129, relevance. The question is about a sign-off by the director general.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition will resume his seat. There is no point of order. I call the Leader of the Opposition to order for the third time. He did not resume his seat when directed to do so by the Chair.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: Out of an abundance of caution for the sake of the community, it went to the Planning Assessment Commission for review. The review that was undertaken indicated a high level of concern. The Planning Assessment Commission, which comprises independent commissioners, determined there was a high level of concern about the biodiversity issues and about the environmental issues. Obviously the Government would like to see a balance. The Government wants to ensure that there are jobs and opportunities for the State but we also must ensure that the system in place is not tainted by the types of people who now occupy just a small space in this Parliament—members of the Labor Party, who gave us that wonderfully rotten part 3A. When it came back from the Planning Assessment Commission, that commission also indicated concerns about the environmental issues and the entire project. The commission also identified concerns around what I would call the pagodas of stone.

Ms Linda Burney: What about the economic benefits?

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: I do not think that the dill pickle in the Opposition would know that during the process, a whole lot of other agencies were consulted.

Ms Linda Burney: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Canterbury will cite which standing order has been breached.

Ms Linda Burney: It is 129. The question was clearly about the process.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member will cite the standing order that has been breached.

Ms Linda Burney: What about the economic benefits?

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Canterbury will resume her seat. If the member does not resume her seat she will be removed from the Chamber. I place the member for Canterbury on three calls to order.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: The Department of Planning and Infrastructure works with a host of other agencies. Properly, they work with the NSW Treasury, the Office of Environment and Heritage, the Environment Protection Authority, NSW Health, Lithgow City Council, the Department of Primary Industries, the Division of Resources and Energy, Roads and Maritime Service, the Central West Sydney Catchment Management Authority, the Heritage Council and the Commonwealth Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities, who all get a say. That is how we strike the balance. Unfortunately, under Labor there was no balance. [*Time expired.*]

REGIONAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mr ADAM MARSHALL: My question is directed to the Minister for Health, and Minister for Medical Research. How is the Government improving the quality of care for regional patients and their loved ones?

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: I thank the member for Northern Tablelands for his question and congratulate him on his great advocacy on behalf of his constituents. The people in this Parliament will know that since being elected to government we have employed an additional 4,100 extra nurses by headcount, which is more than 2,800 full-time equivalent [FTE]. People will be pleased to know also that all nurses working across the New South Wales public health system now have received their 2.5 per cent pay increase, including compulsory superannuation payments, and that the payments have been backdated to 1 July 2013. I know that will be good news for members who have spoken to nurses in their electorates. Following the 2013-14 budget and as part of the Government's commitment to employ a further 275 clinical nurse/midwife educators in our first term, I announced the creation of an additional 80 clinical nurse educator and clinical nurse specialist positions in hospitals across all local health districts and specialty networks.

The clinical nurse educators and clinical nurses provide specialist skills and expertise to assist in educating and supporting less experienced nurses—the new graduates who are coming onto our wards in our hospitals and who are a very important part of the nursing workforce. They are at the very heart of our system of health care. The Government is committed to fostering this workforce for the benefit of patients. As well, I am committed to supporting nurses and midwives working in rural and regional areas and to assisting our hospitals to attract and retain staff by providing increased professional support. That is why, at the 2013 annual general meeting of the NSW Nurses and Midwives Association I announced that, in addition to the 80 positions funded in this year's budget, a further 40 clinical nurse educators and clinical nurse specialist positions would be funded and created.

Today I am delighted to announce that the vast majority of those positions will be located in hospitals in rural and regional areas of New South Wales. I advise the House that the positions have been allocated to local health districts in Hunter New England, 9.5 new positions; Western NSW, 9.5 new positions; Murrumbidgee, 8.5 new positions; Southern NSW, four new positions; Northern NSW, 3.5 new positions; the Mid North Coast, 1.5 new positions; Nepean Blue Mountains, 1.5 new positions; Illawarra Shoalhaven, one new position; and the Far West, one new position. Recruitment to those positions will begin shortly and the nurses will begin work in our hospitals early next year. Today's announcement demonstrates we are delivering on our commitment to nurse recruitment.

In further good news for regional New South Wales, I announce that the New South Wales Government will allocate 12 midwifery scholarships for rural New South Wales in 2014. This is an increase from 10 offered in 2013 and will assist communities such as Narrandera, Broken Hill, Lithgow, Parkes, Forbes and towns across Hunter New England and the Illawarra to grow their midwifery workforce. I know that the shortage of midwives has been an issue of concern to a number of people not only across New South Wales but also across Australia and internationally. Now, through the scholarships, we are growing our own and that will really make a difference, particularly to country areas where midwives are in such short supply but where they provide such important services. Two of the scholarships are dedicated to supporting Aboriginal registered nurses to undertake their midwifery training.

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

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: To sum up, since the Government was elected and up to the end of June, we have appointed 4,100 additional nurses by headcount and 2,800 by full-time equivalent [FTE]. Nurses across the system have been saying how wonderful it is to have additional support from their colleagues and peers throughout the wards and in community health services. It means this Government can provide additional patient care in our emergency departments and on the wards where we are admitting more patients as well as in overnight areas. The nursing hours per patient day were signed off by the former Government, but delivered by us.

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

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: Not one of them was delivered by the former Labor Government: All were delivered by us—absolutely on track. That is why we have been able to employ so many extra nurses.

COALPAC MINE EXTENSION PROPOSAL

Mr NATHAN REES: My question is directed to the Minister for Planning. As required under section 3.7 of the Department of Premier and Cabinet code of conduct, did he require his chief of staff to document in writing her conflict of interest and how it would be managed?

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: Maybe Opposition members were the authors of today's article because they do not seem to understand anything about planning, either. Let me make very clear that my chief of staff, who does an excellent job and absolutely is a woman of complete probity, transparency and decency, attended no meetings—I repeat: no meetings. On the advice I have received from my office—and this morning staff have looked extensively for the meetings because obviously there were a lot of meetings held—she was not at any of the meetings that occurred with Coalpac. There was no conflict of interest and there is no conflict of interest. Let me tell the Leader of the Opposition that his preaching to me about probity and transparency is just unbelievable.

Mr Paul Toole: What about the \$3 million bribe?

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: This is the "Currawong Kid" and the offer of a \$3 million bribe that he forgot to tell the police and the Independent Commission Against Corruption about. Fantastic! Whether it is the milk bars at Circular Quay or the Mount Penny coalmines, they got it right. Have they got money for themselves? Yes, they have.

Ms Carmel Tebbutt: Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 129, relevance. The question was about the code of conduct. The Minister is now straying very far from the question. I ask you to draw him back to the question.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister has only just strayed from the leave of the question, but I uphold the point of order. The Minister will confine his remarks to the question.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: I again state for the record—and I could talk until the cows come home to those silly people in the Opposition—that there was a meeting on 24 February 2012. I was not at it; nor was my chief of staff. Along came the company and they were not happy. They were not happy because they were not getting what they wanted. They were not actually addressing the community concerns about the issues that needed to be addressed. The next meeting was on 23 April in the Premier's boardroom at the request of the Premier's staff because the company again was seeking to lobby and push its own case. It wanted a special deal. It wanted to make sure that it got special arrangements—the sort of thing that, when it started its application in 2010, was how it worked because Labor was in government. It put in the application, but it had not quite learnt that, gee whizz, the new system was open, transparent and honest.

Ms Linda Burney: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Order! Does the member raise a point of order regarding relevance? I have ruled on that.

Ms Linda Burney: My point of order relates to relevance.

The SPEAKER: Order! It is difficult to hear the Minister, but he is being relevant to the question asked.

Ms Linda Burney: The question was about his chief of staff and whether she put anything in writing.

The SPEAKER: Order! I directed the Minister to return to the leave of the question, and he did so. He is being relevant to the question asked. There is no point of order.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: There was then the third meeting on 14 December 2012. That was the time when the Planning and Assessment Commission released its review. That got the company stirred up because it had seen that—gee whizz—the independent processes that this Government put in place were going to make sure that those issues that the community would expect to be considered were, in fact, going to be considered. So the company became quite disturbed about those issues. We were also disturbed in the sense that, as a Government, we wanted to make sure that the company could put in a viable application—one that would allow jobs to be maintained in the area. One has to strike a balance on the big issues in regional areas such as the coalmines. As a government, we want to make New South Wales number one again; we want to get the economy moving and we want jobs for miners. That is made clear to the mining industry. However, industry also has to comply with the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act and with the rules that the community would expect, so that the long-term sustainability of the community will continue. Environmental and biodiversity issues are important.

I had a call from a radio commentator in January this year. He indicated that he was concerned because jobs were being lost. I told him that I would meet with Coalpac and I did so. The company pushed its case—as it is entitled to do. But was my chief of staff at that meeting? No, she was not. Did she have anything to do with the meeting? No, she did not. I could go on but I am making the point that this company is a bit miffed. It has not got its way because it has not learned the lesson that there is now an open, transparent system that has probity, guidelines and standards, which unfortunately Labor never had and could never apply.

I was speaking today with one of the senior officers at the Department of Planning. All the planning officers whom I spoke to there are absolutely angry that this could possibly have been presented in this way. They are absolutely furious. The same departmental officers are furious. One senior officer said, "It is simple,

Minister, this was 100 per cent merit all the way and they did not get what they wanted." But I will tell you one person who did—the bloke who asked the question, Nathan Rees. He got a donation from Centennial Coal—he actually got a donation and he stands there and asks questions. It is the pot calling the kettle black—give me a break.

NATIONAL PARKS PEST MANAGEMENT

Mr JOHN WILLIAMS: My question is addressed to the Minister for the Environment and Minister for Heritage. How is the Government improving pest control in national parks?

Ms ROBYN PARKER: I thank the member for his question and his support of a supervised supplementary pest control program under the direction of the National Parks and Wildlife Service [NPWS]. A three-year trial of the supplementary pest control program will commence following a 30-day notification period in 12 parks in regional New South Wales. They will be eligible to commence under the direction of the National Parks and Wildlife Service from 30 November.

The Government is delivering a supervised and responsible program as an extension of the pest control program already conducted by the National Parks and Wildlife Service. It will have an impact on feral animals. We know that every pest animal removed from a national park is a good outcome for the environment. In the past two years, more than 100,000 pest animals have been removed from our precious national park system and that will be enhanced by the new program. Earlier this year, I announced that a trial supplementary pest control program would be run in 12 national parks and reserves—supervised, coordinated, controlled and directed by National Parks staff. The National Parks and Wildlife Service will develop and approve a specific shooting operations plan for each operation in each reserve. This plan will set out exactly where, when and how shooting will occur, including all safety and communication protocols. This already occurs for the National Parks and Wildlife Service's professional shooting operations.

The trial, to help boost pest animal control, will not operate during school holidays or at night. It will not involve dogs, bows or black-powder muskets. It will only involve skilled individuals over 18 years of age. It will only be conducted in areas that have been closed to other users on the relevant days, as already occurs for the National Parks and Wildlife Service professional pest control operations. It will involve advance notice to neighbours and the community of park closures due to shooting operations and will be administered under the National Parks and Wildlife Act. The trial program will operate over a three-year period. There will be a thorough scientific evaluation of the trial. The evaluation will gather robust evidence to assess scientifically whether the trial improved the overall effectiveness of the National Parks and Wildlife Service pest control programs, including quantity of pests removed. It will measure the financial and economic costs and benefits to the New South Wales Government and local economies and assess the social impacts of the trial.

The Natural Resources Commission will review the results and report to government before decisions are made on the future of the program beyond the three-year trial. The 12 reserves to be included in the trial are in regional New South Wales where pest animals are a widespread problem and firearms are already widely used as a pest control technique across the landscape. The 12 reserves are: Cocopara Nature Reserve, Woomargama National Park, Gundabooka State Conservation Area, Gundabooka National Park, Goonoo State Conservation Area, Goonoo National Park, Coolbaggie Nature Reserve, Murrumbidgee Valley State Conservation Area, Murrumbidgee Valley National Park—"Yanga" precinct, Yathong Nature Reserve, Nombinnie State Conservation Area and Nombinnie Nature Reserve. Volunteer shooters will operate under the National Parks and Wildlife Service volunteer policies and rigorous work health and safety procedures.

To be eligible for the program, licensed volunteer shooters will need to have the skill, experience and accreditation equivalent to professional National Parks and Wildlife Service staff and contractors. This will include training in the use of firearms to humanely destroy animals; navigation and map reading; first aid; and work health and safety. Others have congratulated the Government on this outcome. The Public Service Association, the National Parks Association of NSW and The Greens all welcomed the announcement of the trial. The Australian Workers Union [AWU] also welcomed the decision and I appreciate the respectful way in which they met with me and engaged. They welcomed the decision to have the program regulated and managed by the National Parks and Wildlife Service with all volunteer hunters to be fully supervised. They discussed their safety concerns with me and are pleased that those concerns have been taken on board. I thank the staff of the National Parks and Wildlife Service who have worked with me on this program: Ann King, Bob Conroy, Mick O'Flynn and Ben Russell. I appreciated Bob Conroy particularly for the way in which he engaged with me. Bob is retiring today. He dedicated his entire career to the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service. [*Extension of time granted.*]

Bob Conroy has worked for the National Parks and Wildlife Service since 1975. Bob had three attempts at getting into the National Parks and Wildlife Service and over the past 38 years has served around the State. He was instrumental in strengthening relationships with the Rural Fire Service, leading to what is now a collaborative and cooperative approach to fire management. I witnessed his approach over the time I have been the Minister and I know that others in the Chamber would have met Bob and seen the professional manner in which he approached his job. He is the epitome of an exemplary public servant. I will miss his calm, considered and consultative contribution. I wish him well for his retirement.

I thank all the staff from the Office of Environment and Heritage and the National Parks and Wildlife Service for the way in which they have engaged. In particular I take the opportunity to thank them for the work they did and continue to do in fighting and preventing bushfires and working collaboratively with other services across New South Wales.

COALPAC MINE EXTENSION PROPOSAL

Mr MICHAEL DALEY: My question is directed to the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure. Is it the case that he is, in fact, claiming that his chief of staff played absolutely no role at any time in relation to the Coalpac proposal, either externally or internally?

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: I am not quite sure what the member means by "externally or internally". I must say that the article in today's media deserves 10 out of 10 for graphics, but zero out of 10 for substance. It has fantastic graphics, but absolutely no substance. As I have said, the position is that a number of meetings took place. The central assertion and insinuation was that my chief of staff somehow attended those meetings. The implication and insinuation seem not to make any logical sense. I will just say that she was not at any of the meetings. Chiefs of staff—members opposite would be well aware of them because some of them had the luck of having them, and one of them still has one—have to deal with procedural office administration matters from time to time.

In respect of sitting in meetings with Coalpac's people, the answer is no, not at all. That is the advice. We have gone through the records. That is what I have been advised by the staff and by the department. It is interesting: One has to ask: What exactly did this company expect? What were the expectations as a result of the first period when it lodged the application under part 3A? Remember part 3A, where someone could say to the Minister—that is, the Labor Minister—"Can we lodge this under part 3A? Can you just flick it through and don't worry about too much of the issues?" "Sure", they used to say, regularly—which is what got them down to the Independent Commission Against Corruption. One has to ask: What the dickens was this company doing?

Mr John Robertson: Point of order—

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: You were part of it; you were very much part of that whole culture.

Mr John Robertson: I am not going to be frightened from taking points of order because you point your finger at me across the Chamber.

The SPEAKER: Order! What is the member's point of order? The Leader of the Opposition will not argue across the Chamber. He must cite the standing order that he believes has been breached.

Mr John Robertson: My point of order is relevance under Standing Order 129. The question was about whether the chief of staff sat in any meetings—

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister's answer is relevant to the question asked.

Mr John Robertson: —not just with Coalpac.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister is being relevant to the question asked.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: As I said, you guys know more about corruption. You actually wrote the book on it. You did. You wrote the book on it. Think about it: how many of these people sitting here today—

Mr Paul Lynch: Where there's a will, there's a way, Brad.

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: How many of these people today are the apprentices of Eddie Obeid? Remember the name Eddie Obeid? How many of them actually had dinner with Ian Macdonald? Maybe before or after Tiffanie—who knows?

Mr Ron Hoenig: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Order! The Minister will resume his seat. The member for Liverpool will come to order.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: How many of them? Absolutely all of them—in some way a part of our culture.

Mr Ron Hoenig: My point of order refers to Standing Order 129—

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: Except you—you came late. I apologise.

Mr Ron Hoenig: Standing Order 129 requires the Minister to be relevant to the question asked. The Minister has strayed well beyond the question.

The SPEAKER: Order! I have ruled that the Minister is being relevant to the question asked.

Mr Ron Hoenig: So he has.

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

Mr BRAD HAZZARD: I apologised to the member for Heffron a little too soon because I was reminded that he had a meeting with Eddie Obeid. They have all had meetings with Eddie Obeid. He had a meeting with Eddie Obeid and with Nathan Rees in order to roll the current leader, the \$3 million—"Oh, do I remember a \$3 million bribe?"—man. No. Obviously, the company is miffed and having a spray. I remember Frank Sartor and others saying, "That's the joy of being a planning Minister." When your agencies or departments actually make decisions and do it in the community interest, you are going to upset somebody because not everybody is happy with every planning decision. That is the way it is.

As far as I am concerned, the officers of the Department of Planning and Infrastructure have done a first-class job working with all the other agencies I mentioned earlier. They have tried really hard. They tried hard to get this particular company to modify its application so it did not have the environmental and biodiversity issues, but it did not choose to do that. Now it has said that it will. It has taken it a long while to get that far. We look forward to its doing that because we would like to see jobs maintained in Lithgow. We certainly will look favourably—not favourably; we will consider those issues. As it brings them back, the Department of Planning and Infrastructure and/or the Department of Premier and Cabinet will deal with those issues in due course.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE: My question is addressed to the Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Healthy Lifestyles, and Minister for Western New South Wales. How is the Government improving mental health services in New South Wales?

Mr KEVIN HUMPHRIES: I thank the member for Wagga Wagga for his question. Before I outline in a little more detail some of the fantastic work in Wagga Wagga driven by its local member, I shall reinforce some of the words and sentiments of the Premier regarding the recent bushfires. This morning it was my privilege with the member for Blue Mountains to meet the regional community mental health team at Springwood. That fantastic team has been providing post-recovery support to people in that area of the Blue Mountains. Whilst the past few weeks' media attention and much of the vivid frontline services are dissipating, the work of many of our people, particularly in mental health, is just beginning. Clearly evident there and to everyone in this House was the high regard in which the member for Blue Mountains is held by her community. Wherever we went, whether to the front line or the recovery centre, the many volunteers were truly grateful to have an understanding local member and a Premier that had taken a level of personal interest they had not seen before.

We heard stories that a couple of team members had lost property and houses, but were fundamentally committed to helping to triage that community. They had a two-phase approach of frontline workers and a second tier of workers visiting people in their homes. They made sure that people remained well, not just those who had lost property but also the many who were traumatised because they could not get away in time or were parents separated from their children when many schools were evacuated. That fantastic work will continue in that vein. I spoke with the member for Wollondilly, Central Coast members, the member for Port Stephens and the member for Southern Highlands about the terrific work being undertaken in their communities. We are more than happy to help to maintain that work. This month is Mental Health Month and its mantra is "Little acts of kindness have big impacts". The member for Wagga Wagga should be congratulated not just on his advocacy but also on his long-held interest in mental health in his community. Last week he and the Minister for Health opened the new 50-bed facility as part of stage one of the \$240 million redevelopment for the Riverina area.

Mr Daryl Maguire: It is \$282.1 million.

Mr KEVIN HUMPHRIES: The \$281 million redevelopment. Before I became the Minister I had the privilege of attending a meeting with members of the Sunflower Club in Wagga Wagga, a community-based organisation of which the member has been very much a part. If anyone sees someone wandering around this place with sunflowers, it is usually the member for Wagga Wagga as he has been committed to that issue for a long time. We are very much a part of this world-class facility of 30 new acute inpatient beds and 20 new additional subacute beds.

Dr Andrew McDonald: Thank you, Tanya.

Mr KEVIN HUMPHRIES: You said it; we deliver on it. That is the difference.

Dr Andrew McDonald: Money from our side.

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

Mr KEVIN HUMPHRIES: Expectations on that side led to disappointment. The great expectations that those opposite raised led to great community disappointment. You said it; we deliver it. The subacute facility is a new model of care. We are making sure that people have access to mental health support in and near their communities, in places such as Wagga Wagga, Griffith, the area of the member for Murrumbidgee, and out west to Hay and down in the region of the member for Albury. This will allow us to consolidate mental health services as part of the Albury-Wodonga health precinct. It is all looking good for that part of the State. I thank the member for Wagga Wagga and the Minister for Health for continuing the investment in infrastructure and making sure that we have the models of care that meet the needs of our community.

