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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Wednesday 20 November 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.

LAW ENFORCEMENT (POWERS AND RESPONSIBILITIES) AMENDMENT (ARREST WITHOUT WARRANT) BILL 2013

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

CROWN LANDS AMENDMENT (MULTIPLE LAND USE) BILL 2013

Message received from the Legislative Council returning the bill with amendments.

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

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Notices of Motions

General Business Notices of Motions (General Notices) given.

NATIONAL DISABILITY INSURANCE SCHEME (NSW ENABLING) BILL 2013

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 19 November 2013.

Mr ROB STOKES (Pittwater—Parliamentary Secretary) [10.11 a.m.]: I make a contribution to debate on the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NSW Enabling) Bill 2013. I am delighted to have the opportunity to speak in support of such historic and important legislation, which will directly benefit the most vulnerable in our communities, provide additional support for families in greatest need, and help to establish a strong and sustainable disability care system for the future. I am proud that New South Wales has been so proactive in response to this issue. New South Wales is the first State to reach an agreement with the Commonwealth Government to enable a trial period to commence. We are now setting the legislative structure in place to ensure the smoothest possible introduction of this scheme.

The National Disability Insurance Scheme will be a momentous step forward in the delivery of disability care services in New South Wales. I have spoken with many local families in my community, and in particular I commend the Lawrence family of Mona Vale. It is very easy to look at the big changes that will occur, how many will benefit, the hundreds of millions of dollars that will be invested and the thousands of services that will be involved, but what is most important is how this legislation will benefit individuals and families in local communities throughout the State. For many years these individuals and families have spoken about the enormous challenges that exist, the shortfalls and gaps in services, and the fears and uncertainties they hold about the future—in particular, ageing parents of children with disabilities.

In the short period since the launch phase has been underway in the Hunter, we have already heard some encouraging reports about positive changes being made and transformations in how people living with disabilities are conducting their lives. As we know, the transition of the National Disability Insurance Scheme across the rest of the State will take place between 2016 and 2018, and by mid-2018 the Commonwealth Government will have full responsibility for administering the scheme through the National Disability Insurance

Agency and supporting ministerial council. For now New South Wales has the key responsibility of removing obstructive legislative barriers, ensuring continuity of service is guaranteed and facilitating the smooth transfer of entities, employees and assets.

The bill is designed to ensure that this transition takes place in the most unobtrusive and seamless way for those currently receiving services and their families. I am pleased to note that that focus on a seamless transition is the number one priority of both the Government and the Minister. I applaud this vital approach. We know that around 140,000 people in this State will be participating in the scheme by 2018—this will include 50,000 people accessing support for the first time. We also know that from 2018 the National Disability Insurance Scheme will effectively see a doubling of funding currently provided for disability services in New South Wales to more than \$6 billion per annum.

The bill provides for implementation arrangements to be made, which will include the capacity to establish corporate and other entities and package-up service delivery in a way that is appealing to everyone involved in the sector. The bill will also enable the transfer of the invaluable State disability workforce in a way so that people with disability can continue to be supported by the staff who support them now—people they know, trust and are comfortable with. As anyone who has spoken to individuals and families in these situations knows, these relationships are of critical importance, particularly when so many changes are already taking place and the normal routines to which they have become accustomed are being altered or challenged.

The bill will also offer protections to those staff moving into the disability sector, including the transfer of annual leave, sick leave and superannuation entitlements. Other protections can also be built into agreements with new employers, including employment guarantee periods. New South Wales wants to give existing staff the best possible start in the sector, which is obviously going to need tens of thousands of additional employees over the coming years. Last night the member for Sydney made an eloquent speech in this debate, but I was troubled by some of the issues he raised. I want to refute his explicit criticisms of the role of disability providers whose services and contributions are based on Christian principles. A diversity of choice at the individual level is fundamental to these reforms. I do not believe that we should be restricting or bureaucratising the role of non-government organisations.

In particular, I noted with concern that the member had heard reports of lesbian, bisexual, gay, transgender and intersex people being discriminated against and receiving unfair treatment from religious service providers. If the member for Sydney is aware of issues involving unlawful discrimination I encourage him to talk to the people involved and to bring those matters to the attention of the appropriate authorities. The member for Sydney also said that an Ageing, Disability and Home Care officer had given him a strong assurance that the Government will include provisions in all contracts for the transfer of disability care to prevent any form of discrimination against disability clients or staff.

Whilst I strongly endorse the member's comments in relation to unlawful discrimination, I note that provision of a contract which sought to undermine the existing exemptions allowing for religious freedoms by religious bodies would require legislative amendment. Obviously an illegal contract provision that sought to undermine a legislative protection would be vitiated. It would be void from the moment it was written. Importantly, contracts cannot undermine existing legislative protections. With such momentous, significant and somewhat emotional changes underway, I am pleased that we have such a competent and effective chief executive officer overseeing the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care and the passage of this entire process. Jim Longley is not only one of my predecessors, having served as the member for Pittwater between 1986 and 1996 and as a Minister in the Fahey Government, but also someone who has an in-depth knowledge of care and disability issues. Jim is genuinely passionate about reforms and long-term improvements in this sector.

The bill will enable State assets to be vested in organisations in ways that will enable them to be used most effectively for the delivery of disability and care services. Where these assets are land, such as the hundreds of group homes throughout New South Wales, the bill contains mechanisms in which to transfer them in a range of ways to safeguard the best interests of our State. I am fully aware that these are major, wide-reaching reforms. By the end of the transition period New South Wales will no longer provide or fund disability services in the traditional way. This is certainly significant and represents a major change. However, we will see these services provided by a range of specialist non-government providers.

Individuals will be free to choose where to direct their funding to purchase the services they want. We are fortunate to have some great non-government providers also operating in this sector. Those non-government providers will now be able to expand, diversify and focus their services to capture the increasing demand that

will exist. Indeed, they will be able to use their unique histories and services to enable a greater range of choice than currently exists. Certainly with the expertise that I mentioned of the Chief Executive for Ageing, Disability and Home Care, Jim Longley, and under and the direction of the Minister for Disability Services, the Hon. John Ajaka, MLC, I am very confident in the process being undertaken. Along with all members of the House, I look forward to families throughout New South Wales beginning to benefit from what is not just a major investment of funds but also a complete rethink, realignment and reform of the way we look after and care for the most vulnerable in our community. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr TIM OWEN (Newcastle) [10.19 a.m.]: I make a short contribution to debate on the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NSW Enabling) Bill 2013. We have heard from the previous Minister, Andrew Constance, and the current Minister, the Hon. John Ajaka, on this bill. I will not go into the detail of the legislation but suffice to say that it is designed to protect the fundamental human rights of people with a disability and to assist with the transfer from the current fragmented, broken, State-based system to one that puts the individual at the heart of decision-making. It is about choice and control.

We have started the National Disability Insurance Scheme trial in the Hunter, and some rather unfortunate comments and accusations have been made about the commencement of the delivery of the National Disability Insurance Scheme which relate in particular to the Stockton Centre. As both Ministers have mentioned, currently we pour between \$2.7 billion and \$2.9 billion into the National Disability Insurance Scheme which affords a level of service to about 90,000 people. By 2018 the State Government will be contributing \$3.1 billion and the Federal Government will be contributing \$3.3 billion for a total of \$6.4 billion in New South Wales to assist of the order of 140,000 to 145,000 people with a disability. These are the most vulnerable people in our country and in our State.

Much of the commentary in Newcastle has centred around the Stockton Centre. As Andrew Constance made very clear yesterday and as Minister Ajaka has also made very clear, the National Disability Insurance Scheme does not in any way affect the commitments made to the families, the carers and, more importantly, the residents of the Stockton Centre. We made a commitment, as did the previous Labor Government, that we would engage very closely with each family on an individual basis to look at what their requirements would be as they move forward. We have always made it clear that the current facilities at Stockton are not up to standard. They do not meet the legal requirements for what we as the State Government are required to deliver for the most vulnerable in our society.

We have always made it very clear that we would look to redevelop the Stockton Centre and that the residents who wished to remain on site and their families would have the opportunity in each of their individual consultations to make that clear to us. I say again to the people of Newcastle that we have made a commitment to look at the Stockton Centre, to redevelop the Stockton Centre and to allow residents who wish to remain on site to do so in that redeveloped facility. There is a lot of work to do on this and there will be a lot of discussions and negotiations with individual residents and their families, but the commitment is there. It has never changed. It is unfortunate that a scare campaign has been whipped up to the effect that everybody will have to move and that the centre will close by 2018, et cetera.

These facilities will be redeveloped by 2018 but there has been no articulation from this Government that the centre will close—a point that I make clear for the people of Newcastle. To the residents of the Stockton Centre and their families and carers I say: We will work closely with you and we will deliver what you want. A huge amount of money will be available for these people, the most vulnerable in our society, to have control of and choice for their future, which I think is wonderful. We should all be rejoicing at what the National Disability Insurance Scheme brings to the table. For the first time ever in the history of this country people with severe disabilities will be on an equal footing with everybody else in our society, and that is nothing other than wonderful.

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON (Camden) [10.24 a.m.]: I support the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NSW Enabling) Bill 2013. The implementation of this scheme will be undertaken by the independent statutory agency the National Disability Insurance Agency. The National Disability Insurance Scheme is to better the lives of people living with a significant and permanent disability, and their families and carers. People with a disability will now have far greater opportunities to live life how they choose as a result of this scheme. It is an insurance-based model of funding where people with a disability will be able to access and purchase the services they need. Currently funding is allocated to service providers. However, under the new scheme people will be given direct access to funding to administer themselves or through a broker should they choose to.