On Monday, the member for Maitland delivered on another election promise by opening the community mental health precinct within the acute facility that focuses on carers to ensure that they do not lose contact when people become unwell and need to access an inpatient acute unit. On behalf of the House I congratulate all the local members on doing a fantastic job of supporting the community. Well done. *[Extension of time granted.]*

During Mental Health Month a program called Communities Matter was launched. It was the result of a lot of work undertaken by the Mental Health Commission. Suicide prevention is an important issue in New South Wales. People want to know how to recognise the signs of when people are at risk of suicide, and what tools and skills we need to help them. Most importantly, we need to know where to direct people for help, whether it is to a general practitioner, a medical centre, one of the many psychologists and counsellors, or others in the community who provide support. The program will be trialled in Hay, in the south-west of the State, and Walgett, in the north-west of the State.

The Government aims to roll out the program across the State over the coming 12 months. The statewide program supports those communities that want a hand to start a conversation on mental health and how to put tidy networks in place in our communities. Mental health is an issue in small communities where everyone knows everybody: If someone takes their life, it really affects smaller communities. I thank those members who participated in activities during Mental Health Month 2013. Today two members from each side of the House supported the Governor in conducting a session on recovery, in conjunction with the Schizophrenia Fellowship. Going forward, it is all good news for mental health. But there is a lot to do at a community level.

COALMINING INDUSTRY

Mr GREG PIPER: My question is directed to the Premier. What is his initial response to the recent recommendations of the Independent Commission Against Corruption and its conclusion that there are systemic shortcomings in the State's administration of the coalmining industry that make corruption almost inevitable?

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I thank the member for Lake Macquarie for his question and for his obvious interest in this matter. He served in previous Parliaments and witnessed firsthand the circumstances that led to some of the extraordinary revelations that have come out of the Independent Commission Against Corruption in recent times—and that are ongoing. Today those inquiries are still wending their way through the Independent Commission Against Corruption, and I suspect I could be asked a similar question about another report further down the track.

I rang Commissioner Ipp yesterday to congratulate him and thank him for this report. Anyone who is interested in clean government, in decisions being made in the public interest and in ensuring that the resources that are in the ground of New South Wales deliver a proper return to the people of this State will welcome the report. The fact is that the Government will consider, probably as early as next week, the way in which we will seek to progress many of the recommendations made by Commissioner Ipp. Come the next session of Parliament I will be able to outline in greater detail for the member for Lake Macquarie and for all members some of those matters. I heard the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure say earlier that, when it came to corruption, Labor wrote the book. That may not be completely accurate, but Labor has certainly filled more than one bookcase with Independent Commission Against Corruption reports.

Mr Nick Lalich: Remember Bob Askin, Barry. He wrote the book.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: If I was the member for Cabramatta, I would not speak. This man visits a criminal who was jailed for murdering a Labor member of Parliament. And of course we know that is only the tip of the iceberg, Nick. We know that with the stroke of a pen Labor Ministers, influenced by former Labor members, made themselves and their colleagues richer than Croesus—not paying due regard to the taxpayers of this State, but looking after themselves once again. The member for Lake Macquarie knows that the report seeks to put a proper regulatory framework around the way in which those leases and developments are approved in the future. What is interesting, given some of the questions today, is that Commissioner Ipp's report instances the fact that the Department of Planning and Infrastructure, under the current Minister, has shown the way of delivering transparency and accountability by ensuring that people understand why and how decisions are being made.

On a day on which those opposite seek to suggest that things are not well in the Department of Planning and Infrastructure, we have a report about which I have been asked a question where the Independent Commission Against Corruption says that other government departments ought to take a leaf out of the book of the Department of Planning and Infrastructure when it comes to accountability and transparency around decision-making. That should not be forgotten. Of course, there are also recommendations that go to Parliament. There are recommendations that go to codes and to disclosure matters. I will not pre-empt the Government's deliberations, but I can see no reasons why those recommendations will not be progressed by both Houses so that people can have confidence—as we sought to give them before the last election—that things will change when it comes to decision-making.

If you make decisions openly, based on merit and not personal interest—whether party or business—and if people are held accountable, you will not get into the same sort of trouble as former members of the Labor Party did. You do not rip off taxpayers in the way that members opposite ripped off taxpayers. Nor do you establish a training mine—which may or may not be a good enough idea for training—to bluff the mining industry but not guarantee that the profits of any such mine will come back to taxpayers rather than ending up in the pockets of former union officials. I welcome the report by Commissioner Ipp. He has done an excellent job during his tenure, as I said last week. I wish him a long, healthy and happy retirement. He has certainly done this State a benefit and I think this report will again demonstrate his worth to New South Wales.

COALPAC MINE EXTENSION PROPOSAL

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA: My question is addressed to the Premier. What information can he provide to the House about today's media reports concerning the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure?

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I thank the member for Davidson for his question. I was slightly troubled when I woke up this morning not only to radio reports but to other media reports about this matter. If one read those media reports and listened to what was being said, there clearly was a suggestion of a massive scandal in the Department of Planning and Infrastructure. We heard from the chief executive of the coalmine that present at meetings he had with the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure was the Minister's chief of staff, who apparently had a property that was near, adjacent to and overlooking the proposed coal expansion.

I was concerned. I told Philip Clark on 2BL that I would get briefed when I arrived at work later in the morning. What did I discover? As the House has now heard, meetings were held. I think the Minister said that three meetings were held. These are presumably the meetings that Mr Follington said were attended by the Minister's chief of staff. Let me quote Mr Follington because I would not like to misrepresent him. Yesterday he said he had "several meetings with Ms McFarlane present and there had been no mention that she had a property that overlooked the site or was near the site. Some of the early meetings we had with the Minister she sat in on." What did he hear the Minister say in question time today? Kath McFarlane was not at a single meeting with Coalpac.

If that was not bad enough—if I have heard it right—this "near, adjacent, overlooking" property is, at best, four kilometres and, at worst, 10 kilometres from the proposed mining extension. So if you think Redfern is near, adjacent to or overlooks The Rocks, you probably have a problem because that is about four kilometres. But—and I did not know this—the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure tells me there is a 100-metre hill in between. All I knew was that Cullen Bullen and Capertee both have great pubs, both of which are called the Royal Hotel. What I knew was that the elevation of the Cullen Bullen Royal Hotel—because its website says so—is about 880 metres. The elevation of the Capertee Royal Hotel is about 800 metres so I am not quite sure who is overlooking who.

I must say that I was less concerned when some of the facts came through, but that did not stop me from asking my director general to make some inquiries about this matter. I will now advise the House of what my director general has advised me. My director general advises that the Department of Planning and Infrastructure's decision with respect to the proposed Coalpac mine near Lithgow was made "in accordance with usual departmental processes". He advises that there was no deviation from those usual processes in respect of the proposal. He advises that the assessment was undertaken by experienced departmental officers. He goes on to make the point those officers issued an assessment report to the director general recommending that the proposal not be approved. The director general, having regard to that assessment report and other relevant considerations, including the advice of Treasury and other government agencies, determined that the proposal should not be approved. The reasons for that determination are fully documented in the assessment report and the director general's decision. Both of those documents, and other relevant documents, are publicly available on the department's website.

Importantly, the director general of the department has confirmed that neither the Minister nor any of his staff influenced, or attempted to influence, the department's assessment or decision in any way. The director general went on to say that he further advised that, while he was aware that the Minister's chief of staff had a farming property in the general region—I think we now accept that it was the general region—he was not aware of the location of that property in relation to the proposed Coalpac mine and it did not factor into the department's decision-making process in any way. So here we have a story based on allegations made by a coalmine that has had a bad decision from the Department of Planning and Infrastructure. I share its frustration about that decision; I do not want to see a single job lost from New South Wales. What I know is that we have legislation. [*Extension of time granted.*]

In some cases that legislation was put in place by those opposite and in some cases it was put in place by us. That legislation ensures that these projects are assessed on their merits. No more the Eddie Obeid wink and a nod. No more the Ian Macdonald signature. No more the backdating of approvals. Assessments are made on bona fide principles. So I am not surprised that the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure is aggrieved by the allegations made by those opposite today. I am not surprised that his chief of staff, who has a property that is not near, adjacent to or overlooking this facility, is equally aggrieved. Therefore, I am not surprised that the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure has this day referred the matter to the Independent Commission Against Corruption because he knows he has nothing to hide. Once again, we have Labor the party of corruption. Once again, we have Labor the party of experts of corruption. As the member for Liverpool said, never let the will get in the way when it comes to corruption by those opposite.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: Can you imagine a member of the legal profession ever saying such a thing—boasting about Eddie Obeid's corrupt practices? But that is what the member for Liverpool did.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Liverpool will cease interjecting or he will be removed from the Chamber.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: The Independent Commission Against Corruption will get to the bottom of this case, but on the basis of the information presented to date it will be a pretty quick exercise.

Question time concluded at 3.24 p.m.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders: Matter of Public Importance

Mr BRAD HAZZARD (Wakehurst—Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Infrastructure NSW) [3.24 p.m.]: I move:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended to permit the consideration of the matter of public importance submitted by the member for Shellharbour on 30 October 2013, Pink Ribbon Day, at this sitting at 4.15 p.m.

I apologise to the House, but following discussions with the Opposition there has been a slight change of arrangements for this afternoon. The matter of public importance submitted by the member for Shellharbour about Pink Ribbon Day will be dealt with after private members' statements. I indicated to the House earlier that we would also try to add the additional private members' statements from last night but it has been pointed out to me that the Parliamentary Spring Ball is being held tonight. A number of members will be attending the ball. Last night's additional private members' statements will be deferred until the next sitting week but I promise my colleagues that they will be dealt with.

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

Motion agreed to.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders: Tabling of Papers

Mr BRAD HAZZARD (Wakehurst—Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Infrastructure NSW) [3.25 p.m.]: I move:

That, for the remainder of the 2013 sittings, standing and sessional orders be suspended to provide:

- (1) The tabling of papers by Ministers may be effected by an announcement in the House without handing up copies of such papers.
- (2) Any papers tabled by announcement shall be lodged with the Table Office prior to their announcement in the House.

This will validate the practice that has been adopted in the House for tabling of papers and will commence from the next sitting week.

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

Motion agreed to.

SITTING SCHEDULE 2014

Mr BRAD HAZZARD (Wakehurst—Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Infrastructure NSW) [3.26 p.m.]: I move:

That unless otherwise ordered, the House meet during the 2014 autumn and spring sittings as follows:

Autumn Sittings: February 25, 26, 27; March 4, 5, 6, 18, 19, 20, 25, 26, 27; May 6, 7, 8, 13, 14, 15, 27, 28, 29; June 3, 4, 5, 17, 18, 19 and June 24, 25, 26 as a potential reserve week.

Spring Sittings: August 5, 6, 7, 12, 13, 14; September 9, 10, 11, 16, 17, 18; October 14, 15, 16, 21, 22, 23; November 11, 12, 13, 18, 19, 20 and November 25, 26, 27 as a potential reserve week.

I have circulated a calendar of the sitting arrangements for next year. I seek leave to table it for the information of members.

Leave granted.

Document tabled.

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

Motion agreed to.

JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON ROAD SAFETY

Inquiry

Mr Greg Aplin, as Chair, informed the House that, pursuant to Standing Order 299 (1), the Joint Standing Committee on Road Safety has resolved to conduct an inquiry into speed zoning and its impact on the Demerit Points Scheme, the full details of which are available on the committee's homepage.

PETITIONS

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

Oxford Street Traffic Arrangements

Petition requesting the removal of the clearway and introduction of a 40 kilometre per hour speed limit in Oxford Street, 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**.

Public Housing Rents

Petition requesting that the Government rule out increasing rents for pensioners in public housing following the Federal Government's increase to pensions as part of the carbon tax compensation, received from **Mr Robert Furolo**.

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**.

GOVERNMENT SECTOR EMPLOYMENT LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2013**Second Reading**

Debate resumed from 23 October 2013.

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON (Blacktown—Leader of the Opposition) [3.29 p.m.]: In June the Parliament passed legislation which stipulated new employment arrangements for senior executives employed in the public service. The amendments in the Government Sector Employment Legislation Amendment Bill 2013 extend that approach to the New South Wales Health Service, the NSW Police Force and Transport for NSW. The bill amends the Health Services Act 1997, the Police Act 1990 and the Transport Administration Act 1988 to align employment arrangements for senior executives in the NSW Ministry of Health, the NSW Police Force and Transport for NSW with the new employment arrangements for senior executives in the public service covered by the Government Sector Employment Act 2013.

The bill transfers employment functions for chief executives of local health districts from the director general of the NSW Ministry of Health to the board of those districts and transfers the employment functions for senior executives in those districts from that director general to the chief executives of those districts and specialty networks. The bill aligns employment arrangements for employees of the NSW Police Force who are not police officers with the new employment arrangements for non-executive employees of the public service under that Act. The bill also transfers from the public service to Transport for NSW the staff of the State Transit Authority and Roads and Maritime Services.

Just as we did in June, Labor will oppose these provisions. We have no problem with modernising the public service and we have no problem with updating processes to ensure the highest levels of integrity, accountability and performance. The question is whether this Government can be trusted—whether its word is worth the paper it is written on. After all, this is the Government that never saw a public sector working condition that it did not seek to cut. This is the Government whose \$3 billion of funding cuts are already wreaking havoc on patient care within our hospital system; whose 1,400 job cuts at RailCorp are already wreaking havoc on standards of rail maintenance, with 16 major CityRail breakdowns since February this year; and whose decision to impose a new train timetable has cut peak hour rail services across Sydney, the Hunter, Illawarra, Blue Mountains and Central Coast. I will return to those cuts presently, but suffice to say this is not a government that deserves the benefit of the doubt when it bowls up new legislation affecting our front-line public services.

As I noted several months ago, the Government Sector Employment Bill repealed the Public Sector Employment and Management Act 2002. It established two employment classifications, whittled down from four—the "public service" and the "government sector". However, this legislation goes further. It is a blatant attempt to extend individual contracts throughout the public service. I argued back in June that the legislation represented the thin end of the wedge, and so it has proven with this amendment bill. The reason is that it will be used to move thousands of employees across New South Wales who were previously covered by collective agreements or awards into a new contract-based senior executive structure.

At present, many senior personnel in our health system, our police force and in transport up to grades 11/12 and the senior officer grades are covered by collective agreement or award conditions as well as protections from unfair dismissal. However, these amendments continue the Premier's discretion to set "bands" within which a person would be employed. The upshot is that a person is no longer being employed in a specific job or position but rather in a band—within which they can serve in any type of role. What we see is effectively an elaborate ploy to circumvent the award coverage and unfair dismissal rights of employees and make it easier to sack them.

In addition, the amendment empowers the Premier, under new section 35, to determine the bands in which senior executives in health, police and transport are employed. This power could be used to pull even more workers into this new category. For instance, employees at grade 11/12 level could be next—the Premier will need only to publish the changes on the New South Wales legislation website. One day we could conceivably reach the point where every worker in our hospitals, in law enforcement and in our transport network is employed under an individual contract. If members think that is fanciful, they should think again, because that is this Government's philosophy in black and white. A world governed by individual contracts is what someone like the Premier fantasises about.

In just 2½ years, the Government has applied to Industrial Relations Commission to strip New South Wales public servants of family leave entitlements that allow workers to take a day off to care for a sick child or an elderly parent. It has applied to change 98 different public sector awards—slashing annual leave loading, cutting penalty rates for shift workers, and removing additional sick leave entitlements and parental leave. Whenever this Government proposes amendments of this nature, it pays to believe the worst and it pays to read the fine print. Because the word "modernise" is simply the euphemism used by the Liberal Party for cutting working conditions and protections from our public sector workers.

Another serious concern Labor continues to have with these amendments relates to the Government Sector Employment Rules. These rules, which are yet to be written, will never come before the Parliament, and can never be disallowed by the Parliament. Yet they essentially set the parameters for all senior executive contracts, performance evaluation and procedures for assignment in the upper ranks of health, police and transport. For non-executives, the rules govern recruitment, including merit selection; conditions of engagement; termination procedures and the process for managing excess employees. The rules also deal with the procedural requirements for dealing with unsatisfactory performance which can lead to dismissal. Incredibly, the rules have not been provided to anyone in the House.

I raised this concern back in June. Five months later, we are yet to see the details of this vital procedural instrument which impacts the working lives of thousands of public sector workers. It is simply not good enough. And it indicates that the real objective of the Government here is simply to make it easier to sack people. When a government slashes \$3 billion out of health, why would Labor not believe the worst about its intentions? When a government's funding cuts leave New South Wales with the longest elective surgery waiting times in the nation for procedures like hip replacements, knee replacements and tonsillectomies, why would the community not be suspicious?

The situation in New South Wales hospitals is so desperate that senior clinicians are speaking out. Dr Prahalath, the head of emergency at Campbelltown Hospital, bravely blew the whistle on the funding crisis in south-west Sydney. Professor David Morris at St George Hospital was for 14 months a lone voice in the wilderness begging the Government to clear his waiting list and fund extra lifesaving peritonectomy surgeries. Nepean maternity department is so short-staffed that Paula Bailey was forced to give birth in the car park and Michelle Trotter on her kitchen floor. An entire ward disappeared at the Prince of Wales Hospital. Whether it is bed closures at Bathurst or Dubbo, ambulance backlogs at Maitland, the closure of the John Hunter eye clinic or the Mount Druitt cardiac unit, this Government's funding cuts have brought the New South Wales hospital system to its knees. It is the same story in transport with the Government's new train timetable. The new timetable went down like a lead balloon in Miranda because it cut services out of Como and Jannali and made it impossible for people in the Sutherland shire to get to Kogarah or Rockdale without changing trains.

The timetable cut peak hour train services at places like Granville, Yagoona, Wiley Park, Beverley Hills, Pymble and Stanmore. And it took small communities by surprise all over the Hunter, the Illawarra, the Blue Mountains and the Central Coast—all because the Minister for Transport refused to consult over the biggest timetable change in a generation. Labor's decision on this bill is simple. We are opposed to any legislation that makes it easier for the Government to continue its cuts; we are opposed to any legislation that makes it easier to sack hospital staff, transport staff or senior police personnel, and easier to redefine their roles and to remove their contribution from the front line. We simply refuse to glide a path for the Government, because the person who will ultimately feel the effect of the cuts is the mum who is clutching her sick toddler in a packed hospital waiting room because there is no-one to see them. It is the pensioner in excruciating pain who is stuck on the waiting list for a knee replacement because there is no qualified surgeon. It is the Revesby resident whose street is shot up by hooligans because there are not enough police. It is the Blue Mountains commuter who has caught the 9.02 a.m. from Mount Victoria all her life but now has no service into the city between 8.00 a.m. and 10.00 a.m.

The Miranda by-election should have been a wake-up call for the Government to stop taking people for granted—a siren call from the suburbs to stop cutting. But with each passing day, each new piece of legislation and each new amendment it becomes clear that the Government has learnt nothing. The Opposition believes this bill will simply make it easier to sack people, erode working conditions and decimate our health, transport and law enforcement services. For that reason, we strongly oppose the bill.

Mr JAI ROWELL (Wollondilly) [3.39 p.m.]: I support the Government Sector Employment Legislation Amendment Bill 2013. If we listened only to the Leader of the Opposition then we would think the sky was falling in. We would think that people are losing services in Campbelltown, Bathurst and all over this

great State. I remind the Leader of the Opposition, despite the rubbish he has said in this Chamber, that the Government has just invested \$139 million in the upgrade of Campbelltown Hospital. When members opposite were last in government they said it was a project that needed to be funded, but what did they do? In 16 years they did not take the opportunity to put a single dollar into Campbelltown Hospital. They did absolutely nothing.

During the election campaign we promised \$40 million for the hospital. When we came to government we did not think that was good enough. We knew that we needed to do more, so we did. We have delivered almost triple the amount of money that we promised. That is because Jillian Skinner, Barry O'Farrell and every other Minister around the Cabinet table knew that we had to put money into Campbelltown Hospital. However, the Leader of the Opposition would have people believe that we delivered nothing.

Mr Clayton Barr: How much of that is Federal money?

Mr JAI ROWELL: Not one cent of the \$139 million came from the former Federal Labor Government: 100 per cent of the money came from this Government. I was delighted to meet time and again with the member for Camden and the member for Campbelltown to fight for our communities. I do not know where the member for Macquarie Fields or any other Labor member was when the people of Campbelltown were desperately crying out for more services and an upgraded hospital. That is why the current member for Campbelltown is sitting on the government side of the Chamber today and not on the opposition benches. Like the member for Camden, he knew that we have to deliver for our communities.

The contribution of the Leader of the Opposition really had nothing to do with the bill we are debating. We are a reformist government. We are increasing front-line services and delivering needed infrastructure. I will now return to the bill, and members opposite may want to listen. The bill aligns legislation governing employment arrangements for executives in health, police and transport with the legislation covering public service executives. It aligns police non-executive administrative employees with public service non-executive administrative employees. The bill also makes consequential amendments necessary for the operation of the Government Sector Employment Act 2013.

The bill fulfils the Government's commitment to bring forward legislation to apply the executive reforms in the Government Sector Employment Act to the health, police and transport executive services to extend the reforms across the public sector and provide a leaner, more responsive and capability-focused executive workforce. Employment arrangements for non-executive administrative employees under the Police Act 1990 are also to be aligned with non-executive administrative employees in the public service. There has been longstanding alignment of their employment arrangements to the Public Sector Employment and Management Act 2002. This is strongly supported by the Commissioner of Police.