Something that people not living with a disability take for granted every day is the choice that they have in making decisions about how they receive support or services in any number of areas. I believe that Minister Ajaka hit the nail on the head by describing the scheme and its purpose as:

... the promotion of a vibrant and competitive market of services and supports across communities in New South Wales that will need to respond to the desires and aspirations of people with disability and bring new approaches, innovation and flexibility to bear in how supports are arranged.

Minister Ajaka clearly summed up what this scheme will do and how it will impact positively on the lives of people with a disability. I acknowledge the efforts of Minister Ajaka. In the short time that he has been a Minister he has already been to my electorate and visited a couple of places that provide tremendous services. One in particular was Sunflower Cottage. It was great that the Minister could come and visit and bring a \$20,000 cheque to help redo the playground. That will help Sunflower Cottage to continue to deliver the outstanding service it provides. I thank the Minister for his support for services in my electorate, particularly at such an early stage of being a Minister.

Changes through this scheme bring the single greatest investment in disability services in the history not only of New South Wales but also of Australia. This social insurance scheme addresses the need for a new, better coordinated funding model for people living with disabilities. It is recognised that this can be better achieved through a national approach rather than at a State level. This national scheme will provide individualised funding to people with a disability. I commend the Government for leading the way and being the first to sign up to the national scheme. The former Minister for Disability Services, Andrew Constance, led the charge and signed up before any other State. I think that really shows the commitment of this Government to supporting this scheme and how much value it places on it. I commend Minister Constance for doing so. I also commend those opposite and their Federal counterparts for the bipartisan support that the scheme has received.

Mr Clayton Barr: It was our idea.

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON: This scheme is something that the entire Parliament understands and believes will help people with disabilities to live their lives. This is one of those schemes that everybody in this Chamber supports. That is a very positive thing. This bill provides the necessary framework to ensure the success of the scheme in New South Wales. Currently the National Disability Insurance Scheme is underway in the Hunter, and we have just had the member for Newcastle tell us a bit about that. We have received positive feedback on the outcomes for people using the scheme in that area. As part of New South Wales's commitment and transition to the scheme, it was agreed that we will no longer be a provider of specialist disability services or community care supports. This is because a redesign of the disability services sector is needed, moving away from government-directed services towards client-directed services. Non-government providers are often locally based and more responsive. They are best placed to respond to demand and will not restrict diversity and innovation in a growing market like a dominant public sector could.

I acknowledge the highly important work and the range of support that the Government and community sector agencies have provided to people with disabilities in New South Wales. Over the years the agencies have gathered an enormous wealth of knowledge and expertise in the provision of disability services. Staff will need to move or transfer to new employers, and this bill provides the mechanisms to protect employee entitlements including the transfer of sick leave, annual leave and superannuation entitlements. Employment guarantee periods can also be built into agreements. This bill and the changes it will bring will allow for holistic service delivery that is consistent with the National Disability Insurance Scheme approach. The bill provides for a smooth transition to the scheme and assets will be able to be vested to meet the sector's increased demand for services.

Feedback on this first stage of implementation will be important and it will be taken into account to ensure that the bill is meeting its objectives. The Minister and the Government have made it clear that this is an evolving scheme and any feedback and constructive criticism to improve the scheme would be welcome. This bill will bring control, choice and opportunity to those in our communities living with disabilities. It is important that we support this bill which will enable people with disabilities to live their lives in the way that they want to. The Government is proud of this bill and I commend Minister Ajaka for his work on it. The Minister would be the first to acknowledge his hardworking staff that he has mentioned to me on more than one occasion. He would like me to acknowledge and thank them for their efforts. Adam Zairth did an outstanding job in Health and has now become the Minister's chief of staff. He is a great asset. Alasdair Cameron, who is not on my upcoming preselection panel, is a bright young spark who does a great job. Warren Hudson, Nell Brown, Tina

Daniels and Chelsea Collington also do outstanding work in the Minister's office. It is good to give credit where credit is due. It would be appreciated if the member for Balmain gave the Government a bit more credit for its achievements. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) [10.33 a.m.]: I appreciate the Coalition Government's support for this important Labor initiative. The Government is trying to steal the glory now that the rubber is hitting the road but it was dragged kicking and screaming into signing up to the National Disability Insurance Scheme. The veracity of that claim can be checked by reading the comments of Prime Minister Tony Abbott during the original debate on this issue. The object of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NSW Enabling) Bill 2013 is to authorise and facilitate the transfer of the State's public sector disability service assets in connection with the implementation of the National Disability Insurance Scheme. We need to know a number of things from the outset of this debate, the first of which is that Labor is extremely proud of the scheme and the opportunities it will bring.

The bipartisan support that now exists for this concept was based on some fairly broad brushstrokes. Some grander, big picture concepts were part of the discussion when the scheme was first touted; however, we are now at the pointy end and broad brushstrokes no longer suffice. We need significant, complete and complex detail about the entire scheme and not just the current Newcastle rollout. Much has been said about the rollout of the scheme in the Hunter and one could be forgiven for thinking that the scheme is broadly available in the whole region. The Hunter comprises 11 local government areas and the reality is that it is not available in all of them. In the 2013-14 financial year it is available only in the Newcastle local government area. In 2014-15 it will be available in Newcastle and Lake Macquarie. In 2015-16 Maitland will be added to the areas in which the scheme is available and Cessnock will be added in 2017-18. Beyond 2018 it will be rolled out across the State and country.

It must be made clear that when we talk about the Hunter in this debate today we are specifically talking about the rollout in Newcastle. Constituents in the Cessnock electorate will not be able to access the scheme for three or four years. Because the pointy end of the legislation is directed only at Newcastle for now, the current concerns are Newcastle-centric. One area of concern is the Stockton Centre, which has been mentioned in this Chamber. Members have commented on the current condition of the centre, its future and potential funding for redevelopment. I acknowledge the contribution by the member for Newcastle to whom I spoke yesterday about the Stockton Centre. I also note the introductory remarks by the Minister for Finance and Services, Andrew Constance, representing the Minister for Ageing, and Minister for Disability Services.

I have had many discussions and briefings and undertaken a lot of background reading but I still do not understand how the Stockton Centre redevelopment will be paid for. As I understand it, there is no bucket of money available for infrastructure. The National Disability Insurance Scheme money is attached to the clients, who are the people with disabilities. We may talk about redeveloping the Stockton Centre but I am not sure where the dollars will come from and I would appreciate an explanation from the Minister in his speech in reply. My understanding of how infrastructure redevelopment would work under the scheme is that if 150 clients were based at Stockton and significant redevelopment was required each of those clients would be asked to make a contribution towards the cost. If it were necessary to spend \$15 million or \$20 million the clients might be asked to contribute \$10,000 or \$15,000 each from their funding. It is my understanding that there is no money for infrastructure. The funding provided through the scheme is personal money that belongs to each client. I would like the Minister to clarify this matter in his reply.

Some staff who live in the Cessnock electorate have contacted me about the rollout. They have concerns around the transfer of conditions, which has been spoken of ad nauseam during this debate. I will impart to the House the information I have on what is currently being rolled out to staff. The heads of agreement, which were negotiated, signed off and agreed to by the Premier, Barry O'Farrell, and the then Prime Minister, Julia Gillard, are effective from 1 July 2018. The significance of that is that during the rollout between today in 2013 and 30 June 2018, there will be enormous uncertainty for staff about the transfer of the conditions. When staff who contacted my office asked the question, the response they were given was, "We don't know the answer to that. We cannot give you any assurances or guarantees because the heads of agreement are ineffective from 1 July 2018."

Mr Christopher Gulaptis: That is five years away.

Mr CLAYTON BARR: Across the Hunter staff who will be transferred out of Disability Services potentially tomorrow and the next day will have complete uncertainty about whether their terms and conditions of employment will be transferred.

Mr Christopher Gulaptis: What are you doing five years from now?

Mr CLAYTON BARR: I acknowledge the interjection by the member for Clarence because he has been through a process whereby public servants lost their working conditions. He knows that creates significant uncertainty and significant discomfort for workers and their families. We must acknowledge that. What will happen in relation to the transfer of conditions for workers? They want to stay in the sector, they want to work in disabilities, and they willingly and happily will transfer to a private operator, provided that the conditions are transferred with them. I think that is pretty reasonable. I ask the Minister to address that issue also during his reply and explain exactly how that will roll out on the ground.

Another concern of the staff is whether or not the level and qualifications for staff under the non-government sector or the private sector will be at the same standard as is currently expected in the government sector today. I think that is a pretty reasonable question as well. If there is one thing we know about privatisation, it is that sometimes the way to save money is on staffing. That might mean less skilled people or fewer people on the ground. These are reasonable questions. As I said, in broad terms we can all agree with the National Disability Insurance Scheme, but we need some details around the practicalities. Another issue that we should be checking on is permanency versus casual employment. Frequently in this House we speak about housing affordability and people being able to own their own home. We all realise and appreciate that it is very difficult to obtain a home loan if the applicant does not have permanent employment and an income. It also is a fairly reasonable concern.

Another concern that has been raised by staff is the fact that families of disabled people will have greater access to the funds owned by disabled people. While we would all like to think that all families do the very best with the money that is made available for their son or daughter who is a family member with a disability, in reality that is not always the case. An example cited to me was a family who wanted to access a client's money to take the dog to the veterinarian to have the dog healed or treated. The family of the disabled person argued that it was reasonable because the disabled person really loved the dog and the dog brought great warmth and joy to the disabled person's life. I do not know whether taking a dog to the veterinarian is a reasonable use of a disabled person's money. Another example concerns having the inside of the house painted because that would improve the life of the disabled person.

Another example is getting a new car. Arguably it may be justified if it is a disability access car and it could accommodate a wheelchair, but what if it is not? What if the car is just a sedan and not compatible with a wheelchair? These are the types of issues that an extreme minority of families use to apply for funding. Checks and balances must be in place. In conclusion, the National Disability Insurance Scheme is a great scheme. We agreed to it in broad terms, but now we are getting down to the details in Newcastle and that process will be widened throughout the Hunter in the next few years. We need to have those checks and balances. It is reasonable for me to ask the questions I have posed and it is reasonable for the Minister to address those concerns during his reply. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Parliamentary Secretary) [10.43 a.m.]: I support the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NSW Enabling) Bill 2013, which will facilitate the rollout of the National Disability Insurance Scheme in New South Wales. The National Disability Insurance Scheme is a historic reform shared between New South Wales and the Commonwealth. It will result in an additional 50,000 people in New South Wales receiving government support for the first time as funding more than doubles by 2018. Central to the campaign to instigate the National Disability Insurance Scheme in Australia was the right for people with disability to choose their supports and control their own funding. The National Disability Insurance Scheme is the outcome of a long and hard struggle by individuals, families, carers and their supporters. The New South Wales Government is determined to honour its commitment to provide choice to people with disabilities instead of people with disability having to fit the services offered to them.

Last year the Government committed to the implementation of the National Disability Insurance Scheme with the first launch site to be in the Hunter. On 1 July this year, the National Disability Insurance Scheme was launched in the Hunter. Full transition to the Commonwealth system will be completed by mid-2018. By the end of the transition period New South Wales will no longer provide or fund disability services or basic community care supports. Instead, those services will be provided by a range of specialist non-government providers, and individuals will be free to choose where to direct their funding to purchase the services they want. This enormous growth in client demand also will require an additional workforce of approximately 25,000 people across New South Wales.

The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NSW Enabling) Bill 2013 aims to remove some legislative barriers that would prevent a smooth transition of services to the non-government sector in a way that maintains continuity of services and minimises the liabilities for the State. The current legislation precludes many essential components required for that transition, such as the direction to transfer employees to other entities and the disposal of group home assets. The bill contains measures that the Government may need to complete the reform. I emphasise that the Government is empowered, but not compelled, to use those measures. The bill will enable the establishment of parameters for current services, assets and staff to transition into the National Disability Insurance Scheme. It also will enable a broad range of functions, including creating corporate entities, arrangements for staff and assets and vesting rights and liabilities by way of order.

The bill will enable the Government to enter into an agreement with the private sector entity under which the employment of staff can be transferred, recognising current staff provisions and the need to maintain expertise in the sector for continuity of support for people with disability. In response to the observations made by the member for Cessnock about continuity and security of employment for workers in this sector and their terms and conditions of employment, it is important to note that demand for skilled disability support staff is high and that opportunities for employees will be increasing. The National Disability Insurance Scheme in New South Wales will create an additional 25,000 jobs. People who are working in that sector currently have a promising future. So far as terms and conditions are concerned, it is important to note that we are operating in an environment in which Commonwealth legislation binds new employers to recognise State industrial instruments for transferring employees.

The bill will enable the maintenance of certain entitlements and award conditions on transfer and for detailed negotiations with new employers to be reflected in agreements. The best protection for workers and their terms and conditions is not excessive regulation but, rather, the strength they have that derives from the high demand for their services. What protects their terms and conditions is the high demand for their services. I hope that will give some comfort in relation to concerns raised by the member for Cessnock. The bill will enable vesting orders to be made in relation to assets, rights and liabilities. That will provide vital resources and infrastructure to the sector to enable the growth required for the National Disability Insurance Scheme.

Of the assets in the Disability Services portfolio, approximately 480 residential properties are currently used for supported accommodation. The bill will allow them to be vested by order to appropriate entities, which may include other parts of government, the community housing sector, non-government organisation disability providers and private sector organisations. The bill has mechanisms that are necessarily flexible to enable the transition of a wide range of services in a way that promotes the best outcomes for people with disability in New South Wales. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr JAMIE PARKER (Balmain) [10.48 a.m.]: On behalf of The Greens, I address the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NSW Enabling) Bill 2013 which is before the House. The bill already has been passed by the upper House of the State Parliament with the support of The Greens, and I will support the bill in this place. However, I will take some time to outline some of the potential risks and some of the concerns that have been expressed to me by parents and carers of people with a disability as well as by staff who work currently in the public sector but who will be transferred to the non-government sector. As we know, this bill provides the legislative framework for the Government to transfer disability service employees and assets to the non-government sector or other public sector agencies, including the Commonwealth, as part of the implementation of the National Disability Insurance Scheme. By the end of the transition period, in July 2018, it is anticipated that depending upon demand the New South Wales Government will no longer provide or fund disability services, so there will be a complete exit of the New South Wales Government from the disability sector. This bill enables the development of transfer processes that allow continuity of services and staffing. That is the aim of the bill. We have heard members talk about the fact that we are now dealing with the detail in the implementation of the National Disability Insurance Scheme and, as we know, the devil is often in the detail.

I congratulate—and I am sure all members congratulate—those individuals who care for a child or young person because, frankly, they have to be fighters. In my electorate many people who have children or who care for children with disabilities are activists by nature of the fact that they have children with such high needs. These activists or fighters are one of the reasons for the introduction of this legislation, which we all support. The rollout has started in four launch sites and, as announced, the O'Farrell Government was the first State Government to sign on to the National Disability Insurance Scheme, committing \$3.1 billion, with the Federal Government providing \$3.3 billion. We have all heard about the positive aspects of this bill. My job in this place is to examine the detail—the potential risks and concerns. One concern I have is that the bill enables

the Minister for Disability Services to transfer State sector disability services assets and employees to the non-government sector. The heads of agreement between the Commonwealth and the New South Wales governments signed by Premier O'Farrell and Prime Minister Gillard included:

33. Following commencement of the full NDIS, the NSW Government will not provide any residual specialist disability services or basic community care services.

For more than 12,000 of the 14,000 people employed by Ageing, Disability and Home Care [ADHC], entitlements such as long service leave and superannuation will be preserved, but other employment guarantees such as permanency will be negotiated. That is causing some concern amongst staff in this sector. I will outline a number of reasons why I think this needs to be highlighted as a concern. We know that full privatisation, or the exit of the government sector from disability service provision, is not compulsory; it is not critical to the National Disability Insurance Scheme. The Productivity Commission inquiry report entitled, "Disability Care and Support" and dated July 2013 explicitly identified a role for State provision. At page 18 under the section headed, "What would it mean for the States and Territories", which refers to the National Disability Insurance Scheme, the report states:

The potential to continue as service providers—but on a competitively neutral basis with other providers.

According to the Minister's second reading speech:

For the National Disability Insurance Scheme to be truly innovative and responsive to the needs of people with disability, the non-Government sector needs to grow and flourish.

Of course the non-government sector needs to grow and flourish, but this ignores the potential for the government sector to be innovative and responsive. We have a fantastic government sector with a number of committed staff members who are doing the right thing by the people for whom they care. This statement does not justify the complete privatisation of public provision. It ignores the ability of the non-government sector to grow and flourish in a mixed public and community sector. I will highlight three or four risks that I see in these steps and urge the Government to consider these matters carefully. There is no evidence that denial of public sector choice will improve outcomes for people with disability. The bill is designed to bring to an end the option of public sector provision. That is, in a sense, reducing the choice of people involved in this sector to have exclusive non-government engagement. We heard the Minister state the following:

For the National Disability Insurance Scheme to be truly innovative and responsive to the needs of people with disability, the non-government sector needs to grow and flourish. I will take a moment to explain why this is necessary: non-government organisations are mainly inclusive, participatory and quality-focused, and they have the capacity to generate social capital in a way that government and the private sector cannot. That social capital is critical to maximising advantages for people with disability and other vulnerable groups.

That undermines the efforts of the 14,000 public sector workers who are involved in this sector and who, in my view, do a sterling job. The Minister has not mounted a case that the public sector needs to be dismantled in order for a diverse non-government sector to develop. Obviously, significant disruption will happen. I have been contacted by two families in particular. One family has a child with high and complex needs. Those family members have spent a great deal of time trying to find the right place for their son. They are happy with the provider which is funded through the New South Wales Government and they do not want to see a change. They have been through a traumatic and difficult period. This will cause significant disruption as some 40 per cent of disability services recipients will move to new providers—an issue that must be managed carefully and with respect to all those involved.

With the exit of the public sector under these provisions there is no provider of last resort. While non-government providers are subject to business failures and unpredictable changes in policy and direction, public providers have in the past provided a base of certainty that enables clients to explore new delivery, secure in the knowledge that they can access a public provider if things do not work out. This will not be the case in the future. It also is clear that while public sector agencies can take risk, there is underlying certainty of continuity in the public sector, which benefits people with a disability. There also is concern about the thin market problem. We know in economics that is something that is obvious in rural and regional areas where the provision of services in the non-government sector is not very robust and the government sector does the heavy lifting. That is something that needs to be radically changed under these proposals as there are people with complex needs.