That disproves the scaremongering of those opposite, which is what they do when they are trying to avoid a disaster such as a leadership challenge or the trouble we see on the news that they are in down at the Independent Commission Against Corruption. All they want to do is scaremonger and denigrate the people who are most capable of advising the Government on what is needed. As I said, the Commissioner of Police supports this bill.

The Government Sector Employment Legislation Amendment Bill amends the Health Services Act, the Police Act and the Transport Administration Act to adopt provisions equivalent to those in the Government Sector Employment Act relating to senior executives. More than 4,200 public sector senior executives will now fall within the scope of the reforms. The bill also makes necessary amendments to the Government Sector Employment Act to optimise the alignment. In some cases the bill contains adjustments to the general executive employment model to recognise the specific operational requirements of health, police and transport.

The bill provides for executive bands determined by the Premier under the Government Sector Employment Act to apply to aligned executive services. Executives within the aligned services are to be employed within these bands, and assigned to roles based on work value to ensure consistent and transparent remuneration across the sector. The concept of executives "holding a position" is to be abolished and replaced with being "assigned to a role". Sworn police executives retain positions in recognition of their status. The bill also provides for the assignment of executives in the aligned services to roles within their service and also to roles in other aligned services, including the public service. Sworn police executives will retain the existing capacity for transfer and secondment, but will not be included in cross-agency assignment.

The government sector employment rules that apply to public service senior executives will apply to executives in the aligned services. The Commissioner of Police and the director general of NSW Health will

continue to be able to issue directions on critical operational matters that may be inconsistent with the rules. There will be standardisation of executive contracts across the aligned executive services. Executive employees will be employed as ongoing or for a term, which will replace existing fixed contract terms. Finally, the bill will provide for the preservation of executive employees' entitlements

The bill aligns the employment arrangements for the 3,700 police non-executive administrative employees employed under the Police Act with the employment arrangements for non-executive public service employees under the Government Sector Employment Act. They will be employed in a classification of work and assigned to a role like other non-executive public servants. The Government Sector Employment Act applies to all government sector agencies in relation to workforce diversity, transfers and performance management. Other than those three areas it does not apply to front-line staff such as bus drivers, train drivers, sworn police officers, fire brigade officers, volunteer firefighters, nurses, doctors in hospitals, paramedics, ambulance drivers, teachers and school support staff. The Leader of the Opposition was trying to say we were going to get rid of those categories, but we have created more. Whenever members opposite have a problem they simply try to scare people.

The Government Sector Employment Legislation Amendment Bill does not change this situation except for clarifying that sworn police are subject to their own performance regime. However, the bill does clear up the employment responsibility for State Transit Authority staff, including bus drivers, and Roads and Maritime staff and transfers them into employment under the New South Wales Transport Service. Otherwise they would be employed under the Government Sector Employment Act. Their entitlements and conditions are not affected. As I said, we are a reformist government and we do not shy away from making the tough decisions. This amendment to the Act is much needed. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr NICK LALICH (Cabramatta) [3.48 p.m.]: The objects of the Government Sector Employment Legislation Amendment Bill 2013 are: to align employment arrangements for senior executives in the NSW Health Service, the NSW Police Force and the Transport Service of New South Wales and for certain statutory officers currently employed under senior executive service arrangements with the new employment arrangements for senior executives in the public service under the Government Sector Employment Act 2013; to align employment arrangements for employees of the NSW Police Force who are not police officers with the new employment arrangements for non-executive employees of the public service under that Act; to amend that Act to make further provision with respect to misconduct and other matters; and to make amendments to other Acts consequent on the enactment of that Act.

The New South Wales Labor Party has always understood the importance of a strong and healthy public service. Unlike members opposite, our record on this issue is strong. Unlike the O'Farrell Government, we are not all about the cuts—cuts to public education, community services, fire stations and to our honest, hardworking public servants. With this legislation the O'Farrell Government continues to push through with its ideologically driven trench warfare on the public service. Jobs will be cut and conditions and protections will be watered down or abolished. That is the credo of members opposite—the Liberal-Nationals New South Wales Government.

The original legislation was a sneaky and secretive attempt by the O'Farrell Government to spread the extension of individual contracts to the lower ranks of the public service, and this legislation continues that. Under this bill, if it becomes law, approximately 3,000 award-based employees will be moved to a new contract-based senior executive structure. As members know, and the whole of New South Wales has learned, the Premier is not a friend to any public sector worker. There will be a discretion to set bands within which a person is employed, which means that a person no longer will be employed in a specific job or position, but in a salary band. This bill provides no surety for workers in the public service.

I said that the Premier is no friend to public sector workers. I supported my colleague Barry Collier at Sylvania Heights Public School on the Saturday of the Miranda by-election—and I welcome him back to the House because he will provide a truly strong voice for the shire—and I was fortunate enough to be joined by the Premier. I say "fortunate" because I do not see much of the Premier when he is not in Parliament. The self-styled Minister for Western Sydney has not visited or said a word about Cabramatta since 2011. At that by-election polling booth, we were joined by members of Fire and Rescue NSW—men and women who put their lives on the line every day.

Mr Andrew Constance: Point of order: The member is moving well and truly outside the leave of the bill before the House. Madam Acting-Speaker, I ask you to draw him back to the bill.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Melanie Gibbons): Order! I uphold the point of order.

Mr NICK LALICH: I am still talking about public sector workers—the fireys.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Melanie Gibbons): Order! The member for Cabramatta will return to the leave of the bill.

Mr NICK LALICH: I will move on. New South Wales Labor will always support the public service and stand up for the rights of our workers. We understand the value of the work they do for the community and the service they give to our families. Unlike the O'Farrell Government, which continues to undermine and subtly tear away pieces from the public sector, we in Labor send a clear message to the public service: "We will support you." The Opposition opposes the bill.

Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Hawkesbury—Parliamentary Secretary) [3.52 p.m.], on behalf of Mr Barry O'Farrell, in reply: I am pleased to speak in reply to debate on the Government Sector Employment Legislation Amendment Bill 2013. I thank all members who contributed to this debate, specifically the members for Blacktown, Wollondilly and Cabramatta. Given that the Leader of the Opposition and the member for Cabramatta both wilfully misrepresented this legislation, obviously they have not taken the time to understand or read it. By doing so they confirm that the Labor Party is cemented in the same paths, culture and lack of vision and respect for our public service that led in 2011 to the New South Wales community judging them to be unfit to govern the State.

The bill extends the reforms achieved through the Government Sector Employment Act 2013, which provide the foundation for a leaner, more responsive and innovative government sector workforce that is focused on front-line service delivery. The bill implements the commitment made by the Government during the passage of the Government Sector Employment Act 2013 that the executive employment reforms in that Act would be extended to senior executives in the NSW Police Force, Transport for NSW and NSW Health. That enables those agencies to share the benefits of reforms that are designed to deliver better front-line services and public sector value to New South Wales taxpayers and citizens. The bill also continues the longstanding alignment of non-executive administrative employees in the NSW Police Force with the public service by aligning the relevant provisions of the Police Act 1990 with the Government Sector Employment Act 2013.

Finally, the bill makes consequential amendments to the Government Sector Employment Act 2013 to refine it and support the executive alignment. It makes changes to other Acts to ensure that the Government Sector Employment Act will be able to commence in early 2014. The provisions of the bill that extend reforms to executive arrangements to Police, Health and Transport apply to senior executives in the Health, Police, and Transport services and to unsworn police senior officers positions. They do not affect or apply to sworn non-executive police officers and do not affect the management or control of the Police Force. They apply the executive bands determined by the Premier to the three aligned services, which will lead to consistency of role classification and remuneration and facilitate cross-sector mobility of senior executives.

They provide both for executives to be assigned to roles within the bands and for subsequent reassignment in line with service delivery priorities and individual development needs, noting that sworn police executives also retain positions for police operational purposes. They apply the new Government Sector Employment Rules to the executives in the three aligned services while ensuring that critical operational directions continue to be issued by the Commissioner of Police and the Director General of Health. They provide for executives in the aligned services to be employed on an ongoing or term basis, with standard contracts that are portable, when they are reassigned to different roles across the sector.

Other provisions of the bill continue the existing alignment of NSW Police Force non-executive administrative employees with arrangements applying to non-executive administrative employees in the public service by aligning the relevant provisions of the Police Act 1990 with the Government Sector Employment Act 2013. The bill also will make consequential amendments to the Government Sector Employment Act that will be necessary for the operation of that Act, and will provide for appropriate employment arrangements for statutory officeholders who currently rely on the Public Sector Employment and Management Act 2002 for their employment arrangements.

In conclusion, I make the point that this bill extends the Government's reforms set out in the Government Sector Employment Act 2013 that was passed by this Parliament in June this year. The reforms continue the Government's commitment to create a more professional executive service and extend the statutory

framework supporting an innovative, professional and accountable government sector. The NSW Government is the largest employer in the country and taxpayers expend more than \$60 billion a year on New South Wales public services. We owe it to taxpayers and citizens to ensure that the service is the best it can be and offers to employees a world-class professional working environment in which innovation and merit are rewarded in the services provided to the people of New South Wales. I commend the bill to the House.

Question—That this bill be now read a second time—put.

The House divided.

Ayes, 57

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

Noes, 21

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

Pair

Mr Brookes

Ms Burton

Question resolved in the affirmative

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Third Reading

Motion by Mr Ray Williams, on behalf of Mr Barry O'Farrell, agreed to:

That this bill be now read a third time.

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

NATIONAL DISABILITY INSURANCE SCHEME (NSW ENABLING) BILL 2013**Second Reading**

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE (Bega—Minister for Finance and Services) [4.07 p.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

There are very few pieces of legislation that come before this House that are as serious and as important as this. The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NSW Enabling) Bill 2013 allows transition to occur to ensure that people with disabilities in New South Wales can participate fully in the National Disability Insurance Scheme. At its heart are the individuals, their carers and families who, for many years under successive governments have endured a system of support which was hopelessly inadequate, underfunded, fragmented and—as was established by the Productivity Commission—in need of transformation. There is much to be said in relation to the bill but first I thank the Minister for Family and Community Services for allowing me to lead on the legislation, in light of the fact that I had served as the Minister for Disability Services for 2½ years. I thank the members of the Labor Party who, in a bipartisan way, have worked with the Liberal-Nationals for many years in this State to ensure that people with disabilities were put above and beyond partisan politics.

At the heart of this legislation are people with disabilities. At its heart is the ability for people with disabilities to have choice and control over the services and support they need to ensure their life's aspirations are met. At its heart is the ability for people to live to the potential they and their families want instead of facing barriers that deny them opportunities. Unfortunately, we live in a country where the human rights of people with disabilities, their carers and families have been abused for too long. All too often people with disabilities have had dictated to them what services they can have, when and by whom. And quite often that determines where and how they live and the nature of the life they lead.

Through this reform the Commonwealth working with the States must ensure that those barriers are broken so that people have control over their everyday lives to ensure their life aspirations are met. I can talk chapter and verse about the problems and challenges of the current system. The important aspect here is the need to move a fragmented State-based system to one that is truly national, properly funded and from which restrictions and barriers are removed to enable people to live their lives to their potential. Men and women in the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care have worked tirelessly and thanklessly to provide care and support to individuals with disabilities, their carers and families. Those men and women do an absolutely incredible job. In my travels as Minister I learned that they will support this reform for a number of reasons. They know that ultimately the National Disability Insurance Scheme will provide protection and safeguard the fundamental human rights of the people they are charged with looking after.

We cannot thank enough Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care employees who work around the clock in large residential centres and group homes, those who did the design work around this reform and department leadership for making this State the place it should be for people with disability. A number of officials worked tirelessly on this reform, and continue to do so. Under the leadership of Jim Longley, people such as Sam Taylor and Anne Skortas and their respective teams are incredibly important. They did a lot of the design work and got the bill to this place. Of course, we must acknowledge and thank those in the Premier's department who were instrumental in negotiating the Heads of Agreement between New South Wales and the Commonwealth. I particularly acknowledge Rebecca Falkingham and her team, the Director General of the Department of Premier and Cabinet, Chris Eccles, and Professor Ian White, the head of the Prime Minister's office and Commonwealth Cabinet for their work.

Ultimately, political leadership came to the fore. Likewise, it is important to recognise then Prime Minister Gillard and Premier O'Farrell, who jointly signed that Heads of Agreement, which enjoyed bipartisan support. This bill is incredibly important because it facilitates the transition period to get us to the full scale of the National Disability Insurance Scheme. However, I add some caution. It will be challenging reform; not everything will work as everyone would like. Workforce constraints and the individual capacity of someone with a disability to adapt to the changes about which we are talking will take time, flexibility, innovation and patience. It will mean change for those who work in the government disability sector, but it will be tremendous and terrific change. One of the great things about this legislation is that it sets in place a framework to facilitate that change. I do not want to hear words such as "privatisation" being thrown around because that completely undermines everything the National Disability Insurance Scheme is about by adding incorrect connotations.

This contains no cost cutting or means to raise a quick buck. The State Government is investing \$3.1 billion to go directly into the pockets of clients, not towards administration because the Commonwealth will cover that. This \$2.5 billion system will be transformed into a \$6.4 billion system in financial terms. Putting aside the money, the reform ultimately underpins the proposal. The excitement for many of those who work within the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care is very much about being able to provide for many years more innovative approaches to support those for whom they have cared. Those Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care workers also are conscious that this reform means change in their workplace: a new employer at the end of the day. But ultimately, the reform provides for their ability to be innovative, more flexible and more tailored towards the individual, who, for the first time in their lives, will be at the heart of decision-making for individualised planning and funding that, of course, ultimately will determine the very nature of supports they want.

This will be a very exciting opportunity for our country and for those who work in the sector. Attached to this reform is no shortage of employment opportunities. They will be massive. The prediction was that we need an additional 25,000 new employees to work in the disability field in the next five years. That possibly is the biggest constraint for the reform. By the very nature of choice and control with the National Disability Insurance Scheme, it is fitting that we look to what in essence will be underpinned by market-based theory. It is time for government to get out of the road and allow the innovations we all want for people with disabilities. Through the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care's work some pilot work has been undertaken as well as exciting program initiatives—the Supported Living Fund comes to mind. I have seen firsthand where the lives of families and their carers have been incredibly transformed by the attachment of individualised funding to enable them to choose what they need to transform their lives. This is incredibly exciting.

I acknowledge the bipartisanship of the Legislative Council debate. The Minister for Ageing, and Minister for Disability Services, the Hon. John Ajaka, did an incredible job in debating this issue in the upper House. Unfortunately, some debates encounter misconceptions and it is important that they are addressed. This type of major reform always brings uncertainty for people, so patience will be required in its implementation. When the then Labor Government under John Della Bosca introduced Stronger Together in 2006 there was a sense of relief, particularly within the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care. Those who worked within the agency found more flexible and innovative approaches to support people with disabilities.

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

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! It being 4.15 p.m. the House will now consider the matter of public importance.

PINK RIBBON DAY

Matter of Public Importance

Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) [4.15 p.m.]: As many in this place will know, Monday 28 October was Pink Ribbon Day. Pink Ribbon Day seeks to raise funds to support the tens of thousands of Australian women and men who have been or will be diagnosed with breast cancer. Further, it seeks to raise awareness of breast cancer, encouraging women to be aware of their bodies and to get screened in order to catch this insidious disease early. Early detection is vital for recovery from breast cancer.

Breast cancer is the second most prevalent form of cancer amongst Australian women, second only to non-melanoma skin cancers, with a truly staggering incidence rate. Breast cancer accounted for more than 27 per cent of all new cancers reported in Australian women in 2010. That year there were more than 13,000 cases. What makes Pink Ribbon Day important is that the incidences of breast cancer in Australia are rising steadily. In 1982 there were 5,812 cases and by 2020 Cancer Australia estimates that there will be 17,210 new cases of breast cancer. According to Cancer Australia, by the end of 2008, 159,325 Australian women who had been diagnosed with breast cancer since 1981 were still alive. That figure includes the 57,327 women diagnosed from 2003 to 2008.

The good news is, however, that survival rates have also increased markedly. Between 1982 and 1987, the five-year relative survival rate for women diagnosed with breast cancer was 72 per cent. Between 2006 and 2010 that figure increased to 89.4 per cent. For women who are diagnosed early, before the cancer can grow and spread, and for whom treatment begins quickly, the survival rates are even better. The figures range from

98.2 per cent for women diagnosed with tumours under one centimetre in length to 73.1 per cent for women diagnosed with tumours over three centimetres in length. That illustrates just how vital early detection and intervention are.

There would be few among us who would not have been impacted by breast cancer at some point in our lives through a dear friend or a beloved family member. I am sure that many, if not all of us, have encountered this disease. It is an illness that strikes with no warning. Though there are steps that we can take to decrease risk factors in our lives, such as diet and exercise and avoiding carcinogens, there is no silver bullet that renders one immune to it. The best defence against it is vigilance; therefore, initiatives such as Pink Ribbon Day are vital. Pink Ribbon Day reminds us that we have to be attentive to our health and bodies and we must be mindful of the health of others. The Cancer Council deserves all the credit in the world for this extraordinary initiative and I applaud it for its continued commitment to raising awareness of and fighting against cancer in all its forms. Its success has been immeasurable.

It is telling that the pink ribbon, the international symbol of breast cancer awareness, is instantly recognisable. To the organisers of this fantastic event I offer my thanks and warm support. To those who express their solidarity with the sufferers and survivors of breast cancer by wearing a pink ribbon or purchasing branded products I offer my gratitude. To the women who have been or will be diagnosed with breast cancer and those who are battling it even as I stand here, I wish them all the best. They are all strong and brave women who have earned the respect and admiration of us all 10 times over. I salute them. I trust that the Cancer Council will understand when I say that I hope we do not have to celebrate too many more Pink Ribbon Days but I understand, as we all must, that the fight against breast cancer, and the battle to raise public awareness, will continue. I am sure that fight is in good hands.

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) [4.20 p.m.]: I speak for the Government on this matter of public importance and thank the member for Shellharbour for raising it. October, which is Breast Cancer Awareness Month, gives us the opportunity to recognise the impact of the disease on many people in our community. It also gives us the opportunity to reflect on the number of lives that have been saved through more than 20 years of population-based mammographic screening.

Breast cancer is the leading cause of cancer in women in New South Wales. One in nine women will develop breast cancer before the age of 85. By 2021 more than 5,400 women each year will be told that they have breast cancer and in that year around 900 women will die as a result of their disease. Breast cancer survival now sits at over 88 per cent, up from approximately 70 per cent for women diagnosed in the early 1980s, yet breast cancer remains the second greatest cause of cancer death in women. Advances in treatment, which are among the best in the world, have contributed to these better outcomes.

One of the great advantages for women in New South Wales is that they have available to them a free screening service that is accessible at more than 200 locations across the State. Every BreastScreen NSW client, no matter where she is located, has high-quality images taken of her breast tissue through state-of-the-art digital technology. Each image is read by two experienced doctors. This improves the chances of detecting an abnormality in its very early stages. Like many cancers, breast cancer has a high survival rate if detected and treated early. Early detection of breast cancer can increase the chance of survival to as high as 97 per cent. Yet only half the women in the target age group—which used to be women between 50 and 69 years of age, and is now women between 50 and 74 years of age—have regular, biennial mammograms. The BreastScreen NSW program, run by the Cancer Institute NSW, urges women aged between 50 and 74 years to book in for a mammogram every two years.

Pink Ribbon Day is also a reminder to women that they should be breast aware. They should know the usual look and feel of their breasts and, if they notice any changes, see their doctor immediately. Like so many families across New South Wales I have been impacted by this disease. My mother was diagnosed with breast cancer. I remember the uncertainty, fear and concern that we all shared. My mother, being an incredibly strong woman, saw it through in typical flamboyant style and with strength and determination beat this disease. I remember the impact it had on my family, particularly my younger brothers at the time, and how concerned we were for my mother. Her treatment involved going backwards and forwards to Shoalhaven Hospital for radiotherapy and chemotherapy. I am delighted that cancer care in the Illawarra has been one issue that has seen the disappearance of any division in this Chamber.

In the Shoalhaven construction of a brand-new cancer care centre is nearly complete. There are two linear accelerator kits and the centre will house one linear accelerator to deal with the treatment required. At

Wollongong Hospital the Government is investing an additional \$14 million to improve cancer care treatment and oncology services. I know that will be warmly welcomed by all concerned. I am aware that a petition was tabled in this place regarding a positron emission tomography scanner to assist with detecting cancer and planning the appropriate treatment. That petition was supported by many members of this House and we were able to announce that the positron emission tomography scanner will be delivered to Wollongong Hospital in December, with the first patients scheduled for January 2014.

I am looking forward to seeing that machine operational and delivering better cancer services. Members in this Parliament have played their part. Last week a Pink Ribbon Day breakfast was held in the Speaker's garden and I commend Acting-Speaker Mr Lee Evans along with the member for Myall Lakes for their nifty use of the tongs, and the school students who were assisting in raising funds. I am sure all of us have been touched by cancer but breast cancer affects many women, and certainly one woman very special to me. I am sure that all members of the House will unite on this important issue. I thank the member for Shellharbour for bringing it to the attention of the House.