We know that the complexity of some people's needs might not match the capabilities of non-government service providers. That is a challenge that must be addressed. I am aware of the Stockton issues

where a variety of State services are collated in one residential setting. It appears that the longevity and health of many of the residents—and I am sure we have all heard those stories—stem directly from the accumulation of expertise and learning, and the availability of on-site health, dental, occupational and psychological services. This model is unlikely to be replicated in the non-government sector, which typically does not bring together a range of different services under one management. Cooperative arrangements between different non-government service providers will require time and effort to develop and may not be within the organisational capacity of many community organisations. This is a challenge.

We support the direction of the National Disability Insurance Scheme, but the exit of the public sector leaves us with a number of concerns. In South Australia the public sector has not completely exited the market. In South Australia government disability services will continue. The evidence in South Australia—which is obviously a different market—demonstrates that it is not compulsory or necessary for the public sector to withdraw. In addition to the issues I have raised about parents and carers of people with disability, I have been approached by staff members who work in the government sector who are concerned that pay in the non-government sector is significantly less than it is in the public sector. While their conditions are protected, there is concern about downward pressure on wages and conditions in future as their forced transfer to a new employer might bring with it in the long term the lower rates and conditions that are present in the non-government sector.

In conclusion, concern was expressed in the other place about the speed with which this bill was introduced and the lack of consultation. The parents with whom I have been dealing in my local electorate are vulnerable—people who struggle every day with the complex needs of their children who try to get good services and conditions. It is incumbent on this Government to proceed through this process carefully, slowly and diligently, especially in light of the fact that the State is exiting from service provision—a dramatic change and something about which I am very concerned. I would prefer it if the public sector remained in the mix, but I understand that is not the aim of the Government. I will be supporting this bill.

Mr CHRIS HOLSTEIN (Gosford) [10.58 a.m.]: I support the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NSW Enabling) Bill 2013. I commend Minister Ajaka and, most definitely, his predecessor Minister Constance on their great work. Late last year New South Wales was the first State to sign up to the National Disability Insurance Scheme [NDIS] through a heads of agreement with the Commonwealth Government. This bill enables New South Wales to begin the process to ensure the success of the National Disability Insurance Scheme for those in our community with disabilities. Essentially, the bill lays down a platform over the next five years to give people with disabilities uninterrupted support as they migrate to the National Disability Insurance Scheme, encourage skilled people to remain working in disability services and strengthen the capacity of the disability service sector to transfer buildings, equipment and other assets. The bill enables the Government to put in place a range of possible options for transition to the National Disability Insurance Scheme without committing the Government to any particular option.

The evolution and transition to a National Disability Insurance Scheme will result in placing in the hands of people with disability real choice and control over the supports they need to live the life they want. The scheme will benefit approximately 140,000 people with disability in New South Wales by enabling them to plan their individual funding packages to purchase supports based on an assessment of their capacity and, most definitely, their circumstances. By 2018 the New South Wales Government will spend \$3.1 billion each year on the National Disability Insurance Scheme along with the Commonwealth's annual spend of \$3.3 billion, equating to a total funding package of \$6.4 billion. The scheme was launched in the Hunter area this year and will result in approximately 10,000 people accessing it over the coming three years. This enables the Government to design a steady-as-she-goes approach as part of a progressive rollout across the remainder of the State from July 2016.

Importantly, all policy and operational parameters will be established, tested and confirmed prior to the full State rollout. Our Government is contributing \$585 million to this first-stage rollout. Early feedback is encouraging in that most processes seem to be working, but the next three years is the time for finer tuning. However, importantly, for the first time people with disability will have a choice and control over their support needs rather than continuing the prescriptive nature of services. This new approach will deliver many benefits, including a more competitive and vibrant sector in service and supports across New South Wales communities as they respond to the needs of the disability sector and the introduction of the choice model.

This shift from a prescriptive approach to one of choice and control is monumental and will herald a cultural change from those who service the disability sector into the future. New South Wales has a wide and

diverse non-government sector numbering in the thousands that caters to the disability and community care area. I take this opportunity to mention several organisations in my area. No greater example of a fine organisation dealing with people with disabilities on the Central Coast is there than Coastlink, led by chief executive officer Lynne Rainford and her fine team. We have also the legendary Fairhaven Services, which has operated for decades under the outstanding effort of chief executive officer Jim Bultjens and his team. The Central Coast Disability Network and many others in the area provide services and assist those in our community with disabilities. All of these organisations are embracing the change through the National Disability Insurance Scheme. Being in close contact with their local communities, these organisations have the ability to be innovative and risk taking.

The Government can and will support these organisations to enable them to access a skilled and experienced workforce to achieve the innovation people crave. From 2018 New South Wales will hand over responsibility to the National Disability Insurance Agency for sector development and support funding. This will mean that the existing State service capacity, workforce and expertise will be placed in the hands of the non-government sector and reinvested in the marketplace for the National Disability Insurance Scheme to be successful. The key purpose of the bill is to provide for this transfer through three clear objectives: first, to ensure that the implementation of the National Disability Insurance Scheme delivers maximum continuity of services for people with disability as they make decisions about their future; secondly, to promote the retention of a skilled disability services workforce; and, thirdly, to maximise the capacity of the disability service sector. The bill has been drafted to provide flexibility in the transactions required to implement the move to the National Disability Insurance Scheme. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) [11.04 a.m.]: I contribute to the debate on the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NSW Enabling) Bill 2013. The object of the bill is to authorise and facilitate the transfer of the State's public sector disability services assets in connection with the implementation of the National Disability Insurance Scheme of the Commonwealth. The bill makes detailed arrangements also for the transfer of the employment and entitlements of public sector disability services employees. Presently the non-government disability sector delivers approximately 60 per cent of all disability support services within this State. New South Wales already has invested heavily through the Industry Development Fund to these non-government offices to ensure the sector has the skills and capacity to operate the existing government-run services. Considering the magnitude of the services being provided, it makes sense for the Government to confer more support on the non-government sector to help alleviate the burden on any one agency and to ensure that disabled individuals within our State receive the highest quality care possible.

Clauses 5 and 6 of part 1 of the bill set out and authorise the transfer of assets from the public sector agencies to non-government agencies or to any other public sector agency. This section also confers the power upon the Minister to subsequently provide financial assistance to a person in the non-government sector to whom disability services assets are transferred for the purposes of the authorised implementation. Transferring services to the non-government sector has been underway for over a decade and so far non-government agencies have proved themselves capable of handling and even improving these services. An absolute priority is to ensure that high-quality care and ongoing support services are made available for individuals in our State. Under the former Labor Government, all Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care day programs were shifted to the non-government sector, which was viewed as widely successful, resulting in the delivery of quality, innovative and person-oriented support services throughout New South Wales. I am glad that another fantastic Labor policy, the National Disability Insurance Scheme, has been adopted by the New South Wales Government and that those in need of disability services across our State will receive the assistance they require.

Mr Christopher Gulaptis: Funded by the Coalition.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery): Order! I call the member for Clarence to order for the first time.

Mr Clayton Barr: Funded by the taxpayer.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Sonia Hornery): Order! I call the member for Cessnock to order for the first time.

Mr GUY ZANGARI: The National Disability Insurance Scheme is a landmark piece of legislation that will start the rollout of a plethora of support services that will ensure anyone with a disability in New South Wales will have more options in more locations and support services readily available to assist them. This

transition will pave the way for newer, innovative services to be implemented throughout our local communities, which in turn will significantly benefit disabled individuals in this State. According to the 2011 Census data, approximately 9.1 per cent of individuals in my electorate of Fairfield require help in their day-to-day lives—a significant increase from the 2006 Census data. The growth of disability support services under the National Disability Insurance Scheme will be an enormous boon for those with a disability in my electorate as their lives will be better sooner rather than later.

The implementation of this legislation and the subsequent range of readily available disability support services throughout this State can only bode well for the disabled residents of New South Wales. I have mentioned previously in this Chamber the wonderful workers and, of course, volunteers at the Australian Foundation for Disability [AFFORD] in Canley Vale. I have had the wonderful opportunity on many occasions to visit this marvellous organisation and meet many of its clients. The member for Menai nods in agreement because she too understands the vital work that the Australian Foundation for Disability does not only in my electorate but around New South Wales. The Australian Foundation for Disability is a champion organisation doing great work, particularly to better its Canley Vale facilities through funding from the Community Building Partnerships program. I take my hat off to the wonderful people at the Australian Foundation for Disability in Canley Vale and those providing disability support services across New South Wales. They do a wonderful job in supporting our constituents who have disabilities. I support the bill.

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Menai) [11.10 a.m.]: I am pleased to support the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NSW Enabling) Bill 2013. As someone who worked in the disability sector for a few years, I had the opportunity to meet ordinary families who had children living with a disability: mums and dads who were making sacrifices in their careers, their budgets or their social lives to provide help for their son or daughter who required more care than most children. Some parents had to give up full-time work to become full-time carers for their children because there was no other way to afford the level of care. Even if they could afford the care, it often was not available at the level they needed or did not have the scope they required.

The National Disability Insurance Scheme is Australia's once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to get it right. We still have a long way to go, but I am hopeful because I believe that the scheme will be the first step in giving some of our nation's most vulnerable the support and care they deserve. I have seen firsthand the urgent need for the scheme. I believe people with a disability, their families and carers have waited for far too long. In New South Wales, the Liberals and Nationals already are getting on with the job of personalising service delivery. We have to be ready to go when the National Disability Insurance Scheme is introduced. That is why we are starting to reform the disability sector and improve service delivery to people with a disability and their carers.

Led by our Minister for Ageing and Minister for Disability Services, the Hon. John Ajaka, the Government is committed to empowering people with a disability and allowing them to pick and choose the services they want, rather than being dictated to about the services they can have and the organisations that will provide them. This is a basic human right. This bill provides an opportunity for New South Wales to seize the growing momentum of the National Disability Insurance Scheme and take steps to ensure this generational reform can meet its full potential. For far too long, people with disability have had to fit into the services offered to them, without the power to direct how those supports should be delivered. The National Disability Insurance Scheme builds upon the work being done at State level to redesign this system and represents the greatest single investment in disability in history at both the State and Commonwealth levels.

I thank my colleagues across the floor for their contribution to this historic reform. I also thank all those whose commitment to change has brought about this scheme. It will mean that, more than ever before, a person with disability will have far greater opportunities to live the life they want and make a real and meaningful contribution to their community. The National Disability Insurance Scheme launch is underway in the Hunter. Only four months in, there are already reports of the scheme bringing about positive outcomes for people in the way they live their lives. This will increase as the launch phase continues. The transition to the scheme across the rest of the State is to take place between 2016 and 2018. By mid-2018 the Commonwealth will have full responsibility for administering the scheme, through the National Disability Insurance Agency.

It was agreed when New South Wales committed to the National Disability Insurance Scheme in December last year that once the scheme was fully in force New South Wales would no longer be a provider of specialist disability services or community care supports. I understand that this was for a number of reasons, but the most relevant is that the non-government organisation [NGO] sector can do it better. The diverse range of

non-government organisations in New South Wales is often locally based, more responsive and able to be more innovative than government providers. New South Wales must do all it can to boost the valuable non-government sector so that it, in turn, can deliver the best supports to people with disability within a competitive market. The bill before the House aims to do just that.

The transfer of the New South Wales government service capacity to alternative providers will be crucial to ensuring the sector has the capacity to meet demand, which is expected to expand from 90,000 people currently supported in New South Wales to 140,000 by mid-2018. More than that, the measures in the bill are designed to ensure that this transition takes place in a way that is seamless for those people currently receiving services. This is the Government's number one priority. When I worked at TAD Disability Services, we were always being told that it was difficult to secure funding for disability equipment, particularly for equipment that was not deemed necessary or therapeutic. Families were often forced to turn to community fundraising to pay for equipment such as modified bikes, which were seen as non-essential but were incredibly beneficial recreational items. This is not right. Each piece of equipment has a cost, and each therapist, specialist and respite program has a cost. Having a disability is not cheap.

The bill provides for implementation arrangements to be made that include the capacity to establish corporate and other entities and to package service delivery in a way that is appealing to the sector. It enables the transfer of the invaluable State disability workforce in a way that means that people with disability can continue to be supported by the staff that support them now. These relationships are of critical importance, particularly when so many changes already are taking place. The bill also offers protections to those staff moving into the disability sector, including the transfer of annual leave, sick leave and superannuation entitlements. Other protections can be built into agreements with new employers, including employment guarantee periods. New South Wales wants to give staff the best start in the sector, which is going to need thousands more people over the coming years.

The bill enables State assets to be vested in organisations in ways that enable them to be used most effectively for the delivery of services. Where these assets are land based, such as group homes, the bill contains mechanisms to transfer these assets in a range of ways and to safeguard the interests of the State. Sweeping change is underway in the disability sector, which will mean that people with disability in New South Wales and throughout the country will have far greater opportunities than ever before. As a local member, I am happy to offer any advice I can to the sector. Last week, the Minister for Disability Services, the Hon. John Ajaka, and I met with Disability South West to talk about that organisation's needs now and in the future as it transitions to the scheme. I also met with the Autism Advisory and Support Service and the Young Adults Disabled Association to discuss the support that they will need during the transition phase. I urge members to support this bill to enable New South Wales and the disability sector to deliver the best outcomes for people under the National Disability Insurance Scheme. I thank the staff, the boards and the volunteers of all the organisations involved. I support the bill and commend it to the House.

Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst—Parliamentary Secretary) [11.17 a.m.]: I am proud to support the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NSW Enabling) Bill 2013. This bill is necessary to enable New South Wales to take its first steps towards ensuring the success of the National Disability Insurance Scheme for people with disability in our community. This agreement represents a historic milestone for people with disability and their families and carers not only in New South Wales but throughout this country. It establishes the means by which to deliver equitable and adequate support for people with disability, many of whom have struggled for so long without access to the support they need to live with dignity and respect.

The agreement places real choice and control in the hands of people with disability. The reforms will be delivered through a partnership between New South Wales and the Commonwealth Government and will benefit approximately 140,000 people with disability in New South Wales. The New South Wales commitment of \$3.1 billion will enable people with disability to plan individual funding packages to purchase supports, based on an assessment of their capacity and circumstances. In addition, the Commonwealth will provide \$3.3 billion, making the total funding \$6.4 billion. When I speak to families and individuals on this topic, one of the biggest issues for them is the minefield that has to be navigated to obtain the necessary support. Many families and individuals find it difficult to get the right package. They have to go to different departments and organisations, and getting the necessary support can be a long and arduous trial.

This new insurance scheme will ensure that those with a disability can receive a package that is best suited to their needs. It is a wonderful improvement and I am pleased it has bipartisan support. The scheme will benefit not only New South Wales but also the entire country. The National Disability Insurance Scheme will

allow people with disability to have choice and control over their support services. It will lead to more positive outcomes. Already a suite of support is provided by a diverse disability and community care non-government sector, from small, local volunteer-organised services to large and complex non-government providers.

If the National Disability Insurance Scheme is to be truly innovative and responsive to the needs of people with disability, the non-government sector needs to grow and flourish because non-government organisations are mainly inclusive, participatory and focused on quality. They have the capacity to generate social capital in a way that the government and private sectors cannot. Social capital is critical to maximise advantages for people with disability and other vulnerable groups. Thousands of non-government organisations across New South Wales provide an economic and social benefit. A government service is more conservative, whereas non-government organisations can take risks and influence the views of the community and government about the people they support, leading to greater inclusion, acceptance and transfer of knowledge.

The New South Wales Government has an obligation to people who are currently supported. It should do everything within its power to enable them to engage with the National Disability Insurance Scheme so they have every opportunity to make real choices about their future and not be constrained by the current models of support. From 2018 New South Wales will no longer provide or fund disability or community care support. The National Disability Insurance Agency will take over responsibility for the development of the sector and the funding of support. This means that the knowledge and expertise of the existing State service needs to be placed in the hands of the non-government sector and reinvested in the marketplace for the National Disability Insurance Scheme to succeed. This bill paves the way for its future.

The National Disability Insurance Scheme supports 90,000 people with disability in New South Wales. It provides services that include supported accommodation in group homes, respite centres, therapy services and community-based support. The staff at these facilities who take on the role of working with people with a disability and their families and carers are special people who do a magnificent job. This bill indicates the biggest investment in the provision of disability services, from State-directed support to self-directed support. This issue is above politics. Its aim is to provide the best assistance to those who are most vulnerable. The Government has worked in a bipartisan way with the Commonwealth to get the best deal for people with disabilities and their carers. This is an historic outcome that continues the New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Government's record of reform in social services. It is an investment in the future of the provision of disability services and, more importantly, the future of people with disability in our community as a whole. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson) [11.24 a.m.]: The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NSW Enabling) Bill 2013 allows a transition to occur to ensure that people with disabilities in New South Wales can participate fully in the National Disability Insurance Scheme. This legislation empowers people with disabilities to have choice and control over the services and support they need to pursue their own direction in life. It requires services to be provided on the basis of meeting individual needs of people with disabilities, which is the core aim of the National Disability Insurance Scheme. It is a move from a fragmented State-based system to one that is national and much better funded and from which obstacles are removed to enable people to more easily reach their potential in life.

The disability sector in New South Wales will grow, with annual funding to be increased from \$2.5 billion to more than \$6 billion when the National Disability Insurance Scheme is fully rolled out in 2018. However, the National Disability Insurance Scheme is not only about a welcome financial injection. The reform promotes an innovative, flexible and tailored injection to each individual. Although there will be change for many employees, and change is never easy, there should be no shortage of future employment opportunities in the sector. As John Della Bosca, former New South Wales Minister and campaign director for Every Australian Counts stated, the National Disability Insurance Scheme is designed to shift choice and control for people with disabilities and their families and this requires a market with diverse disability services.

The National Disability Insurance Scheme reform will result in changing service patterns, including a shift from the public sector to non-government providers. Accordingly, skilled employees should be able to transfer to non-government organisations from the public sector and potentially maintain the continuity of caring relationships while at the same time having their employment conditions appropriately protected. Having said that, it is also important that government liability is reasonably controlled. As the Minister in the other place has indicated, the movement of services will be carefully thought out following detailed scoping, investigation and examination of the best options for people with disability, the current workforce and the sector

at large. This approach to prudent progress is warranted and admirable. The bill also builds the capacity and flexibility of the disability services sector by making it possible to transfer buildings, equipment and other assets.

The Public Accounts Committee, which I chair, recently tabled a report of the NSW Audit Office which called on the New South Wales Government to extend the Auditor-General's performance audit functions to non-government agencies when performing functions on behalf of the State. The National Disability Insurance Scheme and its broader reforms and trends towards outsourcing various other community services make this recommendation of the Public Accounts Committee even more important. Finally, I pay my respect to those who work in Ageing, Disability and Home Care and to those who have worked hard to establish and implement the new National Disability Insurance Scheme. This extends to leaders, past and present, across the political divide. It also includes people in my own electorate such as Sue O'Reilly and Katrina Clarke. Much remains to be done. I continue to support those who do the heavy lifting, as I have tried to do in the past. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend) [11.30 a.m.]: I thank the Government for giving me the opportunity to speak in debate on the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NSW Enabling) Bill 2013. This is one of the most important bills that Parliament has dealt with this year. For me, one of the main incentives in becoming a member of Parliament was to ensure that the needs of the most vulnerable in our society were represented along with the needs of others. I agree with the National Disability Insurance Scheme principles of choice and equal rights for people living with disabilities. However, I have serious concerns about some aspects of the bill that put at risk the rights of government workers and the quality of care of members of the disability community. The bill may cause unnecessary fear for family members and parents of residents at the Stockton, Kanangra and Tomaree centres.