Mr ROBERT FUROLO (Lakemba) [4.25 p.m.]: I join my colleagues in congratulating the Cancer Council and, through it, the organisers of Pink Ribbon Day on their terrific achievement of raising awareness and the funds to provide support for the many people in our communities around Australia who are suffering with various cancers, particularly breast cancer. I have had the opportunity to host a number of events such as morning teas in my local community in partnership with the Cancer Council. The most recent event had the support of the Canterbury Leagues Club. I was joined by many local women from groups including the Riverwood Community Centre, the Metro Migrant Resource Centre, the Islamic Women's Welfare Association, the Tripoli and Mena Association, the War Widows Association, the United Muslim Women's Association, local schools and principals as well as staff from Canterbury Hospital.

The benefits and reasons for holding events such as the Cancer Council's Pink Ribbon Day are worthwhile. The obvious is raising funds for research for breast cancer and other cancers, but also the direct assistance and support for those undergoing treatment, including counselling, over-the-phone help and support, and tips and advice for women and their families who are suffering. Another important feature of these events is raising awareness of the impact of cancer on sufferers and their families. For example, one in nine women will be diagnosed with breast cancer in their lifetime. Considering the number of women in our communities, that is an extraordinarily scary statistic. Pink Ribbon Day brings the community together with a focus on preventative health, support and information about cancer, particularly breast cancer. Its role is not only to raise awareness and funds, but is an opportunity to bring people together to share their stories, their experiences and support each other—particularly those who are dealing with the challenges of breast cancer.

At these Pink Ribbon Day events and morning teas volunteers and organisers provide insights and advice for those who are suffering from breast cancer, as well as tips for people to identify ways in which they can test themselves and also encourage them to have proper screening to ensure early intervention. I thank the volunteers who raise funds for the Cancer Council on Pink Ribbon Day. I acknowledge their hard work. I also thank the organisers and groups who support Pink Ribbon Day. Congratulations.

Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) [4.28 p.m.], in reply: I acknowledge the wonderful contributions that the member for Kiama and the member for Lakemba have made to the discussion. Both were excellent, heartfelt contributions, and I thank them. Being physically active is an important key to reduce the risk and incidence of breast cancer. Physically active people may also lower their risk of bowel cancer, endometrial cancer, and lung and pancreatic cancer as well as ovarian cancer. Being active can also prevent heart disease and diabetes as well as help to maintain a healthy body weight. I ask everybody in this House to raise this issue with their loved ones and friends, and to encourage women who have not been tested to do so. As the member for Kiama said, there are more than 200 free breast screening cancer clinics in New South Wales so there is no excuse not to be tested. Check-ups and detection in the early stages of cancer make it easier to treat. It is important for people of all ages to have a check-up when they notice anything unusual or if they have concerns.

People know what is and is not normal for them. Identifying bodily changes is important to detect the early onset of cancer. Conditions that one can look out for include lumps and sores that do not heal, hoarseness and coughs that do not go away, unexplained weight loss and, with skin cancer, changes in the size or colour of moles and skin spots. Screening is important. It is uncomfortable and some women are embarrassed because it is not the most pleasant experience, but it saves lives. I have had some dodgy scans, but I am glad that I was screened. I know many people in this place have loved ones, family and friends, who have had breast cancer. It can affect anyone at any age. I know young mothers who have passed away from breast cancer, leaving behind

young children. It is truly so sad, knowing that early detection could have saved their life. People do not realise that obesity and carrying excess body weight can increase the risk of cancer, so physical health and a healthy lifestyle is important. I again thank the member for Kiama and the member for Lakemba for their wonderful contributions.

Discussion concluded.

NORTH COAST COAL SEAM GAS MINING

Discussion on Petition Signed by 10,000 or More Persons

Ms LINDA BURNEY (Canterbury) [4.35 p.m.]: I am pleased to speak on behalf of more than 12,000 people calling for an immediate moratorium on all coal seam gas activities and licences on the North Coast of New South Wales. I take this opportunity to acknowledge the work of Janelle Saffin, who has campaigned to protect the environment of the North Coast, and her assistance, along with her Labor colleague Justine Elliott, in coordinating this petition. I recognise all those in the community who have signed this petition. Janelle's commitment to her community, through her efforts to protect the environment and voice her concerns about the impact of coal seam gas and fracking, is highly regarded. The residents of Lismore, Clarence, Ballina and Tweed are justifiably concerned about the impact of coal seam gas extraction. They are concerned for their environment and that the scientific community has yet to prove that the coal seam gas industry is safe. They are rightly worried about the impact of coal seam gas on water catchments and the quality of the water they drink.

Members on this side of the House have committed to permanently ban gas coal seam gas activity in the special areas of Sydney's water catchment. We are also committed to consulting closely with communities and scientific experts across New South Wales with a view to defining water catchment areas that can be excluded from coal seam gas mining. We have hit the stop button on coal seam gas exploration until more of the science is understood. We are committed to investigate banning coal seam gas activity in core drinking water catchments across New South Wales, including the Hunter, the Central Coast, the Mid North Coast and Far North Coast. Our water catchments and drinking water are priceless. Once they are destroyed, there is no going back. The pristine environments of the North Coast of New South Wales deserve the benefit of caution.

The Leader of the Opposition, in moving the Coal Seam Gas Prohibition (Sydney Water Catchment Special Areas) Bill 2013, highlighted the constant warnings, calls for caution and calls for restraint. In that debate we highlighted the concerns of Mary O'Kane, Chief Scientist and Engineer, who, in the Independent Review of Coal Seam Gas Activities in NSW, wrote:

... for a dry continent such as Australia more knowledge will be necessary. Further research is required to build our understanding of the hydraulic connectivity between groundwater bodies ... and also between shallow aquifers and connected surface water bodies.

...

Further research is also required on cumulative impacts on groundwater and connected surface water where there are numerous wells and plays and where there are other industries also drawing on the water (such as agriculture) ...

The Nature Conservation Council of NSW also supports the call for caution and restraint, saying that a coal seam gas ban in critical drinking water catchments is a win for common sense. But this concern, this caution, is not shared by all. Promises were made by the then Leader of the Opposition prior to the State election:

The next Liberal-National Government will ensure that mining cannot occur ... in any water catchment area, and will ensure that mining leases and mining exploration permits reflect that common sense; no ifs, no buts, a guarantee.

Of course, in government, that has not applied. It sounds a little cautious, but the Government has failed to deliver—another broken promise, obviously. Neither is this call for caution shared across The Nationals, interestingly. The Federal leader of The Nationals, Warren Truss, believes coal seam gas "has the potential to revitalise parts of regional Australia, delivering a new economic boom". That is hardly cautious! The deputy leader of Federal Nationals goes further, saying, coal seam gas "is a hot button issue for the upcoming election" but that "the CSG industry should continue. We shouldn't have a moratorium." I note that members opposite, whose party made those promises, seem to think this is a joke.

The new Federal resources Minister, Ian Macfarlane, has called for a boost to coal seam gas in New South Wales to avoid an "energy crisis"—having previously labelled people opposing coal seam gas as

"anarchists". Clearly, not a hint of caution: no restraint, more like a bull at the gate. With coalition governments here and in Canberra ready and waiting to rush an expansion of coal seam gas exploration, we on this side are calling for caution. Labor believes we should put our catchments first. We have listened to the community. We have listened to the voices of the more than 10,000 residents of the North Coast who are asking for greater protection of their environment. Labor will consult closely with communities and scientific experts across New South Wales with a view to defining water catchment areas that can be excluded from coal seam gas mining. There are certain places where we should never allow coal seam gas extraction, with our drinking water catchments first among them. Judging from the number of people present on the other side of the Chamber, they too are worried about this activity on the North Coast of New South Wales.

Mr Paul Toole: I am worried that you are here; I am worried that you did nothing about it.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: You're a rude individual.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! Members will cease interjecting or they will be removed from the Chamber.

Mr DONALD PAGE (Ballina—Minister for Local Government, and Minister for the North Coast) [4.40 p.m.]: As Minister for the North Coast, I acknowledge that there is concern about coal seam gas exploration and production in the Northern Rivers area. I have discussed those concerns with hundreds, if not thousands, of my constituents and other North Coast residents over the past few years. I and my Northern Rivers State parliamentary colleagues have taken note of those concerns and have been instrumental in ensuring that New South Wales, including the North Coast, now has the best regulatory framework for coal seam gas activities in the world. This Government's approach is in stark contrast with that of the previous Labor Government—a government in which the member for Canterbury was a Minister. That Labor Government issued 44 exploration licences, covering nearly a quarter of the State, with virtually no protections of any kind for our land and water resources.

Let us put this petition into context. It was a shameless electioneering tactic, initiated by two Labor Federal members on the Northern Rivers in a desperate attempt to boost their chances in the recent Federal elections. The hypocrisy of those two Labor members is breathtaking. They belong to the same party that encouraged coal seam gas activity without any regulation. They stood in main streets gathering signatures and spreading alarm about coal seam gas—scaremongering to try to save their seats—in the full knowledge that coal seam gas companies had walked away from the North Coast months before because our rules are so tough. Did the Labor Party think to regulate or control coal seam gas when it scattered exploration licences across the State, including the North Coast, like confetti? Of course it did not. Did the Labor Party give any consideration to the effect on communities, farmland or water? Of course it did not. It was the Liberal-Nationals Government that listened to community concerns and took swift and decisive action.

Firstly, we effectively had an 18-month moratorium on all coal seam gas activity in New South Wales. We got scientific advice and put in place the toughest regulatory regime in the world. We introduced a host of measures including, but not limited to: the new Office of Coal Seam Gas; a one-stop coal seam gas website, to help people understand the complexity of the issues; a Land and Water Commissioner, to protect access rights of land owners, amongst other things; a statewide aquifer interference policy, to protect our underground water resources; standard land access agreements; agricultural impact statements; mandatory codes of practice for coal seam gas exploration and drilling, signed off by the Chief Scientist; made the Environment Protection Authority, rather than the Division of Minerals and Energy, the single regulator on environmental issues; and imposed exclusion zones on all coal seam gas activity in all residential zones, including a two-kilometre buffer zone.

We have banned BTEX chemicals and evaporation ponds; completed a statewide audit of exploration licences; put a levy on the industry to fund the regulatory regime; appointed community liaison officers to help the community navigate the complex issues involved; developed community consultation guidelines to fully inform the public of licence applications; cancelled the five-year royalty holiday given to coal seam gas companies by the Australian Labor Party; established a fund to give 10 per cent of royalties back to communities; and mapped high-value agricultural land around the State, including on the North Coast, with that farmland being subject to additional regulation in the gateway process if coal seam gas activity is proposed.

Despite our extensive, scientifically backed, tough regime to protect our land and water resources and the environment generally, despite all of that, we still have disingenuous individuals conducting anti coal seam gas surveys in residential locations in North Coast towns, asking people if they want coal seam gas in their

street—when they know that this Government has already banned coal seam gas activity in all New South Wales residential areas and in a two-kilometre buffer zone surrounding every residential area. This Government has established sensible protection for communities, farmland, water resources and the environment on behalf of the people of New South Wales, now and for future generations.

Perhaps the best proof is in the statements of mining companies that do not like the tough stand this Government has taken on coal seam gas. Just three days ago Metgasco confirmed it is sticking with its original decision to abandon its coal seam gas operations in New South Wales, and Dart made the same decision on coal seam gas. Those companies have backed away because our regulatory regime is, they say, too onerous. The Government's role is not to advocate on behalf of mining companies, but to have the regulatory framework that protects our land and water resources and our environment—something that Labor never did. In conclusion, I make this obvious point: Members of the New South Wales Parliament enact laws and regulations for the State as a whole. It is not good public policy to discriminate either for or against any particular geographic area of the State, no matter how close to paradise that part of the world might be. At the last Federal election the Stop Coal Seam Gas Party scored less than 1 per cent of the vote across Australia.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD (Macquarie Fields) [4.45 p.m.]: I note that the Minister for Energy is in the House. I expect he will be speaking after me on this matter. I quote from Pope Francis' inaugural speech in March this year, one that the Minister should be aware of. This quote is taken from a submission by Sister Kramer, one of the Carmelite nuns at Varroville, who has been campaigning against coal seam gas activity in her area. I quote what was said by Pope Francis:

I would like to ask all those who have positions of responsibility in economic, political and social life—

[Interruption]

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! The Minister for Resources and Energy will come to order.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD: Mr Acting-Speaker, can you stop the clock?

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! The member may continue. There will be no more interruptions.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD: Pope Francis said:

I would like to ask all those who have positions of responsibility in economic, political and social life, and all men and women of goodwill: let us be "protectors" of creation, protectors of God's plan inscribed in nature, protectors of one another and of the environment.

That excerpt from the speech of Pope Francis is quoted for one reason only—because the first principle of good practice in life and most of the professions is: First do no harm. When it comes to coal seam gas, we do not know what we do not know; and the Minister does not know what he does not know. That is why coal seam gas activity is inherently an unsafe practice. As the Chief Scientist said:

For a dry country such as Australia, more knowledge will be necessary.

As Sister Kramer said:

It is our impression that the public discourse about this issue over the last few years has been characterised by narrowly focused claims and counter claims by vested interests (government, the petroleum industry and the public) without reference to an agreed body of scientific evidence to back up the claims.

In the absence of a broad, independent scientific assessment of the CSG industry, the public is not in a position to make an informed judgement about it.

What are the facts behind the claim of the New South Wales Government (Minister Hartcher in particular) that NSW faces a gas shortage from 2014?

We expect to hear a response on this.

Mr Chris Hartcher: Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 75. The member for Macquarie Fields regularly takes this point of order. Members should be referred to by their correct titles.

Ms Linda Burney: Why don't you just sit down?

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! I uphold the point of order.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD: I conclude by pointing out that those opposite have deliberately cut into my time.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! I call the member for Lismore.

Ms Linda Burney: Kumbaya.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! I direct the member for Canterbury to remove herself from the Chamber for a period of 15 minutes.

[Pursuant to sessional orders the member for Canterbury left the Chamber at 4.50 p.m.]

Mr THOMAS GEORGE (Lismore—The Deputy-Speaker) [4.50 p.m.]: It is with much pleasure that I speak to this petition signed by more than 10,000 persons requesting a moratorium on coal seam gas activities and licences on the North Coast of New South Wales. I lay on the table a letter that I received from Mrs Louise Sommerville. What hypocrisy we have heard this afternoon from those opposite. We have heard the praises of Janelle Saffin, a former Federal member for Page and a former member of the New South Wales Legislative Council. She was a member of the Legislative Council when the licences were issued for the northern rivers region. They took the money and ran. But they cannot get any more money, so now they want to stop it. The O'Farrell Government, including the Minister for Resources and Energy, the Minister for the Environment, the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, the water Minister—

Mr Nick Lalich: All of them.

Mr THOMAS GEORGE: I do not need any help from the member for Cabramatta. The Government introduced the rules that created havoc amongst those who had petroleum exploration licences in our area. They packed up and left. Metgasco finalised its coal seam gas activities some seven or eight months ago. Those rules resulted from the constructive work of this Government, not from the Opposition screaming and signing petitions. Those on the other side want to stop it. They let the horse out of the yard. One cannot get the horse back without a halter when it is unbroken. Those so-called professors on the other side are now telling the Government how to run coal seam gas operations in this State. I do not know anyone who does not want access to cheaper power and resources. If we do not produce the extra energy that is needed in this State, especially in the northern rivers region, major businesses such as the Northern Co-operative Meat Company will pack up and move over the border. They cannot survive without cheaper energy. That is why the Government continues to control coal seam gas operations in this State.

Mr JAI ROWELL (Wollondilly) [4.53 p.m.], by leave: I apologise for not having the opportunity to speak in debate on the tabling of the petition signed by more than 10,000 persons the other week. I had to return to my electorate to help with the bushfires. I am on the public record both in this place and in my local community as voicing this stance about the Wollondilly drinking water catchment area and protecting the surrounding environment. I have had countless meetings with coal seam gas groups. I take this opportunity to acknowledge Will Darcy, Greg Suisun, Brett Cottee, Julie Shepard, Caroline Graham, David Hunt, Peter Martin and other members of the local groups operating in Wollondilly and the Southern Highlands for their hard work and perseverance on this matter. But it would be amiss to take my position as a sign that this Government has not acted on the issue.

The O'Farrell Government has done more in this field than has any other government in this country. Those opposite handed out exploration and extraction licences like they were lollypops. Some 44 coal seam gas exploration or production licences were approved across the State during the 16 years of the former Labor Government, including six petroleum exploration licences and 10 petroleum exploration licence renewals during John Robertson's time as a Minister in the former Government. The O'Farrell Government has acted on coal seam gas. A number of these actions were undertaken specifically to address the protection and management of water in relation to the exploration and production of natural gas from coal seams, including an independent review of natural gas by the Chief Scientist and Engineer, the introduction of the Aquifer Interference Policy, new codes of practice relating to well integrity, and the appointment of the Land and Water Commissioner.

At the beginning of October the tough new measures that were announced by the Premier and Deputy Premier on 19 February to further strengthen the regulation of the coal seam gas industry were introduced. We implemented the two-kilometre exclusion zones that now apply, and 27 stringent new initiatives have been implemented. They work together to identify, map and protect the State's agricultural land and critical water resources. The Sydney Catchment Authority has a statutory responsibility to protect drinking water catchments that supply Sydney, the Blue Mountains, the Illawarra, the Shoalhaven and the Southern Highlands. This includes Warragamba Dam, which is located in my electorate and supplies approximately 80 per cent of Sydney's drinking water. Furthermore, the New South Wales Government has implemented two new codes of practice that require world's best practice for operations. These codes have been independently peer reviewed by the New South Wales Chief Scientist and Engineer.

Coal seam gas operations in the Wollondilly region were approved by Labor for more than a decade without concern. They have provided energy to meet local demand and employed locals to stimulate the economy. Those operations are not the target of this petition. As a local member and the father of two young boys I believe that we must protect the water supplies in Wollondilly's catchment areas. I will continue to speak out against anything that may harm our most precious natural resource, but I will not stand for the catcalling of those opposite. They have the audacity to condemn those of us who have spent the past two years cleaning up the mess they left behind. That mess includes the planning approval to Apex Energy for 15 exploration boreholes in the Darkes Forest area, 11 of which were located within the drinking water catchment in my electorate.

Discussion concluded.

COMMUNITY RECOGNITION STATEMENTS

WINGHAM HOCKEY PLAYER MORGAN COLEMAN

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) [4.56 p.m.]: Today I inform the House that Morgan Coleman from Wingham was selected to play in the New South Wales under-14s hockey team in a tri-series against Victoria and the Australian Capital Territory in Canberra. Morgan has already represented New South Wales at the Primary Schools Sports Association level and played in a State development team. She also represented New South Wales in an indoor team in 2012. Morgan plays for Wingham in the Manning under-15s competition and division one women's competition. She also plays on Tuesdays in Newcastle for the Central Wests in the division two premiership.

ITALIAN IMMIGRANTS WORLD ABRUZZO NATIONAL DAY

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) [4.57 p.m.]: The Italian Immigrants World Abruzzo National Day 2013 was held on Sunday 4 August at Club Italia, Lansvale. The Associazione Abruzzesi del NSW Inc. hosted the celebration. This celebration is recognised worldwide by the Italian Abruzzo Parliament to acknowledge migrants from the Abruzzo region in Italy, who left their homeland in search of better opportunities for their families. The event comprised a traditional Abruzzo lunch, and donations collected from the day went to the Children's Hospital at Westmead. The Abruzzo region is rich in cultural heritage. It has the blue Adriatic coastline, the white snowfields in the Apennines and the lush green hills of La Bella Addormentata, known as "Sleeping Beauty". Congratulations to the president of the Association in New South Wales, Mr Luigi Bucciarelli, and the organising committee on celebrating the success of migrants from the Abruzzo region in Italy.

STEPHEN KING SCULPTURE BY THE SEA

Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands) [4.58 p.m.]: I commend and congratulate Walcha woodman Stephen King, whose six-metre high creation *Fallout* has taken the top award at this year's Sculpture by the Sea. Mr King's three-tonne timber sculpture, which was inspired by the Fukushima nuclear disaster and took him three years to finish, was last week named the winner of the \$60,000 Macquarie Group Sculpture Prize, the highest cash prize for sculpture in New South Wales. Sculpture by the Sea showcases 106 sculptures and can be viewed by the public taking a walk along the coast from Bondi to Tamarama. Mr King's works are well known and highly regarded in the Northern Tablelands. Congratulations to Stephen King, and I wish him the best in his future endeavours.

DEEPAVALI FESTIVAL

Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool) [4.59 p.m.]: I acknowledge the Deepavali Mela or Festival of Lights that was held on 26 and 27 October in Liverpool. The Mela was organised by Shree Sanatan Dharm Pratinidhi Sabha Australian Inc. and held in the Northumberland Street parking station. The Sabha has been organising Deepavali festivals for seven years and I am delighted that I have been able to attend each of them. This, the most spectacular and colourful of the Hindu festivals, is a great example of the thriving and successful multiculturalism of Liverpool and Sydney generally. The two-day festival attracts many thousands of visitors and I am told that even more attended this year than last. There were cultural performances and a host of stalls, especially food stalls. I especially acknowledge Sabha's office bearers Pandit Jagdish Sharma, Yogesh Chandra, Marcus Pran and Satish Prasad. It was a pleasure to be invited and to attend the festival.