I have had a lot of involvement with workers, clients and their families. The number one message I hear time and time again is that people are afraid. They feel that the Government is railroading them; they are not being heard. Enough politicians have had their say on this matter; we need to hear more from those whom this bill will affect. I take this opportunity to read into *Hansard* two excerpts from interviews conducted by my office with disability workers over the past few weeks. The first is from an interview with Michael Grant, a hardworking nurse at the Stockton Centre. He said:

Unfortunately, what they're doing is devolving this model of care. The model of care that these clients have is the best that can be there for them. They have medical needs, all sorts of medical needs. They have seizures all the time ... eating and drinking problems ... sleep problems ... behaviour problems ... all the problems under the sun that most people in their life time would never come across. Unfortunately, without the specialised care that these guys are gonna need they're gonna go to the community and get someone with a licence and a first aid certificate.

The information [about the Stockton Centre], they use is old information. The information they use is mostly from overseas and in the past there were institutions, there were asylums as John Ryan said. Nowadays, look at the model we have now. We have a bunch of people who look after clients in a caring, interested, involved way ... that's the model they should be developing. Unfortunately, because of the public's unawareness of the way things have changed in the last 10 or 15 years. Maybe 20 years. In that time things have changed so much.

One of the good things that's happened is the Stockton Centre went from being a hospital, which is a "get out of my space" kind of environment to a situation where you ask the client, you look at the client, you identify what the client needs. At Stockton, the client educates us.

Really what they need to realise now is this is a community. It is not an institution. It is a gated community. They're becoming common practice. Lots of people live in them. Why can't these people?

The next interview was conducted with an Ageing, Disability and Home Care worker who was very concerned that I not use their name for fear of their being reprimanded for speaking out. The worker said:

All our group homes are 24 hour staffed. So they have active shifts 24 hours a day. That is because some clients have high medical needs and they need to be checked regularly through the night. For example they may have epilepsy, they may need to be turned, they may be at risk of choking. It could be someone with dementia who wanders through the night.

Under ADHC we currently have an active night shift. So you come in on an afternoon shift where you start at 3pm [and] go home at 11pm, the next shift comes in at 11pm and works through to the morning, so there is always someone on duty.

The non-government sector does not pay active night shift. They have what's called a sleep over shift. Which works like this: I work on the afternoon shift I get paid 8 hours, they then have a bed in that house that staff can sleep in, so then I go to bed in that house at 11. I may have to get up one or two times in a night for a client. For that I get an allowance. You stay there til 7 in the morning and then you go home. You get a \$35 allowance. You come back for the next afternoon shift. For that 8 hours from 11 til 7 you're not paid. It is called a sleep over shift.

Who wants to work for 16 hours and get paid for 8? And then there's the whole issue of client risk as well. We have active shifts because the clients need us ...

This enabling bill is handing [us] over, lock stock and barrel—ADHC care centres, the clients and the staff. They're not going to be able to maintain current conditions. There's going to be a mass exodus of staff. As a staff member I don't want to go and work for a non-government organisation. I have a passion for the ladies I work with. I'm worried about them. I am worried about what's going to happen to them.

The quality of care provided at the Stockton, Tomaree and Kanangra centres is second to none. Their highly qualified staff are kind and respectful. I am very proud that in the Hunter community, and in my Wallsend electorate, we have the calibre of the staff who work at the Stockton Centre—from the plumbers to the general service support staff, nurses and other clinicians. I take my hat off to you all.

Before I conclude I seek a response from the Government to the following vital questions on behalf of the community, residents and staff at the Stockton, Kanangra and Tomaree centres. Will the Minister for Ageing, Minister for Disability Services confirm that Stockton will remain open after 2018—we want that in writing—and in what capacity? Will the residents who choose to remain at the Stockton Centre be permitted to do so? Part 4 of the bill deals with the transfer and vesting of assets and that includes "six large residential centres". What will happen to the Stockton Centre? The next question reiterates the concern expressed by the member for Cessnock: When will funding be provided for the potential redevelopment of Stockton and from which budget? What are the details of the capital works involved?

How will the Government ensure that a high quality of care will continue with non-government organisations who pay their staff—as members well know—significantly less? They do not require the same qualifications as those in the public sector and, unfortunately, some are profit driven. How will the Government ensure that the individual rights of people with disabilities are protected—especially if a religious organisation is given a contract of work? What if the values of the religious organisation do not coincide with those of the person with disability? I will be voting in support of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NSW Enabling) Bill 2013 as a starting point. This is the very first step. But in moving forward it is our responsibility to look seriously at the issues being raised by those at the coal face and to work with current disability workers, clients and families to develop policy that best serves those who are most in need in our community.

Mrs ROZA SAGE (Blue Mountains) [11.37 a.m.]: I am pleased to have the opportunity to make a contribution in support of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NSW Enabling) Bill 2013. I was extremely surprised and dismayed by the comments of the member for Wallsend because my involvement with the disability sector in my electorate is completely different from hers. The majority of disability providers in my area are non-government organisations. They are qualified professionals and do a brilliant job. The time has come for the National Disability Insurance Scheme, and those with a disability are looking forward to it keenly. When I talk to people with a disability, their families and carers in my electorate they convey to me the sentiment that they want that choice. They want to have a say in how they live their lives and what services they use. One mother named Fran told me that she would like to transition her son, Josh, into an independent living environment—not a group home but a small flat. Josh has Down syndrome. He could do this with some assistance, and he wants to. Fran told me that the National Disability Insurance Scheme will make this dream possible.

The service providers are also keen to see what their role will be and how they will need to change to adapt. I have many professional and caring disability providers in my electorate. I have been to visit all that have a presence in the Blue Mountains and I can say without hesitation that their professionalism and the way they care for their clients is without question and beyond reproach. I serve on the fundraising board of Greystanes Disability Service, the Greystanes Foundation. I often talk with the chief executive officer of that organisation, John Le Breton, about what the National Disability Insurance Scheme [NDIS] will mean to it. Greystanes is eager and ready to participate in the National Disability Insurance Scheme, and in fact is already providing a brokerage service similar to that proposed under the National Disability Insurance Scheme. Greystanes clients are mostly very high dependency, with both physical and intellectual needs.

The introduction of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NSW Enabling) Bill 2013 is a momentous step forward in the evolution of disability services in New South Wales. Now that the National Disability Insurance Scheme launch project has been underway in the Hunter region for four months, it is imperative that the Government put in place a legislative framework to ensure the success of the scheme in New South Wales and fulfil the Government's commitments to people with a disability. The initial trial in the Hunter is precisely that—a trial to iron out any difficulties with rolling out the National Disability Insurance Scheme. It is disappointing to see the politicking around this important initiative.

I mentioned previously in this House how the former Federal Labor Government used the National Disability Insurance Scheme for political pointscoring, with the former Federal Minister for Disability Reform announcing a rollout of the National Disability Insurance Scheme in electorates—of which Blue Mountains was one—without any consultation. This was very disappointing. We had heard that there was to be a bipartisan approach to empowering people with a disability. However, disappointingly, the trust that the Labor Party would do the right thing by people with a disability was destroyed. It was heartening to see at the recent Federal election that the people of Australia recognised this untrustworthiness.

The National Disability Insurance Scheme is a social insurance scheme that addresses the need for a new, better-coordinated funding model for people with a disability rather than the current State-based approach. It establishes a single national system that provides individualised funding to people with a disability and which is based on need. Instead of funding being allocated to service providers, as is currently the case in New South Wales, individuals will be given direct access to funding that they can administer either by themselves or through a broker, giving them greater choice and control in the provision of their supports. If their service provider is doing such a fantastic job then I am sure that people will stay with their current service provider.

The disability provider sector has come a long way from people being institutionalised, with group homes and rigid programs, to now becoming person centred and individualised. This is not only a huge shift in thinking for some; it also requires profound system-wide change in the way that we provide services to people with a disability in New South Wales if it is to succeed. For many years the New South Wales Government and community sector agencies have provided a range of supports to people with a disability in New South Wales. Ageing, Disability and Home Care and the services it funds have developed enormous expertise and experience in the provision of disability services. This experience has seen a shift away from program-funded service provision to client-focused, holistic service delivery, consistent with the National Disability Insurance Scheme approach.

The service providers in the Blue Mountains I have spoken to are shifting to this approach. Greystanes Disability Services has a Leura day options program as well as one-on-one activities to suit the needs of the client. Blue Mountains Disability Services, Eloura, another provider in my electorate, earlier in the year participated in the Challenge Awards, which are based on the structure of the Duke of Edinburgh Awards. Participants chose a variety of skills through which to challenge themselves. Some of them took up photography. Some learned how to put up a tent. Those who were physically able tried climbing a climbing wall. These were activities the clients chose to do. This Friday night Kirinari Community Services will hold a ball, which is the social activity their clients chose. None of them had been to a ball before and it is something they wanted to experience. I look forward to attending the ball and enjoying the night with the Kirinari clients.