MAITLAND ELECTORATE EVENTS

Ms ROBYN PARKER (Maitland—Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) [5.00 p.m.]: A series of significant anniversaries have been celebrated in Maitland during October 2013. I congratulate the Morpeth Museum committee and Maitland City Council on their celebration to mark the 150th anniversary of the historic Morpeth Court House. With \$150,000 funding from the Office of Environment and Heritage, the courthouse has recently undergone significant renovations to restore it to its original condition. Congratulations also go to the Maitland Mutual Building Society, which has celebrated its 125th anniversary. The Premier attended the society's celebrations. Maitland Mutual Building Society is one of Australia's oldest financial institutions, operating continuously for 125 years. I also acknowledge and congratulate East Maitland Bowling Club, which last weekend marked its centenary with a celebration on Saturday evening. I congratulate also Maitland Harness Racing Club on winning the Harness Racing New South Wales Carnival of Cups. The award was presented at the annual industry presentation for this year's fiftieth anniversary Inter City Pace. I congratulate club president Richard Earnshaw on receiving the Don Clough Appreciation Award from Harness Racing New South Wales for his contribution to the sport.

OUR LADY OF MOUNT CARMEL FESTIVAL

Mr NICK LALICH (Cabramatta) [5.01 p.m.]: I congratulate the president of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Festival Organising Committee, Mr Tony Romano, for the wonderful fifty-third festival that was held at the Mounties Sports Complex at Mount Pritchard on Sunday 13 October 2013. This festival was started by the local Italian community in 1960, with the intention to bring to our community the spiritual traditions Italian people have celebrated for centuries in their home towns in Italy. The celebration started with a Holy Mass performed by Father Anthony at the local Church of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, followed by a procession carrying the statue of the Madonna to the festival venue. The day was filled with entertainment, featuring many popular Italian singers and entertainers, and rides and face-painting for the children. I again thank the president and his committee for continuing this wonderful festival and, in doing so, ensuring that their culture and traditions are retained and passed on to future generations.

TACKING POINT SURF LIFESAVER RYAN ROSENBAUM

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie) [5.02 p.m.]: I congratulate Tacking Point Surf Life Saving Club's Ryan Rosenbaum who has won DHL Surf Lifesaver of the Year at Surf Life Saving Australia's 2013 Awards of Excellence. As Tacking Point Surf Life Saving Club's patrol captain for six years and the first on-call duty officer in his region, 27-year-old Rosenbaum was instrumental in the development of a text-messaging system for duty officers across New South Wales in the 2012-13 season. Ryan has been committed to volunteering since early childhood and, as the holder of more than 50 sporting certificates, works harder than most for the community. The awards of excellence are an opportunity to honour surf lifesavers, administrators, athletes, coaches and surf life saving clubs who work tirelessly to keep our beaches safe throughout the year. Rosenbaum was also named as a Services to Sport awards winner at the 2013 Eather Recruitment Hastings Sports Awards ceremony this month. I congratulate Ryan Rosenbaum and thank him for his tireless dedication to saving lives in our community.

KIAMA AND DISTRICT CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) [5.03 p.m.]: On Thursday 19 September the Kiama and District Chamber of Commerce held its annual general meeting at The Sebel in Kiama. I acknowledge the new Kiama and District Chamber of Commerce board, including past president Barry Hayward, owner of the Extinguisher

Guy. Barry has dedicated many hours of hard work on behalf of the chamber over the past few years. The new president is Deidre Hindmarsh, from Sureway Employment and Training. The vice president is Dave Lambert, from Oxygen Health and Fitness. The secretary and treasurer are my good friend Kay McNiven, from Kiama Cabs and Hire Car, along with her husband, Kiama Councillor Gavin McClure, who is also a board member. I acknowledge the other board members: Marie Beikmanis, from Lush Flowers and Gifts, who brings to the board her years of experience as a local business operator; and Megan Smillie, from Devinely Fit Yoga and Lifestyle.

PORT KEMBLA FOOTBALL CLUB

Ms NOREEN HAY (Wollongong) [5.04 p.m.]: I congratulate the Port Kembla Football Club on another outstanding season, which culminated in the annual club presentation on Sunday 27 October at the Fraternity Club in Fairy Meadow. Founded in 1966, Port Kembla Football Club, of which I am a patron, celebrated its fortieth anniversary in 2007. It has become one of the most successful clubs in the Illawarra competition, through the hard work of management committee members, such as Maria Cazzolli and Emilio Salucci, and members and supporters. The club has won 26 major trophies in 13 years. Port Kembla Football Club has produced some elite football players in the past 15 years, who have successfully moved on to play in State and national leagues. It was without any surprise that on 29 September this year Port Kembla defeated Bulli 3-1 in the grand final. Bulli dominated the first half, but Port Kembla's determination and commitment came out in the second half when it dominated the game and pulled off an amazing win.

THIRLMERE PUBLIC SCHOOL 125TH ANNIVERSARY

Mr JAI ROWELL (Wollondilly) [5.05 p.m.]: I recently attended the 125th anniversary ceremony of Thirlmere Public School. It was a wonderful day, with hundreds of members from across the community pulling together to make this a special event. Thanks must go to the organising committee, in particular, the president Sandra Stewart and her dedicated team. I know that many people have volunteered their time in many different ways. The success of this day is testament to their hard work. The parents and citizens association president, Leah Blatch, also did an excellent job. The teachers, administration staff, parents and community members all did a wonderful job, led by principal Stephen Lord, who is a brilliant educator. Despite more than 100 years passing since the school's creation, the values of the school remain very much the same. Things such as honesty, integrity, discipline and the school motto of "Show respect" are alive and well. I acknowledge school captains from 1988, Carlie Russell and Julien Hunt, and the current school captains, Grace Casno and Lawson Reedie, as well as student leaders Jayden D'Aran, Mitchell New, David Morrissey, Angus Blatch-May, Lachlan Anderson and Savannah Joukhador-Lumley. I congratulate the school and wish it many more successful years to come.

RESPONSIBLE RUNNERS CLEAN-UP

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.06 p.m.]: On 13 October 2013 I attended the launch of a weekly organised marine debris clean-up at North Cronulla Beach by Responsible Runners. In just over half an hour we removed 278 cigarette butts, six nappies, 167 drink bottles, a milk crate, thongs, plenty of food packaging and lots of micro plastic. Responsible Runners is a network of people dedicated to keeping our beaches, waterways and land sites clean and debris-free at a number of beaches around Australia. More than 40 clean-ups have taken place since September 2012. Responsible Runners have collected more than 3.5 tonnes of rubbish in just over a year. I highly commend the group on its initiative in addressing marine debris under the slogan "pulse up, waste down". I thank the local organisers, Cronulla resident, environmental scientist and model Laura Wells and her partner, Jesse McNeilly, for their commitment to protecting our oceans and biodiversity and to raising awareness of the health and environmental dangers of single-use disposable waste, particularly plastic.

ROCKDALE ELECTORATE BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS

Mr JOHN FLOWERS (Rockdale) [5.07 p.m.]: I congratulate Mr John Thomas Byrne of Sans Souci on the occasion of his ninetieth birthday, which he celebrated on 29 August 2013. I wish him happiness and good health in the future. I take this opportunity to extend heartfelt congratulations to Mrs Reva Underhill of Rockdale, on the special occasion of her 100th birthday celebrated on 24 August 2013. I wish her happiness on this special occasion. It is with pleasure I bring to the attention of the House the ninety-ninth birthday of Mrs Madeline Florence Cumerskey, which is being celebrated on 23 September 2013. Mrs Cumerskey is known as Dolly. She previously worked for Bob Davey, former Editor of Debates, Hansard, who requested that Dolly be remembered on her special day.

BUSHFIRE VOLUNTEERS BEN ALBERS AND DANIEL PATTERSON

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby) [5.07 p.m.]: I applaud the contributions of Ben Albers and Daniel Patterson, both in year 11 at Cherrybrook Technology High School, for their tireless efforts towards bushfire aid in the Blue Mountains in the past week. Ben has been a cadet of the Oakville Bush Fire Brigade since he was 12 and became a fully-fledged member at 16. He has spent time in East Kurrajong, Mount Wilson and Winmalee working day and night to fight the flames and save homes, vehicles and animals. In addition, Daniel volunteered his time to the Lithgow Disaster Relief Centre as a first aid officer. Daniel spent two days giving first aid treatment to those at the centre. It should be noted that earlier this year, Daniel also helped save the life of a heart attack victim during the Parramatta duathlon. I congratulate the selfless contributions of Ben and Daniel in assisting their community at this devastating time. They represent what is best in our community, and I wish them the very best in their future careers.

GREATER HUME CHILDREN'S SERVICES

BORDER RELAY FOR LIFE

Mr GREG APLIN (Albury) [5.08 p.m.]: Congratulations to the staff of Greater Hume Children's Services who have been recognised as the State's best in the 2013 New South Wales Excellence in Family Day Care Awards. Well done to all involved in providing such wonderful service. I congratulate all 4,000 people who attended the Border Relay for Life last weekend at Bunton Park, North Albury. The annual event broke records again, with 2,850 registered participants raising a total of \$450,000 for the Cancer Council. On the day 163 teams took part, with Milspec Manufacturing, led by captain Maree Booroff, raising the most money—\$16,000. I acknowledge the incredible work of the chairman of the event, Carl Friedlieb, and his irrepressible committee. My best wishes go to Tegan Webb of Howlong, who was born with an extremely rare genetic syndrome that shortens life expectancy. Tegan has beaten the odds and will celebrate her thirtieth birthday today, 31 October, after a gathering of family and friends at the Howlong Community Centre last Saturday.

AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL FIELD DAYS

Mr ANDREW GEE (Orange) [5.09 p.m.]: I draw the attention of the House to the fact that the Australian National Field Days were held in Orange last Thursday, Friday and Saturday. The field days are a highlight of the region's calendar of events. This year the committee made the decision to run the event into the weekend. This proved to be a huge success, with bumper crowds passing through the gates over the three days. The Australian National Field Day team must be congratulated on its efforts in organising yet another outstanding event. The importance of this event to the economy of Orange cannot be overestimated. In particular, I congratulate chairman Rob Armstrong; the great deputy chairman Keiran Renshaw; administration manager Jayne West; grounds manager Geoff Brabrook, accounts manager Judy Cosier; administration officer Mandy Littlewood; and subcommittee members Chris Lennon, Allan Watts, Chris Soloman, Brett Douglas, Andrew Norton, Bruce Reynolds and Rob Hewett. I pass on my congratulations, and those of the Parliament, to the entire Australian National Field Days team and all the volunteers who contributed to such an outstanding event this year.

BEST OF THE WEST FOOD FESTIVAL

Mr ANDREW ROHAN (Smithfield) [5.10 p.m.]: On behalf of the Minister for Environment, the Hon. Robyn Parker, I launched the Best of the West Food Festival at Lizard Log in the Western Sydney Parklands in Abbotsbury in my electorate of Smithfield on Sunday 27 October. The food festival was in its second year, with about 4,000 people attending from across Western Sydney. The day was a great success. It showcased the best food producers and restaurants in Western Sydney, where we boast a culturally diverse and vibrant food culture. Justine Schofield, a former MasterChef finalist and celebrated television chef, was the master of ceremonies and presented live cooking lessons with a line-up of other local chefs. We had many workshops, including one on pizza making and one presented by Reverse Garbage on reuse and how to help the environment. I thank Suellen Fitzgerald, Executive Director of Western Sydney Parklands Trust, and her team for organising this successful festival and for providing more public places for families to enjoy at the beautiful Western Sydney Parklands.

NEW HAVEN FARM

Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Hawkesbury—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.11 p.m.]: I congratulate Olga Zavaglia of Rouse Hill and Lola Hair of Freemans Reach who have received Local Carers Awards. Lola Hair,

along with her late husband, established New Haven Farm, which is located at Freemans Reach, over 50 years ago. Today New Haven Farm provides a range of supported accommodation for adults with an intellectual disability which meets individual needs and which is caring and secure and at the same time treats residents with dignity and respect while developing individual potential. Lola, who is now aged in her nineties, is still caring for her two disabled sons. I pay tribute to Lola and Olga and all the carers in New South Wales.

Community recognition statements concluded.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

INNER WEST LIGHT RAIL EXTENSION

Ms CARMEL TEBBUTT (Marrickville) [5.12 p.m.]: I draw the attention of the House to the extension of the Inner West Light Rail. This is an issue about which I have spoken on many occasions in the House. This is a project of great importance to my electorate and I am extremely proud that Labor in government responded to the enormous community campaign to extend the light rail by allocating funding and commencing construction of the extension to Dulwich Hill. The light rail extension will provide important benefits to the people of the inner west. It is cost-effective, using the existing goods line. It provides important cross-connectivity in the inner west, and it links some important sites of medium-density housing.

Of course it is disappointing that the O'Farrell Government abandoned the greenway—the integrated walking and cycleway that was to run alongside the light rail extension. This would have provided much-needed recreational opportunities, bush regeneration sites and a wildlife corridor. The inner-west community has not given up on the greenway becoming a reality and we will continue to pursue the Government on this issue. There are three issues in particular that I wish to raise tonight with regard to light rail. The O'Farrell Government has inherited this project, and I am pleased to see that it will soon be completed and that services are due to begin early next year.

However, residents of Bedford Crescent in Dulwich Hill have raised concerns with me about the noise and dust from the rail corridor. They fear this will be exacerbated once the light rail commences operation. The light rail will add a different spectrum of noise not previously present—such as bells, lift machinery, platform conversation, announcements, et cetera. Given that this environment is already very sensitive because of the extremely high levels of pre-existing noise caused by the goods line, the residents are understandably nervous. Bedford Crescent is adjacent to the current Dulwich Hill train station, which is where the new light rail interchange will be located.

Residents of Bedford Crescent are very supportive of the light rail extension and have been patient, given that their street has been a construction zone for the past seven months. However, despite this support, they have a very reasonable request. Given that the whole street is to be landscaped as part of the light rail extension project, they have requested that a barrier be added. This would help to mitigate noise. I urge the Minister for Transport to accede to this modest request. This would make a huge difference to the residents of Bedford Crescent. It would help with the beautification of the street once the light rail station has been constructed and also, importantly, help with noise mitigation.

The other two issues I wish to raise are the fares to be charged for travel on the light rail extension and access for students travelling to school. There were reports this week that there are plans to introduce a third fare zone to Dulwich Hill. If these reports are correct, this could put the use of light rail beyond the means of many people. If the light rail is to achieve its objective of decreasing congestion in the inner west it is critical that the fares are reasonable to encourage greater use of this mode of transport and to encourage people to leave their cars at home. I urge the Government to ensure that the fares for the extension are reasonable and fair.

The third issue I wish to raise is the provision of free travel for students between home and school on the light rail. Currently the light rail is not included in the School Student Transport Scheme. Once the light rail extension has been completed there will be at least seven high schools located close to light rail stops. I have been contacted by many parents and by parents and citizens associations, including the Sydney Secondary College Parents and Citizens Association. They are urging the Government to extend the School Student Transport Scheme to include the light rail. Many of these students currently are having to catch two or three buses to get from their home to their school and back. They could easily make this journey using the light rail. However, if the light rail extension is not included in the School Student Transport Scheme the cost of travel will make it prohibitive for parents and students.

I encourage the Government to respond to parents', students' and teachers' concerns about access to the light rail. There is no doubt that buses in the inner west are already extremely overcrowded, and students add to that overcrowding. If students were able to use the light rail, it would make a huge difference. It would be much more convenient for students because they would spend less time travelling. I also believe that their parents would be much happier knowing that they were able to make the journey to school without having to change buses or trains. I welcome the Inner West Light Rail extension and I urge the Minister to consider these issues.

Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Hawkesbury—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.17 p.m.]: I will briefly respond to the comments of the member for Marrickville. After 2½ years in office, this Government prides itself on taking responsible actions to provide public transport for people across New South Wales. I cite in particular the 1,000 additional rail services that have just been announced in the new timetable and the hundreds of additional bus services. I also point out that this Government has commenced construction of the North West Rail Link and the South West Rail Link. The Labor Government—the member for Marrickville was a Minister in that Government—failed to do that despite 16 years of repeated promises. I also point out that the Government has implemented the Opal card on various modes of public transport. The Labor Government wasted \$100 million on a Tcard and we never saw so much as a single ticket. This Government is proud of its achievements in public transport and it will continue to liaise with the community on any improvements that can be made.

[*Business interrupted.*]

PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARIES

Mr BRAD HAZZARD, on behalf of Mr Barry O'Farrell, by leave: I advise the House that:

- (1) Stuart Laurence Ayres was appointed Parliamentary Secretary for Western Sydney.
- (2) Raymond Craig Williams was appointed Parliamentary Secretary for Transport and Roads.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

[*Business resumed.*]

WAR WIDOWS GUILD OF AUSTRALIA

Mr JOHN FLOWERS (Rockdale) [5.18 p.m.]: In response to the kind invitation of Eileen Santolin, Manager, Guild Clubs and Membership, the War Widows Guild Sydney, and the president of Rockdale War Widows Guild, Elmyra Kirwin, I was delighted to attend the fiftieth anniversary luncheon of the Rockdale War Widows Guild Club held at the Rockdale RSL Club on Wednesday 4 September 2013. The club had gone to great effort to decorate the tables and the function room, which provided an atmosphere that was fitting to celebrate such an important anniversary. The chefs prepared a fine meal and everybody was provided with a memorial gift book, which set out the history of the War Widows Guild with many historic photographs. It was also a pleasure to meet Patricia Campbell, Chief Executive Officer of the War Widows Guild of Australia NSW Limited, the national president, Anne Bonner, and State president Wendy Thompson. Also in attendance was the president of the Rockdale RSL Sub-Branch, Mr Geoff Hedge, a former councillor and mayor of Rockdale City Council.

War widows are from all walks of life and they have a common bond. Thousands of war widows across New South Wales come together to enjoy friendship and social activities. The guild has more than 100 guild and social clubs around New South Wales—a network of friends to turn to when there is often no-one else. All war widows benefit from the advocacy work carried out by the guild. Much of the guild's success comes from its strength and its strong and active membership. The guild also provides information, advice and help through its trained community services workers. Self-care units in three Sydney locations provide low-cost housing for members. For country members a toll-free number is available every weekday for contact and for any assistance whatsoever. Country members can also use the guild's holiday unit in Sydney for holidays or to access health services.

The guild in New South Wales—a not-for-profit company limited by guarantee with charitable status—has about 10,000 members. Its purpose is to promote and protect the interests of war widows. I was reminded that the guild is continuing its discussions with the New South Wales Government to extend all State

Government concessions to all war widows, especially with respect to council rates. The guild also participates in a number of ventures and projects with other organisations such as the Veterans and Veterans Families Counselling Service, Concord Repatriation General Hospital and the NSW Department of Health.

Guild membership is based on sharing a common bond. Members offer each other understanding, mutual support, friendship, caring and identity. Self-help and independence are important values appreciated by members. Members of the Rockdale War Widows Guild meet at Rockdale RSL on the first Wednesday of each month. Members can enjoy the amenities at the guild's Friendship Room, which is situated at the guild's head office in the centre of Sydney. The Friendship Room is open every weekday from 10.00 a.m. to 3.00 p.m. and provides a tranquil atmosphere where visitors can relax and have a chat to fellow members over a cup of tea.

The guild has achieved recognition by Australian society due to the sacrifice of war widows. All war widows, regardless of age, are supported by the guild. Young war widows have much to confront them in raising children alone, while the needs of older war widows are changing as they age. The words of the guild's motto are reflective of the unity and friendship this special organisation represents:

We all belong to each other. We all need each other. It is in serving each other and in sacrificing for our common good that we are finding our true life.

COWPER BUS CRASH

Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS (Clarence) [5.23 p.m.]: Today, some 11 days after the twenty-fourth anniversary of the Cowper bus crash, I recognise the magnificent efforts of our local State Emergency Service volunteers and other emergency responders who provided assistance to the accident victims. At about 4.00 a.m. on 20 October 1989, a bus carrying 45 passengers and a truck carrying pineapple products collided on the Pacific Highway near Cowper, killing 21 people and injuring 22 others. The lives of all involved in this accident, both victims and rescuers, changed forever from that moment. The Maclean State Emergency Service controller at the time, Barry Essex, described the scene as being "like a war zone".

Many survivors suffered widespread and serious injuries and rescue time varied, with some people trapped in the wreckage for up to four hours before being rescued. Not only did the bereaved have to cope with the suddenness of their loss but for many people the identification process was horrific due to the physical damage to bodies caused by the vehicles colliding. Rescue personnel were also among those affected by the horror of the tragedy and the pressures of having to respond. On site, rescuers were exposed to the screams and pleas for help of the trapped and injured, while the mayhem that surrounded them included shattered and mutilated bodies. Off-site personnel had to deal with a sudden influx of injured survivors and distressed families. Some rescue personnel provided support to individuals, families and groups and so became accustomed to hearing repeated stories of tragedy. Communication and other difficulties that normally ensue in the management of such large-scale incidents added to the confusion, while the pressure of responding to the disaster was further compounded by the attention the incident received from the media.