Similarly, the Nepean Area Disabilities Organisation [NADO] and Civic Residential Services at Blackheath in the Blue Mountains have wonderful, dedicated staff whose prime goal is to enhance the lives of people with a disability in their care. Hence the next step in the National Disability Insurance Scheme is to redesign the disability services sector and move from government-directed to client-directed services. This requires New South Wales to invest its disability service resources in the non-government sector so that it can better meet demand for this approach. The care, concern, flexibility and excellent service that non-government organisations provide in the Blue Mountains allays any concerns in my mind regarding the transitioning of services to the non-government sector.

The bill defines clear objectives to guide this process: continuity of service provision for people with a disability, continuity of employment for people providing those services and a commitment to building the capacity of the disability services sector through the transfer of government assets to that sector. Given that the demand for disability services is expected to increase greatly when the National Disability Insurance Scheme is running fully by mid-2018, a concomitant increase in the number of staff will also be needed. An estimated 50,000 extra people will be able to access support for the first time. Given that the National Disability Insurance Scheme is in only its first stage of operation, it is important that the processes by which the bill seeks to achieve its objectives are open and flexible so that feedback on the scheme from people with a disability, their families and carers, service providers and community organisations can be taken into account.

It is also important that that process starts now not only to ensure that the transition is as smooth as possible but also to give the sector enough time to expand to meet growing demand and adapt as lessons are learned from the launch. This is an exciting and challenging period in the evolution of disability services in New South Wales. The bill establishes the foundation for the future of disability services in this State. It is eagerly anticipated by people with a disability, their families and carers. It is the right thing to do for people with a

disability. I congratulate the Minister for Disability Services, John Ajaka, and the previous Minister for Disability Services, Andrew Constance, on pursuing the cause of people with a disability, which has culminated in the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NSW Enabling) Bill 2013. I commend the bill to the House.

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie) [11.47 a.m.]: I am pleased today to speak on the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NSW Enabling) Bill 2013. The introduction of the bill in this House marks a significant and historical day for people with disabilities, their carers and their families across New South Wales. It is momentous in that the way we deliver services and funding to those with disabilities is about to change, and change for the better. I know this as someone who grew up as a carer for my younger brother, Phillip, who has lived with severe physical and intellectual disabilities his entire life. Like my parents, who have cared for him for the past almost 50 years, I know how important it is that people with disabilities are treated as individuals and are provided with services that address their unique needs and wants.

I congratulate the Minister in the other place, the Hon. John Ajaka, and his predecessor, the Hon. Andrew Constance, on their determination to see change. But I do wonder why it has taken so long for legislatures to realise that one size does not fit all—it does not work for the rest of the population so why did we think it would work for those with disabilities? My brother Phillip is as individual as you and I; and, as with the rest of us, he has his likes and his dislikes. He likes music, he likes to be active, he likes to socialise with others and he likes to watch sport, particularly when his sisters, nieces and nephews are on the field. He likes to go for drives, he likes to eat out, and he does not mind a beer every now and then. Sitting in a room with others with disabilities who are unable to communicate will not satisfy his needs, and expecting him to sit at a table and undertake some activities will in a short time see him frustrated and bored. There is not a single reason why he and my parents should not have the right to choose the support services they want to use and be in control of government funding that best suits their needs.

So it is exciting that people with disabilities will no longer have to fit into the services that are on offer; rather, they will have the opportunity to choose the services they want based on what best fits their individual needs. This is a generational change. By passing this bill we can be confident that New South Wales will be able to seize the opportunities that form the basis of the National Disability Insurance Scheme. These reforms, which are shared between the New South Wales and Commonwealth governments, will see an additional 50,000 people with disabilities in our State receive government support for the first time and funding will more than double by 2018.

In 2012 the New South Wales Government made a commitment to implement a scheme that put the person with a disability at the centre of decision-making. On 1 July 2013 the Government launched the first site in the Hunter and we will see a full transition to the Commonwealth system completed by mid-2018. As well as providing enormous benefits to people with disabilities, the transformation of this sector will result in an additional 25,000 people across New South Wales being employed in a workforce that effectively responds to people's needs. There will need to be some legislative change in order for a smooth transition of services to the non-government sector that will provide continuity of services.

The object of the bill is to authorise and facilitate the transfer of the State's public sector disability services assets in connection with the implementation of the National Disability Insurance Scheme of the Commonwealth. The bill also makes detailed arrangements for the transfer of the employment and entitlements of public sector disability services employees. The bill will empower the Government with measures that it may require to complete these reforms and enables the establishment of parameters for current services, assets and staff to transition into the scheme; the creation of corporate entities, arrangements for staff and assets and vesting rights and liabilities by way of order; and the ability to transfer the employment of staff through an agreement with a private sector entity. It is vital that this is made possible to ensure we maintain the expertise and skills of those who are already working in the disability sector.

The bill will enable the maintenance of certain entitlements and award conditions on transfer and will enable vesting orders to be made in relation to assets, rights and liabilities. I note for example that some 480 residential properties are currently used for supported accommodation. The bill will allow for these to be vested to the appropriate entities, which may include other areas of government, the community housing sector, non-government organisation disability providers or private sector organisations. It is important that the Government make sure there is a smooth transition to the National Disability Insurance Scheme. The bill will enable that to happen. Our focus must always remain on ensuring that people living with disabilities are at the centre of our decisions, that they can access a diverse range of services that best meet their individual needs and that we do everything in our power to ensure that we allow them to get the best outcomes.

I commend the many local disability services in the Port Macquarie electorate that do such an amazing job and with whom I have worked on a range of issues. To name just a few, I am confident that NewIDAFE, Access Community Education Services and Hastings Respite will be key players in the provision of disability services in the future under the National Disability Insurance Scheme. These non-government organisations provide a range of services and have excellent relationships with individual clients because of the high standard of services they provide. I know from first-hand experience that they do a great job. They are flexible, innovative and responsive to individual needs. Their capacity and services will only be strengthened and broadened when the National Disability Insurance Scheme is fully implemented.

A few months ago Minister John Ajaka visited a number of disability service providers in Port Macquarie. He, like me, was impressed with the work that these organisations are undertaking in preparation for the transition to the National Disability Insurance Scheme. I acknowledge and thank the hundreds of volunteers who give their time to work alongside our paid employees in the disability sector. Their collaboration and teamwork every day is nothing short of outstanding and the beneficiaries are those with disabilities and their carers. I thank them for their care, generosity and effort. I know that each time they interact with people with disabilities they are rewarded by their smiles, but on behalf of our community I sincerely thank them. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands) [11.54 a.m.]: I speak in debate on the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NSW Enabling) Bill 2013 with a great deal of pride for a number of reasons. With the indulgence of members, I will tell a short story. Last Saturday night at Armidale I attended the Butterfly Ball, which was the first debutante ball for people with disabilities to be held in Armidale. There were 23 debutantes. They looked stunning and the smiles on their faces were priceless. On the evening I quoted Ghandi, who said that a society can be judged by how it treats its weakest and most vulnerable. If members had been there they would have seen how true that is. It was wonderful to see the debutantes so happy.

During the evening I spoke to some of the debutantes and their families about the upcoming debate on this bill. Their excitement and anticipation for these reforms was overwhelming. They are looking forward to having choice and empowerment as well as benefiting from the extra resources that will be dedicated to the disability sector and service providers. I thank Minister John Ajaka and his predecessor, Andrew Constance, for their great work in championing the National Disability Insurance Scheme in this State. We must acknowledge that New South Wales is leading the way in disability services. We were the first State to sign up to the National Disability Insurance Scheme and this legislation will provide the framework to ensure the success of the scheme and its roll-out.

The National Disability Insurance Scheme is an insurance-based model of funding that will enable people with disabilities to access the market and purchase the supports they need to live their lives to the full. It is no understatement to say that this is one of the most significant social reforms to take place in this State and this country. The bipartisan support the scheme has received is a credit to all involved on every side of politics. That is a credit to everyone. However, for these reforms to be successful the market needs to be diverse, dynamic and able to respond to the choices people make as the scheme is rolled out. The Government has acknowledged that one dominant public sector provider will restrict diversity and innovation in the market and skew competition in a way that prevents natural market responses. Government is often restricted by process and infrastructure and is unable to be as innovative or dynamic as non-government providers. For this reason, as part of the commitment to the National Disability Insurance Scheme, the Government will be withdrawing from the delivery of disability services and community care supports in order that the organisations that are best placed to grow and meet the demand are able to do so.

It would be remiss of me not to acknowledge the great work done by all service providers in my electorate of Northern Tablelands. I acknowledge the Inverell Accommodation Service, Inverell Disability Services and Joblink Plus, which has a magnificent community garden project that I recently had the pleasure of visiting and helping with plantings. I also acknowledge the Dementia Access Project and Care for Children with Disabilities in Armidale, the Ascent Group, Medicare Local New England, Life Without Barriers, Maclean Care Inverell, Promoting Early Intervention and Active Learning Inc. [PEDAL] Early Childhood Intervention, Sunnyfield and the Cerebral Palsy Alliance. In addition, I acknowledge the eight councils in my electorate that provide community transport and important home and community care services across the region. I also acknowledge the other providers that do fantastic work. I have had the pleasure to meet with some of the volunteers, employees and clients. They are excited about these reforms and what the future holds.