The fact is that people suffer from severe, long-term problems after experiencing a disaster, either as a victim or as a rescuer. Subsequent research into the survivors and bereaved identified a high level of stress and psychotic morbidity more than 12 months after the accident. Whilst emergency personnel did not experience the same level of psychotic morbidity as the victims and other groups researched, they experienced considerable distress, as evidenced by intrusive thoughts and avoidance behaviour and by the overall perception that this had been the most distressing experience of their lives. The aftermath of the accident may have accounted for an unusually high level of attrition, a suicide and a suicide attempt, high levels of transfers and considerable sick leave, which it was called then but which we recognise today as stress leave.

Those personnel at highest risk of experiencing severe problems were those who were at the site of the accident involved in rescue or support, performing unfamiliar tasks, and who perceived that it was the most distressing event of their lives. It is for this reason that I agree with Bryan Robins, a former permanent employee of the New South Wales State Emergency Service, that the volunteers who attended this bus crash and the Clybucca bus crash some two months later, which resulted in the loss of a further 35 lives, deserve recognition. These men and women are volunteers—ordinary members of our community who put their hands up to help their fellow man and who were thrust into the most unimaginable disaster. They have done extraordinary things at the expense of their own health and welfare.

As a resident of the Clarence Valley for more than 30 years I well remember the Cowper bus crash and the local State Emergency Service members who attended the accident scene. I have spoken to some of them and I know that that horrific moment in time has never left them and will never leave them. They have carried

this burden for the past 24 years and will do so for the rest of their lives. I hold these volunteers in the highest regard; they are my friends, they are my neighbours and they are my local heroes, and I know that the rest of my community thinks of them in the same way. It is for that reason that I support the personal recognition of these volunteers for the service they provided, above and beyond the call of duty, on that fateful day of 20 October 1989. It would be fitting and proper for this recognition to be made on the twenty-fifth anniversary of this tragic accident next year.

PARLIAMENTARY STUDY TOUR OF ISRAEL

Mr BRUCE NOTLEY-SMITH (Coogee) [5.28 p.m.]: Recently I joined with parliamentary colleagues on a study tour of Israel, hosted by the NSW Jewish Board of Deputies. Twenty-three years ago, as a young backpacker touring across west Asia in the direction of the United Kingdom, I travelled from Kathmandu, through India, Pakistan, Iran, Turkey, Syria, Jordan and Egypt, and then arrived in Israel. Like many Australians my age, the little I knew about Israel consisted largely of television images of then Defence Minister Moshe Dayan, military battles between tanks in a severe desert environment and ultra-orthodox Jews praying at the Western Wall.

I was instantly taken by Israel; it shone so brightly as a beacon of democracy and freedom amongst its neighbours. I confess I was a convert to the idea of Israel from that time forward. At just larger than 27,000 square kilometres—around one-tenth of the size of the electorate of the member for Murray-Darling, who was on the trip—Israel is surrounded by Egypt in the south, Jordan to the east, Syria to the north-east and Lebanon to the north. Beyond lie Iraq and Iran, and the countries of the Arabian Peninsula. It is a challenging area of the world.

I thank the New South Wales Jewish Board of Deputies and in particular President Yair Miller, who accompanied us on the tour, for his outstanding hospitality and warm friendship. I also thank the board's Chief Executive Officer, Vic Alhadeff. We were fortunate to meet and speak freely with an amazing and engaging variety of people about their insights into the history of Israel, how they perceive Israel's current position in the world and, most importantly, in the Middle East, and its future. Amongst others, we spoke to small business people, a general, some politicians and even a former member of the Palestine Liberation Organization.

What struck me 23 years ago and what was reaffirmed recently is the amazing optimism of the Israelis, their confidence in the future of their country and their courage in the face of the unrelenting attacks on their nation. We visited the old city of Jerusalem, the ancient fort of Masada and the Dead Sea. We flew in light aircraft to the northern border within sight of the Golan Heights and Lebanon. We toured a Palestinian refugee camp and met with the Palestinian governor of Bethlehem. We dined in the home of an Arab Israeli and his family, and we visited the graves of the Australian Light Horsemen who fell in Beersheba.

My electorate of Coogee is home to many people of the Jewish faith, and I am fortunate to count many of them as friends. I encourage all members of this House to undertake this study tour if given the opportunity. They will find it one of the most rewarding, informative and amazing experiences they will ever have. Like so many in this House, I await eagerly a peaceful resolution to the conflicts in the region, and hope that the dream of an Israel and its people living in peace becomes a reality.

WORKERS COMPENSATION SCHEME

Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool) [5.33 p.m.]: I draw to the attention of the House the situation of constituents of mine who have been affected by decisions of this Parliament. The first is Valentin Andreatta, a long-term resident of the Liverpool area. Mr Andreatta came to Australia in 1969 when he was five years of age. He left school mid-way through year 10 and started an apprenticeship in carpentry and joinery. He subsequently obtained his full qualifications. He has spent his entire working life in the building industry, apart from short times as a truck driver, and has been continuously employed apart from time he has had off with injury. He even worked a second job as a driver with a courier company. When injured he did light duties whenever they were available.

During his employment Mr Andreatta sustained the injuries that are extremely common in his type of work, especially on smaller building sites such as where he worked. Some were discrete injuries and some were build-ups due to the nature and conditions of his employment. Because he became a leading hand he could, to some extent, delegate some work to others to minimise aggravation of his injuries. He has had consultation with

orthopaedic surgeons, an arthroscopy to his left knee, operative treatment to his right elbow and an arthroscopy to his right knee. He also sustained injuries to his right index finger, right shoulder and lower back, and had all the recommended treatment. He also developed neck issues.

The end result is that Mr Andreata's current continuing disabilities include headaches, stiff and painful neck, neck pain extending to the head and arms, difficulty raising arms above shoulders, stiff and painful right elbow, pain to right index finger travelling up right arm, weakness to right arm, stiff and painful lower back, pain and stiffness and swelling to right arm and left knee, difficulty with bending, lifting, pushing, pulling, turning, walking, prolonged sitting and prolonged standing, and difficulty with sleeping and driving. He also became dependent on painkillers. He has been off work since 2011. Mr Andreata has a good work record, having worked at a second job and always pursuing available selected duties.

Mr Andreata has been unfit for the work for which he is qualified since 2011. He keeps pursuing work and makes inquiries every day. The insurer has his job logs. In the real world, however, no-one will offer a job to someone in Mr Andreata's position. Even QBE, the worker's compensation insurer involved, concedes that he has many restrictions on his pre-injury work capacity. However, it will use the new workers compensation legislation passed by this Parliament to maximise its profits and take workers compensation benefits off Mr Andreata. It also relies upon the work and assessment of an injury management consultant who does not seem to have ever seen Mr Andreata. QBE sent the usual standard form letter dated 31 May saying that Mr Andreata's compensation payments would be terminated as at 8 September 2013. There is no serious avenue for appeal against this decision; there is only an internal QBE review. The decision is unjust and unfair. The lack of any credible appeal mechanism is also unjust and unfair, and it is a direct result of unjust and unfair legislation.

Sam Gattelari, who lives in Cecil Hills, is another constituent of mine who has been adversely affected by workers compensation changes. He is a 53-year-old man with a long history of working in the construction industry. That industry is inherently dangerous and it is one in which workers are often hurt. He received injuries in 1995, 2000 and 2001. He hurt his lower back and left knee, and has significant pain in his back and neck, and both arms and legs. He is no longer able to work in the construction industry. He luckily obtained other employment but it was nowhere near as satisfying as the work he had been doing for so long and certainly not as remunerative. He lost significant income because of this. Mr Gattelari obtained workers compensation payments—he needed them to keep body and soul, and family, together. The new compensation laws allowed the workers compensation insurer involved, Employers Mutual, to significantly reduce his payments. As his union said to me:

Workers compensation has changed Sam's life and disadvantaged him in many ways, but at least with his weekly benefits and medical expenses covered he was able to survive. Without these benefits Sam will struggle to pay his bills and feed his family. He will not be able to afford the medication and treatment needed to manage his injury.

In a letter dated 30 August that was entitled "Work capacity decision notice", the workers compensation insurer, Employers Mutual, pointed out that the law had changed last year. It concedes that Mr Gattelari is physically unable to return to his pre-injury employment. That is, there is no dispute he is injured and cannot do his old job. But it is going to reduce his payments regardless of what the rest of us might regard as the justice of the case. The end result of these laws and the consequence for people such as Mr Andreata and Mr Gattelari is that workers are in effect being punished for being injured. They have no effective appeal rights. They are treated as being employable when they are not. In an article I read recently Professor Alain Supiot reminded me that Kafka's professional career was devoted to applying laws relating to work accidents. That seems entirely appropriate. This State's workers compensation laws as they affect my constituents are in every sense Kafkaesque.

NORTH COAST FOREST INDUSTRIES

Mr ANDREW FRASER (Coffs Harbour—The Assistant-Speaker) [5.38 p.m.]: I began preparing this private member's statement some weeks ago. I am still looking for some more data, but the issue of the North Coast forest industries is so urgent that I felt I should raise it now. Recently we have heard green groups claim a \$15 million profit from New South Wales forests as a loss. That is an absolute disgrace and it could not be further from the truth. In reality, the forest industry employs hundreds of people in New South Wales. During the term of the previous Government millions of hectares of State forests that had been logged for more than 100 years were reserved as national parks. I still pose the question that if it has been logged for 100 years and is

in good enough condition to be turned into a national park, why not continue to manage it as a producing State forest that provides jobs and timber for the building industry? We have been through forest assessments and agreements: we have been through the whole box and dice—every time the forestry estate has shrunk.

The State has spent millions of dollars over a number of years to buy out the timber industry. The reality is we still need the wood; people still need to build houses. At the same time we have a shrinking resource not because the resources cannot be provided but because they are in what is now a national park. Since State Forests cannot provide mature timber we have had to resort to forestry on private land. That has always existed, but the restrictions that are in place are making it harder and harder to provide that resource. Half the industry, half the jobs and most of the value has disappeared. The cost of accessing resources has been allowed to accelerate beyond all reason. Regulatory restrictions on access have increased along with the increased costs of management. The Greens clamour to impose absolute exclusion as an alternative to the socioeconomic balance, yet at the same time timber imports have increased and diminished the market value.

Mr Deputy-Speaker would remember that on 12 October John Crighton was injured and subsequently died after an accident during a logging operation at Whian Whian. The accident occurred on a private property that had been blockaded by greens. As a result, State Forests and the Environment Protection Authority sent personnel in to manage the operation. Mr Crighton was there trying to keep people away from the area when a limb fell from a tree, hit him on the head and killed him. Mr Crighton should not have been there. He did not need to be there. However, because of work health and safety concerns held by State Forests about the green protesters who were there—they often try to enter property and hold up an operation—it was deemed necessary for Mr Crighton to be there.

A family has lost their father because the greens failed to comply with work health and safety regulations. In fact, they blocked radio signals and roads. Indeed, although they claimed that they assisted the police in getting an ambulance in there, it was delayed. I do not believe them. The Coroner will look at the issue. At the end of the day the Government must ensure that we have a forest system that protects workers in a forest. We need to provide rural communities with protection from the disgraceful behaviour of the green ratbags at a level equivalent to the protection available for Sydney-based industries. If these blockades had happened in any industry in Sydney the police would have been on the doorstep and shifted them out.

These fools create situations where people are not only injured but killed. It is high time the Government moved to ensure that these green protesters who enter private land and State forests are removed by the police. I do not want to see another headline about a forest worker, whether employed by the State or by private industry, being killed while trying to protect an operation that was signed off after going through all the environmental regulation. It was estimated that it would take between 20 and 30 loads of logs from the 14-hectare block. The operation was being undertaken in accordance with environmental principles. Unfortunately it was necessary for State Forests to oversee the operation because of the green protestors. I call on the Government to introduce legislation to ensure that this does not happen in again. This needs to be covered by work health and safety legislation, and we need to protect these hardworking employees in the forest industry.

Mr THOMAS GEORGE (Lismore—The Deputy-Speaker) [5.43 p.m.]: I place on record the sympathy and thoughts of members for the family of John Crighton. A big service was held at Kyogle Catholic Church. The industry has lost not only a great employee but also an experienced employee, and a wonderful family and community man with the death of John Crighton.

MAITLAND ELECTORATE INFRASTRUCTURE

Ms ROBYN PARKER (Maitland—Minister for the Environment, and Minister for Heritage) [5.44 p.m.]: On this occasion I will give the House a further update on infrastructure developments in the Maitland electorate and announcements by the Liberal-Nationals Government. Since March 2011 the Government has delivered on many of our election commitments. Our record includes selection of the site for the future Maitland Hospital as part of a \$20 million election commitment for planning; \$45 million for Maitland roundabout upgrades; \$91 million for water infrastructure to support population growth; and \$15 million to upgrade and expand facilities at Rutherford Technology High School, as well as \$2 million for the restoration of Maitland Town Hall, among many others.

I take this opportunity to acknowledge the work of the emergency services in my electorate involved in firefighting activities, especially in the Port Stephens area, in recent weeks. The newest emergency

services facility in Maitland is the Rural Fire Service's Lower Hunter Zone Fire Control Centre built this year at East Maitland. I attended the official opening of the \$4 million centre only four weeks ago. That afternoon we had severe weather conditions, and everyone who attended the opening was fully prepared to go out that afternoon, and indeed some of them did. Lower Hunter Fire Control Officer Superintendent Jayson McKellar and his staff have subsequently got down to business, with major outbreaks over the past fortnight in the Port Stephens area requiring their attention. I am advised by his deputy incident controller for the Port Stephens blaze, Superintendent Greg Windeatt of Fire and Rescue NSW, that his brigades from Maitland, East Maitland, Telarah and Morpeth were involved in that operation last week supporting their Rural Fire Service colleagues.

Maitland-based Central Hunter police officers have also been involved in bushfire responses, with Commander Superintendent Garry O'Dell advising that he has had personnel deployed to fire scenes at Port Stephens and the Hunter Valley in recent weeks. To all our emergency services in the Maitland electorate, both professional and volunteers, I say thank you for your hard work so early in the bushfire season, and my thoughts are with you for the days, weeks and months ahead as we prepare for what is looking to be a difficult fire season. As the Minister for the Environment I have become familiar with bushfires over the past 2½ years and I appreciate the value of the new fire control centre to coordinate major incident responses.

This state-of-the-art facility is the headquarters for the 47 Rural Fire Service brigades in the Maitland, Port Stephens, Dungog and Cessnock council areas, which have 2,000 volunteer members, and it is the new workplace for 26 Rural Fire Service staff. It is strategically located to bring a range of activities under one roof, such as advanced training, operational management, and prevention and mitigation activities. It also has a storage facility to house specialist equipment during large fire and emergency events such as those already being experienced. As I mentioned previously, another local organisation that has its eye on Maitland's future needs is Hunter Water. I am pleased to advise that Hunter Water is making a record investment of \$91 million over the next four years to provide for new water and wastewater infrastructure.

Hunter Water has already invested \$46 million on upgrading Maitland's water and sewerage system in the past two years, including \$14 million on the water supply from Maitland to North Rothbury and \$29.5 million to upgrade the Farley Waste Water Treatment Plant. The water upgrade includes the 10-million litre Lochinvar Reservoir, from which I recently had the honour of drawing the first glass of water. Maitland is expected to retain its place as one of the fastest-growing regions in the State. That is why I appreciate the Government's commitment of funding to the Maitland area. In many cases this is catch-up, but the infrastructure is certainly needed.

Today I announced that Roads and Maritime Services has on its website—it is also available at Rutherford Library and Maitland City Council—plans for a \$3.5 million upgrade to the New England Highway between Racecourse Road and Regiment Road, an area where there is a strong pinch point and that has had 16 accidents in the past two years. The highway goes from two lanes to one lane, and the plans look to make the road a four-lane road. I encourage local residents to get involved and tell us what they think of the plans. This is yet another indication of the Government recognising the growth in the electorate, understanding the needs and putting money behind upgrading our infrastructure, for which I know our residents are grateful.

RAINBOW CLUB AUSTRALIA

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.49 p.m.]: On two previous occasions I have had the pleasure of addressing the House on the activities of Rainbow Club Australia, of which I am a co-patron. Rainbow Club Australia is a non-profit organisation whose mission is giving "children with disability the opportunity and confidence to extend their abilities through swimming". Rainbow Club Australia is the umbrella organisation for 16 local clubs in New South Wales and two in Victoria. Each club engages qualified instructors to provide swimming lessons for its members. Rainbow Club Australia does a tremendous job. I am always impressed by the level of commitment and passion displayed by board members and other volunteers. Last year I was delighted that Rainbow Club Australia received a one-off grant of \$250,000 from the O'Farrell Government. Tonight I update the House on two recent matters, namely, the Rainbow Connect Day and the launch of next year's Murray Rose's Malabar Magic Ocean Swim.

On 12 October I attended Rainbow Club Australia's Rainbow Connect Day at Cronulla leagues club. The Rainbow Connect Day was a special event, with the purpose of socially connecting and engaging the parents, instructors and friends of Rainbow Clubs. This means offering them the opportunity to meet and share their knowledge while gaining support from others. The day was full of important and useful information for

members. Gold medallist, Paralympic wheelchair racer and co-patron Louise Sauvage, OAM, warmly welcomed those present. President Alexandra Finley discussed the vision for the Rainbow Club's future. General manager Catriona Barry gave a presentation on the general model for local clubs.

Former president and current board member Suzanne Stanton was appropriately conferred life membership for her long and dedicated service to Rainbow Club Australia. Rob Lloyd spoke about the 2014 ocean swim, to which I will return. The event proceeded with two informative sessions. One was for parents and club managers, dealing with the newly formed Rainbow Club Australia management system. The other was a workshop, facilitated by swimming instructors, to discuss the goals and plans for a great Rainbow Club experience. After lunch there was an open discussion on the Rainbow Club lifecycle, with a discussion about the difficulties encountered by children with disabilities. Leading providers of disability services gave panel presentations and included Autism Spectrum Australia, the Brain Injury Association and the Down Syndrome Association NSW. The last item of the agenda was the presentation of Rashies, which were generously donated by the Primary Club of Australia, which was represented on the day by committee member and Cronulla local Jim Winchester.

Each year Rainbow Club Australia holds Murray Rose's Malabar Magic Ocean Swim to raise funds and contribute to meeting the ongoing costs of the Rainbow Club program. Murray Rose's Malabar Magic Ocean Swim is named after the late, great Australian Olympian, Murray Rose. The name of the swim reflects the esteem in which Murray Rose, the club's former patron and inaugural facilitator of the ocean swim, is held by Rainbow Club Australia. It is a fantastic event. I encourage all members to dive in and participate. It draws diehard swimmers and first-timers of all ages from right around the globe. It offers friends, families and workmates a chance to have fun and test their limits. The launch of Murray Rose's Malabar Magic Ocean Swim 2014 will be held tonight. The swim will be held on Sunday 16 February 2014. I encourage all members to save the date in their diaries.

Murray Rose's Malabar Magic Ocean Swim has become an iconic part of the OceanSwim calendar and offers a two-swim program consisting of a one kilometre swim, which starts at 9.00 a.m., and a 2.4 kilometre swim, which starts at 10.00 a.m. The Malabar Magic is a featured event on the OceanSwim calendar and the Fine Ocean Swimmers Series. I thank all the local Rainbow Clubs across New South Wales for their hard work and dedication to providing children with disability with the opportunity and confidence to extend their abilities through swimming. I commend the hardworking board members of Rainbow Club Australia. In conclusion, I must say that one of the great things about my job is involvement in great charities such as Rainbow Club Australia. I commend its work to the House.

BLUE MOUNTAINS BUSHFIRES

Mrs ROZA SAGE (Blue Mountains) [5.54 p.m.]: As the ashes settle over the Blue Mountains after the worst bushfire in living memory, rebuilding has begun. The past two weeks have been a harrowing time for the fire-affected communities across the Blue Mountains. Stories of generosity of spirit abound. I have heard so many accounts of individuals who set aside concerns about personal safety to help others. St Thomas Aquinas Catholic School Principal Sergio Rosato is one of those inspirational people. As fire bore down on his school and the closely located St Columba's High School, Serge kicked into action. Serge and his wonderful staff members walked the whole school, including kindergarten children, 2½ kilometres to safety at the Winmalee Shopping Centre. Serge and some members of his staff knew that they had lost homes, but their first concern was for their charges. The students were later bussed to the evacuation centre at the Springwood Sports Club where I was able to catch up with Serge and his family. What a beautiful family they are, despite already having been through so much anguish over the health of Serge's wife.

Over and over again I heard victims say, "Please, help others first as there are people worse off than me." Even at the recovery centre it is sometimes difficult to persuade victims that they too deserve to be helped. As the ferocity of the fires subsided, I was able to join our dedicated Blue Mountains police officers to see firsthand the worst of the devastation. Witnessing families finding their precious pets had not survived the inferno provided some of the most heartbreaking moments. But occasionally there were miraculous stories—such as the family who had been forced in the chaos to leave one pet behind as they fled their home. When they returned, somehow the dog had survived, albeit with a set of burnt paws. Among the incredible Winmalee Rural Fire Service Brigade alone, four members lost houses. Did that slow them down? Not a chance!

The brigade's captain, Anthony Black, was a true leader during this crisis, as were members of the incident control team. Day after day they stayed to plan and oversee operations. The east sector's Group

Captains, Duncan Allen, Greg Corrigan and Colin Brown, were a permanent presence each and every time I visited. Knowing men and women of this calibre were on the watch filled me with confidence and pride. The communications team also included logistics officer Jeanette Quinn, and Jenny, Ben and Tony, who were there all the time. There are so many heroes I am afraid I cannot name them all. But we owe a great debt to all of them. Each and every brigade member worked tirelessly and with an unwavering sense of responsibility to protect their community.

Spirits visibly lifted when the Premier, Barry O'Farrell, and Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons visited Winmalee. They toured fire-affected areas and spoke to community members and emergency service workers. The Governor-General, Quentin Bryce, also visited. While I was at the recovery centre I saw firsthand her concern and generosity of spirit. She took the time to speak to a young girl who sought to meet her. The care and concern of those in high office is much appreciated by the community. It demonstrates that we are not alone and the hearts of all Australians, and the world, are with us. A visit by Danish Crown Prince Frederik and Princess Mary was the icing on the cake for this suffering community. As one woman said, "This is the first time I have seen my daughter-in-law smile since they lost their house." With the recovery and healing process in full swing I must emphasise that those needing help are being attended to and are receiving assistance. This difficult process is about helping the community and overcoming any challenges that individuals might face. That is what I am committed to doing.

Many people have shared with me with me their initial feelings of trauma and how difficult that has made processing all the available information. The one-stop shop at the Springwood Disaster Recovery Centre allows victims to repeatedly return to seek assistance as they go through the process. I was particularly heartened on one occasion when I crossed paths with a married couple I first met at the evacuation centre. On initial contact, the lady was visibly shaking. She was unable to sleep or eat due to the trauma she was suffering. She told me that she could not get the vision out of her head of the burning buildings as she was racing from the area. That couple had also lost their house. A trauma counsellor was at hand to provide that important initial first aid. When I came across them again several days later at the recovery centre, she related to me that she was much better and now benefiting from the counselling that she so desperately needed. To me that was a positive indication that healing in the community had begun. My community, like the legendary phoenix, is rising from the ashes.

PORT KEMBLA RSL SUB-BRANCH EXECUTIVE

Ms NOREEN HAY (Wollongong) [5.59 p.m.]: Today I place on the record my concern over the recent unexplained dismissal of the Port Kembla RSL Sub-Branch executive. It is well known in my community and indeed in this place that I am, and always have been, a staunch supporter of the Port Kembla RSL and its executive, having worked so closely with executive members for many years. It was with great sadness that on 28 May this year I informed the House that the Port Kembla RSL Club had closed its doors, due to financial troubles. Following the closure, an administrator was appointed. Many options were explored and community meetings were held to try to find avenues to reopen one of the oldest sub-branches in Wollongong. I attended those community meetings. To date, the doors remain closed.

Yesterday it was reported in the *Illawarra Mercury* that the sub-branch executive, comprising the president, Jim Lyon, the senior vice-president, Terry Wetherall, the vice-president, Bevan Fermor, the trustee, Peter Devonshire, and the secretary-treasurer, Peter Edwards, had been informed by email that "the executive committee of the Port Kembla Sub-Branch will be stood down and an administrator be appointed." The letter had been sent from the State Branch of the RSL with no further explanation given, only that the grounds for the dismissal would be forwarded by mail in the future. The whole situation is just appalling. The former executive members are all well respected members of the community. Over the years, all of them—they are volunteers—have given their time, skills and knowledge to the sub-branch free of charge.

To be dismissed without explanation is, in my view, simply unacceptable and far from good enough. I have spoken with a number of the former sub-branch members, and they are not happy. Mr Fermor is particularly outraged and is quoted in today's *Illawarra Mercury* as saying that he was "absolutely disgusted". He is also cynical that a meeting will be convened two days after Remembrance Day, which means that the RSL will not be having its usual and expected ceremony—which the community have always attended and supported—to pay tribute to the brave men and women who have fallen. What is the reason behind the State branch's seemingly sudden decision to remove the hardworking former executive? It is alleged by some that it is being done to sell off assets and that it is a quick grab for cash. I spoke to Mr Rowe from the State branch and

I am prepared to accept his assurances that they hope to continue operating the sub-branch and that there is no intention to sell the premises and take control of the sub-branch's finances. However, there are questions that must be answered, and not just as a matter of courtesy.

It was stated in the *Illawarra Mercury* that basically this is nobody's business but that of the State branch and the sub-branch. I can assure members that the community of Port Kembla and Wollongong in general are very keen to see the Port Kembla RSL survive and have shown great interest in and support for that club by attending public meetings and supporting it in whatever way they could. I call on the New South Wales RSL to provide an explanation for these unprecedented sackings as a matter of urgency, not just to the former executive, but to the community of Port Kembla and greater Wollongong who have always supported the RSL in their endeavours to keep alive the memory of those who gave their lives to make Australia the great country it is today.

I am also a supporter of the State Branch of the RSL so I do not want my comments today to be taken as anything other than being supportive. However, I think any of us who give our time and dedication as volunteers to a community organisation want to see the sub-branch survive. The Port Kembla RSL is keen to see the memorabilia room retained and to have a meeting place for its members. The unfortunate situation that the sub-branch finds itself in is as a result of the club side of the RSL getting itself into financial difficulties. I hope that common sense will prevail but, at the very least, the club's volunteer executive need to be told the reasons for the actions that have been taken. They are entitled to be able to put their case. They should have been allowed to answer the concerns and I call on the State RSL to meet with them as a matter of urgency.

KIAMA SCOTS PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 150TH ANNIVERSARY

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) [6.04 p.m.]: I bring to the attention of the House the 150th anniversary of the Scots Presbyterian Church in Kiama. Recently I attended celebrations for this important institution in Kiama's Christian community. The most recent celebrations were held at the Kiama Pavilion and I was joined by my friend the Mayor of Kiama, Councillor Brian Petschler, and his wife, Sue, and the local church minister Noel Creighton and his wife, Fleur. We had a delightful evening.

The first minister of the Kiama parish was Reverend George McKie who established the first church when in 1850 he purchased an old store that was on the beach in front of the current post office for £40. In his early sermons, Reverend McKie could hardly be heard over the roar of crashing waves. It was at this time that Kiama lived up to the meaning of its name as the "Place where the sea makes a noise". The second minister of the Kiama parish was Reverend John Kinross who set about building the very church which celebrates its 150th anniversary this year. He began construction in 1859 and completed it in 1863, with the first service being held on 4 March, 1863. Such is the generosity of the Kiama people that although the church cost almost £2,000 to erect, the parish was £250 in debt upon its completion. The first sermon of the new church was preached by the Reverend Dr Robert Steel of Sydney, who began with the first verse of the 122nd Psalm: "I was glad when they said unto me, let us go into the House of the Lord." And it was this House of the Lord that would stand for another 150 years, serving the great people of Kiama.

The church itself was designed by Thomas Rowe of Sydney and constructed with materials from the Kiama area, such as sandstone donated by the Robb family in Riversdale and basalt from Mr Carson's quarry in Kiama. The church building has been consistently maintained and has undergone several renovations and developments. Such developments include the construction of the belltower in 1898, the introduction of electricity in 1924, the replacement of the church roof in 1952, the major internal changes with the seating plan revised in 1954, the chemical damp-proof course installation and replastering in the 1980s, the complete electrical rewiring in 2007, and the reinforcing of the belltower in later years. Constant maintenance has been required due to the proximity to the ocean and the damage done to the sandstone building by moisture and it is a credit to the Kiama Presbyterian community that the church building has been preserved so well over such a long time.

A significant aspect of the Scots Presbyterian Church is the pipe organ which has been in place since 1907 when it was donated by church member, businessman, and landowner George Lawrence Fuller. It is this spirit of generosity that has long been a part of the Kiama community and has allowed the Kiama Presbyterian Church to remain a strong force for good in the Kiama community. The pipe organ is in the same condition, with minimal alterations, as it was when installed more than a century ago. Many fine organists have served the church community since its installation, for example, James Cocks, who held the appointment for 49 years until his death in 1956, and the current appointee, Mardi McDonald who has served for the past 24 years.

The church today continues to serve the Presbyterian community and the wider community of Kiama through regular services, Sunday schools, the Girls Brigade, the Op Shop and the Christian Bookshop. The invaluable work that continues to be done by the Kiama Presbyterian Church is greatly appreciated by all in the community and should be recognised by the House. It is a fantastic achievement for any building, organisation, or community group to last for 150 years. I am certain that the Kiama Presbyterian Church will last long into the future and continue to serve the people of Kiama and the surrounding areas. I congratulate the Kiama Presbyterian Church on its longevity and on its commitment to serve the people of Kiama.

Over the past few months I have been very privileged to attend a number of openings and new beginnings for churches in my community. Christ Church, Kiama recently opened enormous upgrades which have been warmly welcomed by the people of Kiama. The Baptist Church recently moved to new facilities in Browns Road. I have no doubt that this will continue to grow. I am delighted the Christian community across my electorate is prospering and growing, particularly with young people coming to church. I am pleased that in this instance we were able to celebrate the history. Churches and religious congregations are such an important part of local communities, particularly in rural and regional Australia. I was pleased to accept the invitation from the Scots Presbyterian Church, and I look forward to seeing its congregation continue to grow and prosper.

CHARLESTOWN ELECTORATE CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE

Mr ANDREW CORNWELL (Charlestown) [6.09 p.m.]: I acknowledge the work of the local Chambers of Commerce in my electorate. My electorate comprises a group of villages that have, over time, coalesced as a result of urban consolidation and growth. As such my electorate is made up of a number of smaller town centres, each of which has a very active Chamber of Commerce. It is my pleasure to acknowledge some of the work of those chambers. First, I acknowledge the work of Cardiff Chamber of Commerce, which advocated very strongly for the upgrade of Cardiff railway station. I acknowledge the presence in the Chamber of the Minister for Transport and thank her for her ongoing support of that project.

Cardiff Chamber of Commerce is a relatively new organisation, being less than 10 years old, but its achievements are remarkable. I acknowledge the incoming executive: the president, Mr Greg Foster, vice president John Moore, secretary Mrs Robin Roworth, treasurer Mr Barry Lindbeck and Noel McFarlane and Mr Paul Harrison. I thank the outgoing members of the executive, Mr Ben Campbell, Mr Max McCorkell and Councillor Robert Denton. Last Saturday they held the third annual family Halloween Fun Day which attracted approximately 6,000 people to Cardiff. The feedback was fantastic, the town was abuzz and a great sense of community was created. In an era where people think that Facebook and Twitter are communities we see that events like the fun day conducted by the Chamber of Commerce really reflect what a true community is about.

Second, I acknowledge the work of the Warners Bay Chamber of Commerce. Its incoming executive members are: president David Naylor, vice president and treasurer Darren Glover, secretary Rosemary Salway, public officer Steve Rayfield, membership liaison officer Kathryn Halyburton, foreshore precinct manager Sue Rigby, Macquarie Road precinct manager Bruce McIntyre, and the Hillsborough Road precinct manager position is still vacant. This is an opportune time to acknowledge the work of Greg Hopper. Greg has been the driving force in that chamber for some 20 years. Warners Bay Chamber of Commerce has a notable list of achievements and Greg Hopper has been central to those. His advocacy on behalf of the businesses of Warners Bay and the suburb as a whole has been an enormous contribution to our area. Greg will continue to make a major contribution in his role on the committee for the Festival of Lights and also as a board member of the local TAFE college. Greg Hopper is a powerhouse in providing for his community. I thank him for the contribution he has made over the past 20 years and I look forward to continuing to see the fruits of his labour over the coming years.

I also acknowledge the work of the secretary of the Warners Bay Chamber of Commerce, Mrs Narelle Redman. Narelle will soon take up the role of president of the Charlestown Chamber of Commerce. She is a brilliant networker and a great driver of the local chambers. She is going to be a real asset for us at Charlestown—Warners Bay's loss will be our gain. However, Warners Bay Chamber of Commerce has a strong executive that will continue to make a great contribution to local business. I acknowledge the Kahibah Business and Community Alliance—a new chamber of commerce that we have assisted in setting up. Its new executive is Ms Beth Webb, Ms Dominique Sheehan, Mr Neil Coutts, Mr Maurie Cinelli, Mr Bob Tan and Ms Tracey Tatersell. Kahibah town centre is about 150 years old and is based around an old coalmine. It is an area that is undergoing dramatic change. The area has large parcels of land with only a single dwelling on them—family homes that are 70 or 80 years old. When one is doorknocking in the area, one meets people who have lived in the same house for 50, 60 or 70 years. The area is undergoing change with many blocks being subdivided. Dual

occupancies and units are being built and the Kahibah town centre will have an important role to play in developing and maintaining a sense of community. I look forward to our continuing work with the Kahibah Chamber of Commerce.

Finally, I acknowledge the work of Business Charlestown. Business Charlestown is a major chamber of commerce in our region. Charlestown is second only to the Newcastle central business district as an area of business and commerce and its role is a critical one not just for Charlestown but for the entire region. I welcome the new board: president, Narelle Redman; vice president, John Wheeler; treasurer, Neil Hocquard; secretary, Lyn Oberholzer; and executive committee members Councillor Jason Pauling, Dominique Sheehan and Josh Swetnam. I thank the outgoing committee members Ken Semple and Jason Pauling who has served as president for the past few years. I know that Narelle Redman is excited to be the incoming president.

It is timely to acknowledge the work of our business chambers. They bring an enormous sense of goodwill to the community but as local businesspeople they also bring a great deal of expertise. It is important for us to understand the huge difference they make to the community through the large amount of unpaid work they do behind the scenes. Our main streets are an important part of our communities. The local chamber of commerce is responsible for making sure that our main street is an asset of which we can be proud. I take pride this evening in acknowledging the work of those organisations.

NORTHERN SUBURBS FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION

Mr MATT KEAN (Hornsby) [6.14 p.m.]: Tonight I refer to some of the recent achievements of the Northern Suburbs Football Association, on and off the pitch. I know that the member for Willoughby, who is in the Chamber, is an enthusiastic supporter of the Northern Suburbs Football Association and I am happy to share these achievements with her. The association's chief executive, Duncan Tweed, special project coordinator Greg Hay and competition manager Damien Miles have all overseen a period of positive growth for football in the Hornsby, Ku-ring-gai and North Shore areas. Tonight I place on record my appreciation to the chairman of the Northern Suburbs Football Association, Mr Chris Rayner. He is an example of the best in our community. He has dedicated 30 years of his life to not only promoting sport in our community but also building a better community, for which I thank him. I also place on record my appreciation for the support given to him by his wife, Wendy. Between them they make a great difference to northern Sydney and to sport in this State.

The association, which encompasses 34 clubs catering for under-6 to Premier League competitions and spreading from Brooklyn to North Sydney, now has over 16,500 registered players. This is a great achievement for our local association which often battles field shortages, with hundreds of games being played every weekend. I commend the association's senior management team for its ongoing efforts in promoting grassroots sport, which has a vital role to play in our community. Football is the highest participation sport in New South Wales and caters for thousands of junior players at all skill levels. Recently, the juniors competition has been overhauled with the introduction of small-sided games, which is having a great effect on skills development and the retention of junior players.

Our new Minister for Sports and Recreation, Gabrielle Upton, will agree with me that investment in grassroots sport is vital to promote healthy lifestyles and identify talented players for representative honours. I am told that Premier Barry O'Farrell, my neighbour in the Ku-ring-gai electorate, was also a handy goalkeeper in his younger days. The Premier played his junior football in Victoria but will join me in acknowledging the five Australian internationals that have emerged over the years from the Northern Suburbs Football Association. Earlier this year I was honoured to be able to assist the Northern Suburbs Football Association by teaming up with Hornsby Council to donate \$27,000 for the construction of new floodlights at Berowra Oval. I thank the mayor, Steve Russell, for his ongoing support and commitment to sport in our area and in particular the Northern Suburbs Football Association. That donation will enable the association and Berowra Soccer Club to host night matches, meaning more games and more players will benefit from the Community Building Partnership grant.

While I am speaking about the Berowra Soccer Club, I would like to make special mention of Berowra Soccer Club President Cathy Ruggero, who dedicated a lot of her time and effort to write and compile the club's submission and apply for the Community Building Partnership grant. The Berowra Soccer Club, like other soccer clubs in the district, is an amazing club because of the people who give up their time to make it great. I know that Bruce Waterhouse and Greg Steptoe have given many years to making it a great club. I thank them for their contribution. I also make special mention of the northern suburbs biggest representative club, the

Northern Tigers. The Tigers finished eighth in this year's National Premier League NSW Mens 2 competition. The club has a long and rich history in the Asquith area and has been a past contender for promotion to the NSW Premier League. I look forward to them making the Premier League in the near future.

Over the years the Tigers have produced many decorated players, including Australian international and former Adelaide United player Bruce Djite; Fox Sports commentator Andy Harper; and former Australian assistant coach Robert Hooker. I share the club's excitement about the next chapter in its development with the announcement of the Football Federation Australia [FFA] Cup competition. This will give the Tigers an opportunity to play off against New South Wales Premier League and A-League club opposition for the first time in a knockout tournament. The FFA Cup is a great initiative by Football Federation Australia, the governing body, as it will create a clear player pathway for the first time in the code's history.

I also congratulate this year's Northern Suburbs club champion, Asquith Soccer Club, which finished the club season ahead of both Knox United and Wahroonga. I am delighted about this because that club is in my electorate and it does a wonderful job. This is a great achievement by the Asquith club and I congratulate the club's president, Chris Hemming, and his team on their hard work and dedication. Although Lindfield is out of my electorate, I would like to highlight a recent tournament win by the Lindfield Football Club. Lindfield has become the first club from the Northern Suburbs Football Association to win a female Champion of Champions title after a gutsy 3-1 win over the Killarney Heights district in the under-14 girls final competition. This is an impressive win by the girls who defeated the best teams from across New South Wales to win the under-14s crown.

I am sure the sports Minister will join me in acknowledging the girls' achievement and in wishing them the best of luck for the future. If the girls continue with results like that we could be seeing some of them representing the Matildas in international women's soccer. I look forward to seeing members of the northern suburbs football fraternity again on Saturday at the annual President's Dinner function in Killara. It gives the community an opportunity to acknowledge the work of our volunteers in supporting our local soccer clubs and promoting sport in our local area.

WAGGA WAGGA MENTAL HEALTH UNIT

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE (Wagga Wagga) [6.19 p.m.]: I advise the House of a momentous occasion that occurred on Monday 21 October at which the Minister for Health, the Hon. Jillian Skinner, joined me and Michael McCormack, the Federal member for the Riverina, along with executives from the Murrumbidgee Health Network, to officially open the new mental health wing of Wagga Wagga Hospital. This has been a dream of the Wagga Wagga community and the wider region. For years we have campaigned to build a new hospital in Wagga Wagga. An amount of \$282.1 million was allocated to build a new facility. Phase one was the mental health unit, which the Minister for Mental Health mentioned today. The new unit will increase the capacity of the mental health service to 20 acute beds and 30 non-acute beds. It is attracting the very best in medical physicians and staff to give the best treatment to people who require mental health assistance.

I cannot believe that in just 16 months the Minister for Health, the planning people and the committees that have been guiding and monitoring the establishment have been able to build this wonderful facility. I joined the community for the official opening on 21 October when some 500 to 600 people inspected the site and gave wonderful feedback. Also in attendance for this momentous occasion were about 150 officials, and the Minister for Health, the Federal member and I had the opportunity to say a few words before the unveiling of the plaque. Phase two will be the demolition of Gissing House mental health facility, which is beyond its use-by date, and the construction of the new acute hospital, including new emergency services, angiographic suites, a medical imaging operating theatre, and inpatient units in a new eight-storey tower with a helicopter pad on the top. Phase three will be the demolition of the existing tower building, a new main entrance and forecourt, and additional on-site car parking and on-site works.

The hospital will include 20 new subacute mental health beds, 10 additional acute mental health overnight inpatient beds, new emergency services, an increased capacity renal facility, a new operating theatre suite, including expanded recovery capacity, a new cardiac catheterisation laboratory and angiographic suite, a new women's and children's inpatient unit including birthing suites, new central sterilising services, a new medical imaging department and additional car parking. More developments are planned. The plan we have put forward will be completed in 2016. I understand that next week Gissing House will be demolished and I intend to be present when the excavators move in and knock it down. Building is expected to commence early in the new year. I understand that the first sod is to be turned in December—a date has already been set. These are

exciting times for the region. The community and I have campaigned hard for this construction and I place on record our appreciation to the Minister for Health, Premier Barry O'Farrell, Deputy Premier Andrew Stoner and all my colleagues for their support in bringing this to fruition. It has not been easy. There has been blood, sweat and tears over this, but finally the community is seeing the results of all that hard work.

However, more work is needed so that the job can be completed. Members can rest assured that I will be campaigning hard to bring about phase four. It is rather complicated because there are many other services to be considered such as ambulatory care and the university and who will deliver medical teaching in the hospital. Whoever wins the contract, I want the university to be established in the grounds of the hospital, sharing the resources with our health services. In that way the teaching facility can attract university scholarships and research funding and a precinct that will attract further medical specialists, thereby expanding the hub. I thank the Minister for Health for coming to Wagga Wagga and joining me to open this wonderful new facility.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN (Willoughby—Minister for Transport) [6.24 p.m.]: I congratulate the member for Wagga Wagga on acquiring these essential health and mental health facilities for his community. I know I speak for all members in this place, especially those who have been here for a number of years, who have witnessed his dogged determination over many years to acquire these vital services for his community. I congratulate him on what has been achieved to date and I urge him to continue with dogged determination to acquire further services for his community. I do not think many members realise that the member for Wagga Wagga also completes 10 years as lead Whip for the Coalition. I congratulate him on behalf of all members; we appreciate his hard work and commitment over many years. It is pleasing to see him not only reach that personal milestone but also achieve so much for his community, which I know many organisations will benefit from for many generations to come.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Gareth Ward): I join the Minister in congratulating the member for Wagga Wagga and I also note the valuable and extraordinary investment he has achieved for his electorate. I also congratulate him on his 10 years as Whip and note he is an inspiration and mentor to younger members in this place.

WOLLONDILLY ELECTORATE BUSHFIRES

Mr JAI ROWELL (Wollondilly) [6.25 p.m.]: I echo the sentiments in relation to the Government Whip. As Deputy Government Whip over the past few months I have valued the leadership, inspiration and guidance of the member for Wagga Wagga as I have settled into my new role. I congratulate him on his 10 years as Whip. I have learnt a lot about delivering for my electorate. His achievements in delivering for Wagga Wagga in the past 12 months are amazing.

Today I speak in testament to the brave men and women of New South Wales emergency services, in particular, the NSW Rural Fire Service. The Wollondilly community was recently impacted by fire during what has been reported to be the worst bushfires in New South Wales for over a decade. The State was ablaze with more than 100 separate incidents, with particular devastation in the Blue Mountains, the Great Lakes, the Southern Highlands and Wollondilly. I place on record at the outset my true admiration for the work of the NSW Rural Fire Service and the Wollondilly-Southern Highlands incident management team, headed by Inspector Ashley Frank and my new best mate Inspector David Stimson.

Rural Fire Service personnel were complemented by Inspector Fryer and his team and Superintendent Quarmby from Emergency Services NSW, to name but a few. On Thursday 17 October, while supporting the Lions Club barbecue on level 9 in this place, I was made aware of the worsening fire situation in Wollondilly and around the State. A fire had started just outside my electorate and was moving at great speed towards the townships of Balmoral, Buxton, Yanderra and Bargo. I received a call from a close friend, the Deputy Mayor of Wollondilly, Lou Amato, whose backyard at that moment was on fire. The fire came with unexpected ferocity, fuelled by dense undergrowth in nearby bushland.

Minister Goward and I were excused from question time by the Premier to return to our respective electorates and we battled the gridlocked traffic to head home. Upon arriving at the fire control centre we were brought up to speed with the current situation—high temperatures, strong winds and a fire front in one section over 17 kilometres in length. The southerly change did not bring the level of respite that we had hoped for, as it now pushed the extensive fire front towards the township of Wilton. On that day I saw residents lose their homes, sheds, cars and livestock. I saw pristine vistas hazed over with smoke and stretches of land on which I drive daily turned into unrecognisable, barren landscapes. But amid this chaos I also saw in my community human nature at its best.

What I witnessed on the fire ground, in the control centre, in the emergency evacuation points and in the community in general was such generosity and goodwill that it has filled my heart. It is often said that the true testament of a man is how he rises to the challenges laid before him. I believe this sentiment is applicable to all our communities as well. Brave men and women from Wollondilly and surrounding suburbs and towns selflessly volunteered their time, exposing themselves to the dangers of Mother Nature, to protect their community. I saw dedicated emergency services staff work tirelessly to implement plans with the diligence of true professionals.

I saw members of the Brethren Church and other church and community groups activate so quickly and with such organisation to provide aid and offer their churches as an evacuation centre that it would make any member of this place envious of their potential campaigning skills. I saw Lions clubs, Rotary and all the other groups that make a town a community rise up to the challenge and provide the care that was required. I saw a community activate via social media with messages of support and the sharing of information to ensure residents remained informed. Inspector David Stimson of the Rural Fire Service is to be commended for his strategic and measured use of the Southern Highlands Rural Fire Service Facebook page to keep a steady flow of accurate information. In fact, the membership of the page went from just over 1,500 subscribers to over 16,000 in a matter of days.

It is worth mentioning that despite such extensive damage over the past fortnight, we are not yet officially into summer. That being said, I am confident in the resilience of the people of New South Wales, in particular, Wollondilly. However, this confidence is mitigated with the knowledge that disaster can strike at any moment and I am fully aware of the price we pay for the lifestyle we lead in rural and regional townships, often at the urban interface of bushland. For this reason we, as a State, must remain vigilant against complacency. Now is the time to make a bushfire survival plan. Now is the time to discuss with family members, including children, what to do in the event of an emergency. Now is the time to take stock of what has just happened and use this knowledge to our advantage.

I cannot remember a time that I have been prouder of the Wollondilly community than over the past fortnight. We united as one to face the challenges that were laid before us. We may have taken a few hits and breathed in our fair share of smoke but we came out the other side all the better. I place on record my condolences to the residents of the Blue Mountains and those in other parts of the State affected by the recent bushfires. My sympathies go to the member for Blue Mountains, her constituents and other people in this place, such as Joe. May they recover and may we all prepare well for the future. I thank all those who assisted in our time of need.

PROSPECT RESERVOIR 125TH ANNIVERSARY

Mr ANDREW ROHAN (Smithfield) [6.30 p.m.]: This year marks the 125th anniversary of a remarkable piece of infrastructure in my electorate of Smithfield: Prospect Reservoir. Shortage of reliable water supplies to Sydney was noted in the late 1860s as the population continued to grow. It took two major government inquiries over a period of 13 years before funding was allocated; thus construction commenced in 1880 and was completed in 1888. This marked the beginning of an era when a reliable water supply system for Sydney was established. Prospect Reservoir is built at the headwaters of Prospect Creek on the site of an extinct volcano. This earth-filled dam has a wall that is 2.2 kilometres long and 26 metres high. The wall was raised another half metre in 1898. The 50,000 megalitre Prospect Reservoir is the centrepiece and part of a bigger, magnificent and visionary infrastructure known as the Upper Nepean Scheme. The scheme was built in a can-do era and the reservoir was designed as a water storage facility with no significant catchment area of its own. The other two parts of the scheme comprise the upper canal and the lower canal.

The vision behind the scheme's design is simple: it involved collecting water from the Southern Highlands, where it rained frequently and heavily, and transferring that harvested water by gravity for storage in Prospect Reservoir. The scheme was built in a number of stages. Stage one was completed in 1888 and comprised a series of tunnels, canals and aqueducts along approximately 64 kilometres. Water flowed by gravity all the way from Pheasants Nest Weir, at the confluence of the Nepean and Cordeaux rivers by tunnel to Appin, then merged with another tunnel taking water from Cataract River at the Broughton Pass Weir. From Appin the canal meanders through the countryside all the way to Prospect Reservoir. The second stage was built between 1902 and 1935 following the 1901-02 drought. Cataract Dam was completed in 1907, followed by Cordeaux Dam in 1926, Avon Dam in 1927 and finally Nepean Dam in 1935. These four dams massively increased the availability of water for Sydney and are another example of the can-do mentality.

In 1960 the massive Warragamba Dam project was completed, creating a two million megalitre reservoir known as Lake Burragorang, which is connected by a pipeline to Prospect Reservoir delivering water by gravity. Prospect Reservoir remained the centre of Sydney's water supply network, supplying 20 per cent to 40 per cent of Sydney's water needs. Finally, the construction of the Shoalhaven scheme between 1971 and 1977, which enables water to be supplied by either the upper canal or Warragamba Dam to Prospect Reservoir, provided an invaluable source of water in times of drought. This water scheme also is used to supply the New South Wales South Coast. Today water from the upper canal and Warragamba pipeline bypasses Prospect Reservoir. However, the reservoir can still be used in times of high water needs. The third part of this comprehensive project is the lower canal, which travelled from Prospect Reservoir to pipe head at Guildford and then by pipeline into Sydney.

On the morning of Friday 25 October I was pleased to accompany the Hon. Katrina Hodgkinson, MP, the Minister for Primary Industries, to Prospect Reservoir to announce the discovery of heritage items as Prospect Reservoir was being upgraded. Lowering the water level to allow for the \$13.7 million maintenance work at the reservoir exposed some heritage artefacts dating from Sydney's early colonial period and possibly belonging to explorer William Lawson—one of three pioneer explorers who crossed the Blue Mountains in 1813. I also had the honour of accompanying the Minister for Finance, the Hon. Andrew Constance, who visited the electorate on the same day, to inspect the \$1.2 million dollar upgrade of the Prospect Reservoir pipelines. As the member for Smithfield, I can only say thank you to the New South Wales Government for continued investment in our Western Sydney infrastructure.

JANNALI AND COMO TRAIN TIMETABLES

Mr BARRY COLLIER (Miranda) [6.35 p.m.]: As I waited this morning for the 8.10 a.m. city-bound train at Jannali station I spoke with Mr John Ansell, who was accompanied by his guide dog. Mr Ansell works as a volunteer with Careline, a telephone counselling service operated by the Salvation Army at Five Dock. Before the train timetable changes on 20 October, Mr Ansell caught a regular peak-hour train from Jannali direct to Rockdale each morning. From there he caught his regular bus to Five Dock. However, the new timetable changed all that. His Jannali train no longer stops at Rockdale station in the morning peak hour. If Mr Ansell wants to get directly to Rockdale to catch his bus, he must now get an earlier train and change platforms with his guide dog, navigating his way through an already overcrowded Hurstville station, and up the stairs if the lifts are not working.

John and his guide dog, on which he is so reliant, have had to change their whole morning routine and make new arrangements just to get to work at Five Dock, now via Hurstville. Mr Ansell is just one of many people in the shire forgotten by the Minister in the new timetable. Paul, who works at Kogarah, is a partially sighted commuter who uses a cane. He too must leave home earlier and change trains and platforms at the crowded Hurstville station because his regular train from Jannali no longer stops at Kogarah. In a letter to me dated 22 October Mrs C of GyMEA Bay wrote:

As a senior citizen, I and others need to frequently visit specialists and medical centres at Kogarah. I no longer drive there by car as parking is a great problem ... It is extremely difficult for older passengers to change trains at Sutherland or Hurstville in order to reach their appointment on time.

I would be grateful if you could consider this problem on behalf of your aged constituents.

These are not isolated cases. Early on the third day of the new timetable I met two people—Mr J and Mrs K—waiting on Jannali station for a train to get to their appointments at Kogarah before 9.00 a.m. They are outpatients at St George Hospital undergoing chemotherapy treatment. As if they did not have enough to worry about, they now have to leave home earlier and change trains and platforms at Hurstville just to keep these very important appointments. That same day I also met Tina, standing on the platform by herself. Tina is a working mother of three boys who attend school at Kogarah. She used to catch the same train with them on her way to work in the city. Now Tina gets a different train from her sons because they have to change trains at Hurstville to get to school. This is the case of a mother whose precious time with her children has been cut because their train no longer stops at Kogarah.

Under the new timetable Jannali has lost four peak-hour services between 7.00 a.m. and 8.00 a.m. From my reading of the new timetable, the whole shire does not have a direct service to Kogarah for three hours in the morning peak hour. For instance, after the 6.46 a.m. train from Jannali the next train to stop at Kogarah leaves Jannali at 9.36 a.m.—a gap of around three hours. Removing these direct services in the morning peak hour from the shire to Kogarah is causing considerable hardship to those with disabilities, those who work at

Kogarah, those who attend medical specialist appointments, those who receive outpatient treatment or visit loved ones at the three major St George hospitals, including Calvary, and the many students attending the four large St George high schools and the Kogarah TAFE.

In my very first question on my return to Parliament I asked the transport Minister to restore the peak-hour services cut from Jannali and Como, as well as direct services from the shire to Kogarah, which were removed under the new timetable. While the Minister was at pains to tell me that services had been increased at other stations, she did not address at all the issue of service cuts to Jannali, Como and Kogarah. Instead, the Minister made the astonishing statement:

Even at those stations that in the peak periods may receive one, two or three fewer services, customers will have a better experience.

Mr Ansell, Paul, Mrs C, Mr J and Mrs K, and Tina are the forgotten people of the timetable. For them the changes have not produced a better experience. On the contrary, it has made their lives so much more difficult and more demanding than they ever needed to be.

They ask why, for example, every train in the morning peak from the shire must stop at Wolli Creek whilst none stop at Kogarah. Rather than doggedly defending a timetable that disadvantages so many in my community, the Minister must listen to the people. She can start by consulting the shire community and undertaking a serious review of this timetable. On behalf of the forgotten people of the timetable, I demand that she does this as a matter of urgency.

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Parliamentary Secretary) [6.40 p.m.]: It is all very well for the member from Miranda to cherry-pick individual cases. On the Illawarra line the new timetable introduces 149 new services per week and 55 express services per week. The Government estimates that only 2 per cent of passengers have to change trains at Hurstville and there are lifts available to those commuters. What the member for Miranda omits is the 98 per cent of residents who have benefited from this new timetable. The member does not mention the extra services at Miranda, Gymea and Kirrawee in his electorate.

The Cronulla line has two extra services in the morning peak between 6.00 a.m. and 9.00 a.m., three extra services during the afternoon peak between 3.00 p.m. and 7.00 p.m., four minutes shaved off the average travelling time to the city in the morning peak and 2½ minutes shaved off the average travelling time in the afternoon peak. The member spoke of St George Hospital, but patients going to St George Hospital benefit from direct train services to Kogarah from 10.00 a.m. onwards—in time for appointments. When the timetable is rewritten we cannot improve the travel experience for 100 per cent of people. However, for the overwhelming majority of people this timetable is good news.

BALMAIN ELECTORATE ARTS

Mr JAMIE PARKER (Balmain) [6.41 p.m.]: This evening I will speak about the important role that arts play within my electorate of Balmain. Many members will be aware that the inner west is home to vibrant and varied art organisations, artists and creative industries. Our vibrant arts community is what makes our area so special. There are photographers, printmakers, designers, painters, milliners, jewellers, publishers, illustrators, architects, animators, videographers, musicians and so many other creative types. Balmain is renowned for its vibrant arts community. I am committed to making it even better, particularly by supporting local artists and art organisations. I have been working in my electorate on a wideranging strategy to further enliven our arts community.

Last month I hosted local forums for artists, organisations and anyone who loves the arts to have their say on how we can help foster our creative community, enliven our local arts scene and help facilitate arts programs and projects in our area. These forums formed part of the consultation process to help us develop an integrated arts strategy that will support local artists, and revitalise and invigorate the creative community. Some fantastic ideas came from the meetings and we want to help make those ideas happen. It has been very heartening to see so much interest in the arts. We have consulted with artists and organisations and a number of suggestions have been raised, including the need for more affordable studios and venues for artists, support for artist-run initiatives and help with applications for grants funding. As part of our consultations we are forming a network of artists, artisans, local arts organisations and art lovers to create innovative new projects in our community.

We identified two distinct projects that we will be moving forward within the coming months. First, I refer to sculptures by the bay, which is an exciting proposal to create an open-air exhibition to showcase local

work. The first step will be to establish a committee of dedicated local artists and interested residents to drive the project. I will be meeting with interested people next week and hope to move forward with this idea as soon as possible and work in a collaborative manner with the council of the City of Sydney. Second, I refer to a weekend event at Callan Park to bring people to the area and showcase as many artists and organisations as possible. This can be used to test the potential of securing long-term space for ongoing exhibitions and events and to help secure the Callan Park master plan, which is so important for this site. I have arranged a time to inspect the potential building for this event and will be forming a local committee to drive the project. It is very important for me that our community comes together to own and drive these projects. I am delighted that there has been strong interest in both projects.

Another aspect of the broader art strategy is to facilitate networking of local artists. In the next few weeks I will be hosting the first network event at a local art gallery. It is an important part of our strategy to bring artists, practitioners, exhibitors and others together to share their ideas and build enthusiasm. It came out of the arts forum and we see it as a great way to encourage collaboration within the arts community and provide opportunities for creativity to flourish. I acknowledge the many great arts organisations in my electorate such as the Annandale Hotel, the Bald Faced Stag and other pubs and clubs in the area that provide music and entertainment.

Other organisations include: Sydney College of the Arts, Artspark Studio, Art Est. Gallery and Art School, Breathing Colours, Cabinet of Wonder, dLux Media Arts, Legs on the Wall, NSW Writers Centre, one+2 Artist Studios and Gallery, Punch Gallery, Archway 1 Theatre Company, Articulate Project Space, Arterial Gallery, Australian International Conservatorium of Music, Boomalli Aboriginal Artists Cooperative, OedSpace gallery, Embelish Atelier, Flourish Arts, Gallery Red, Ginkgo Gallery and Studio, Glass Artists' Gallery, Higher Ground Studio, Inner City Clayworkers Gallery, Kate Owen Gallery and Studio, Kinema Film Society, Leichhardt Espresso Chorus, Metropolitan Orchestra and Poetry in Action.

There are many businesses and organisations that I have not mentioned, but that list is an indication of the extensive arts community in Balmain. It is important that we engage and enjoy the arts. I encourage all members of this House to continue to support the arts. I look forward to working with the Minister for the Arts to encourage grant support for our local community. It is important when we visit galleries and attend live music venues that we open our pocket and purchase some of the art. In this way, we support the artists and exhibitors of art and ensure they can follow their dreams, express their love for the arts and share their love of art with the community.

KU-RING-GAI HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson) [6.46 p.m.], by leave: Dr Harriet Biffin is not a household name, but thanks to the Ku-ring-gai Historical Society she will never be forgotten. Dr Biffin is just one of the thousands of colourful characters brought to life by the Ku-Ring-Gai Historical Society, which celebrates its fiftieth birthday in one week's time. Dr Biffin practised in Lindfield from 1904 to 1928 and was notorious for doing house calls in a dogcart, wearing a straw boater and a suit, while exercising her flair for the Greek language. One can only imagine the impact she would have had on Ku-ring-gai's rather conservative establishment: a woman dressed as a man offering medical advice peppered with Greek.

Dr Biffin also joined with Dr Lucy Bullett to found the NSW Association of Registered Women Doctors. The pair then went on to open the New Hospital for Women and Children in Surry Hills, which became the Rachel Forster Hospital for Women and Children in Redfern in 1921, a bastion of women's health. She was not only a great contributor to women's health but also a wonderful personality in Ku-ring-gai's rich and colourful history. That history has been tirelessly documented by the volunteers and members of the Ku-ring-gai Historical Society.

On 7 November the society turns 50. I am looking forward to joining its members and volunteers on the night for an anniversary celebration dinner at Roseville Golf Club. The Ku-ring-gai Historical Society was formed in 1963 when Ku-ring-gai Council cast a wide net to find a team of local residents willing and experienced enough to document their municipality's history. It was the remarkable foresight of Mayor George Nicol that brought together representatives from business, schools and service clubs, genealogists and members from the Royal Australian Historical Society to collate Ku-ring-gai's history.

Councillor Nicol was elected first president and Sir John Northcott, a former New South Wales Governor, was the first patron of the society. One of the society's first decisions was to invite each newly elected

mayor of Ku-ring-gai to be patron of the society, a tradition that is still in force today. Archibald and Nancy Gray, both prominent genealogists, were among the first members. It is because of these dedicated founding members, with their enormous wealth of experience and passion for the past, that the Ku-ring-gai Historical Society has catapulted from strength to strength, offering maps, heritage listings, water board sketches, land titles, an enormous database on local people and places and more than 10,000 local photos.

Today it boasts more than 600 members and 90 volunteers and it is housed in the old Gordon Public School, adjacent to the Gordon library. Volunteers offer their expertise in research to the public every day except Wednesdays and Sunday, when the database is built. Queries from the public range from questions about the origin of their street name or Aboriginal art they glimpsed in the bush. A local resident may be curious about Ku-ring-gai's famous sphinx, the 110-year-old former Killara post office, or how a gentleman with the name of Eccleston du Faur was responsible for creating Ku-ring-gai's much-loved national park.

These days, computers make the job of research so much easier. In the early days of the society its volunteers often travelled to the Mitchell Library in the city to research information. One of the most popular meetings hosted by the society occurs on the first Saturday of every month when the family history group meets. Help is on hand to newcomers who want to explore their family tree but have no idea where to start. The society has also produced publications about Ku-ring-gai's colourful history, including *Focus on Ku-ring-gai*, *Women of Ku-ring-gai* and its annual research publication *The Historian*, which combines local history, built heritage and family histories.

At the moment society volunteers are scouring local honour boards and war memorials to assist them in writing a World War I compendium which will list and provide the history of all Ku-ring-gai residents who served during the Great War, including nurses and ancillary staff. The society has inspired thousands of local residents to connect with each other and their pasts. It is a marvellous interest, in particular, for retirees, with their research assisting the whole community to understand a little more about what has shaped Ku-ring-gai. It has been a fabulous and productive 50 years for the society. I hope the next 50 years of recording and documenting the times we live in now prove just as fruitful.

Private members' statements concluded.

**The House adjourned, pursuant to standing and sessional orders, at 6.51 p.m. until
Tuesday 12 November 2013 at 12 noon.**