The National Disability Insurance Scheme represents a massive increase in funding. A number of members who preceded me in this debate have referred to the doubling of funding throughout the full rollout for

disability support. With 140,000 people in New South Wales participating in the scheme by 2018, which includes an additional 50,000 people who will be able to access support for the very first time, the Government acknowledges that for the sector to meet this demand, it needs to grow very quickly. That is why the bill provides for that growth by enabling the transfer of assets and the workforce to organisations that will deliver a range of services through the National Disability Insurance Scheme. The bill does not provide for exactly how that will be done but it will enable flexibility for the Government to negotiate the best arrangements to obtain the best outcomes for people. As we heard from the member for Port Macquarie earlier in this debate, at all times our focus should be on people with a disability and obtaining the best possible outcomes for them and their lives.

The bill will do three things to provide for a smooth and effective transition through the National Disability Insurance Scheme. First, there will be continuity of supports and services for people with a disability while they are in the process of making their own decisions about their future. Secondly, the non-government sector will be encouraged to retain skilled disability workers. Thirdly, the non-government sector will be able to maximise the capacity of the disability services sector through assets it will hold and the staff it will have. The Minister and the Government have acknowledged that this will mean the transfer of staff to new employers. When that is the case, the bill has mechanisms built into it to protect employee entitlements and provide for continuity of awards, which is very important. That concern was raised with me initially in this process. The bill also will enable the finer details to be worked out between relevant stakeholders following negotiations with the client, staff, employee representatives and non-government employers. The capacity to vest assets has the potential for huge growth in the sector and will enable it to meet the increasing demand for services.

We are advised that the launch of the National Disability Insurance Scheme in the Hunter is going very well. There will be a full-scale expansion of the National Disability Insurance Scheme over the next few years to the whole of the State. People in my electorate of Northern Tablelands are very much looking forward to that. From the launch we are learning what we need to do in relation to operational and policy issues for people with disabilities in all parts of the State. The bill provides for the legislative transition that is necessary to support the National Disability Insurance Scheme. This bill represents an opportunity for New South Wales to continue to lead the way in the provision of disability care by delivering the National Disability Insurance Scheme and, with it, real choice and real control. I am proud to speak in favour of this bill and to be part of a Government—indeed, a Parliament—that places such high importance on ensuring the best possible future and outcomes for people with disability in New South Wales. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie) [12.02 p.m.]: During my contribution to debate on the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NSW Enabling) Bill 2013, I place on the record some very real concerns I have about the lack of provision it makes for high dependency people with a disability in residential care. Those people have little option other than institutionalised care, due to significant developmental disability, physical disability or a combination of both. At this point I foreshadow that at the conclusion of my speech I will move a motion that the question, "That this bill be now read a second time", be amended by omitting the word "now" and inserting instead, "That this bill be read a second time on 25 February 2014", to allow for consultation with affected residents, families, carers and other interested parties prior to rather than after the carriage of the legislation.

Let me state for the record that I support the intentions and provisions of the National Disability Insurance Scheme because of the opportunities that it will open to so many people with disability who in the past have been denied dignity and opportunity due to a lack of funds and services. Those features of the scheme are to be applauded as they advance us as a community. The majority of the bill is laudable. However, I have concerns about the provisions in the bill aimed at divesting the State of any role in delivering disability services. This has been the sticking point for me since the bill was introduced and it remains so, despite discussions I have had over the past week with the Minister for Ageing, Minister for Disability Services, and Minister for the Illawarra, Mr Ajaka, and the Minister for Finance and Services, Mr Constance, as well as ministerial and departmental staff. I express my appreciation to Minister Ajaka and Minister Constance for the time they afforded me. As I indicated in my opening remarks, my particular concern is removal of the safety net of public sector residential care from those in the disability sector who are most vulnerable. Anyone who shares my concerns—and I assure the House there are plenty of them—would be offended by the Minister's second reading speech in the other House. He stated:

I will go so far as to say that a vote against this bill is a vote against the National Disability Insurance Scheme and the rights of people with disability to live with dignity and respect in the New South Wales community.

I do not know who wrote that for the Minister, but it is a disgrace. It should not be said. People should not be wedged by such an argument. Generally we can work across the board in a bipartisan manner in relation to the

National Disability Insurance Scheme but I have a responsibility to represent people in my electorate who have very real concerns about this bill. I will not be confined by a wedge argument from the Minister. I do not believe that is the Minister's true intent. Once again I believe we are seeing a bit of politicking and a bit of poor advice. I know I am swimming against the tide in speaking against this bill and that both the Government and the Opposition have signalled their support for it, but I cannot let it charge unopposed through both Houses of Parliament while serious issues have not been resolved, even though the concerns affect a minority of those who will benefit from the National Disability Insurance Scheme.

As a former developmental disability nurse—actually, I was a psychiatric nurse but I spent many of my years working in disability services—I know quite a deal about this subject. I also note that many people have legitimate fears about the privatisation of public sector residential care. For the past few weeks since the bill was hastily introduced to the upper House at 8.00 p.m. on 23 October, I have been hearing from families and carers of people in long-term residential disability care who are extremely anxious about what the future holds. They email and call my office constantly. Some are constituents and others are not. Some work in the field or have family members in residential care. In most cases they have sought me out in the hope that I might be able to help them find some answers to their questions. None of those people were from the Public Service Association [PSA]. Despite all the talk about consultation, the first that many people knew of the Government's decision to phase out public sector residential care by 2018 was when they read about it in the *Newcastle Herald* on 16 October. Then, lo and behold, just a week later this legislation is seemingly stealthily introduced with no further explanation or public discussion about what it will mean for those very vulnerable clients of public residential centres.

In the Hunter region there are three residential facilities—Stockton in Newcastle, Tomaree in Port Stephens and Kanangra in the Lake Macquarie electorate at Morisset—that together house more than 500 clients. I worked at the Morisset centre at Kanangra for approximately 25 years, the last 10 years of which I spent in developmental disability services. My many friends who still work in the sector maintain connections with past clients and their families. I know firsthand the challenges faced by families and carers of those who have the most severe and restrictive disabilities. The services they need are complex, diverse and often are labour intensive. They require high skill levels and dedication from carers and certainly not the types of services that private operators, with an eye to the corporate bottom line, will perhaps be in a rush to provide.

Although there is no doubt that some do, there are some who can, and there are some who will, but already we have seen concerns expressed by respected disability service providers, such as the House with No Steps, that remuneration levels for carers under the National Disability Insurance Scheme are inadequate and will force small operators to the wall. What does that say about the likely success of very expensive high-dependency services being picked up by the private sector and delivered with the same diligence and focus on quality that those clients in public care have come to expect? The Combined Pensioners and Superannuants Association of New South Wales is one group that shares my concerns about this. In a press release issued last week, the association stated:

People should have the option of retaining or accessing Government run services if they wish to do so. Within a market focused environment people with high needs who are unable to advocate for themselves, particularly those who don't have a strong advocate speaking out on their behalf, fall through the cracks.

We see this happening in aged care, where private providers are able to cherry pick nursing home residents and so avoid taking on people who are considered to have costly high needs or labelled as having problem behaviours.

Without a Government operator which can have more oversight, we'll end up with a race to the bottom in terms of quality of services for high needs people.

There are many people with developmental disabilities and challenging behaviours who are living successfully and with dignity in the State system. In many cases they are doing so after failed attempts to manage their residential needs in the private or not-for-profit sectors. For the benefit of the House and to give some people a sense of the challenge faced by carers, I add that some of the extremes of behaviour sometimes seen in those residential resources include self-injury, violence to others, property damage, disturbance of the local community through screaming abuse, sexual promiscuity and inappropriate and confronting dress or other behaviours, or a lack of dress. I know of examples where people cared for by non-government organisations were so out of control that the only option was to place them in State care. The public sector has traditionally been the provider of last resort and it needs to continue to be there for this purpose. There are many residents who I can say without exaggeration might not be alive today if not for the expertise, experience, care and dedication of nursing and allied staff within the State care system. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

One example that comes to mind from my own nursing experience is that of a woman who was prone to violent tantrums, escalating to extreme self-harm. At times she would attempt to attack others, but her most

confronting and difficult behaviour was her propensity to bite her own arms with extreme force, inflicting deep wounds and gashes. As a matter of fact, she would take a piece of her own flesh from her arms and sometimes chew and swallow it. After many years of this behaviour, her arms were all but scar tissue. This behaviour brought her into State care and, while it took time, her life has now changed and these extreme behaviours are no longer evident. I use this example to illustrate how effective State care can be in the most challenging situations. I could give many more examples, including some that are even more confronting. However, time and the sensitive nature of these issues restrict me.

Another benefit of State residential care is the embedded medical service that is provided within the facilities. Residents often have complex and considerable medical needs, which can be exacerbated by communication difficulties. Trying to have those needs attended to out in the community is extremely difficult. Medical officers attached to residential facilities can deal with these challenges in a familiar environment and in a way that is less confronting for both the patient and the person delivering the care. The underlying tenet of the National Disability Insurance Scheme is providing people with disability with choice about their care, but there is one important choice that this bill will take away, which is the choice to remain in public sector care.

As honourable and desirable an ideal as community-based care is for many, it is important that we acknowledge it is not the silver bullet solution for everyone. Some people now in full-time residential centres will, with improved resources and support, be able to transition to an alternative mode of care—and this will be a positive outcome of the National Disability Insurance Scheme. Others, however, will not and for those people it seems ironic, if not disingenuous, to say that this bill is about providing choice because it is actually about removing choice. It is about divesting the State of responsibility and assets in the area of disability services. There is no ambiguity about this. The Minister for Ageing and Disability Services, in his second reading speech, said:

From 2018 New South Wales will no longer provide or fund disability or community care support ...

But I, and others who share my concern about the apparent lack of contingency planning for people with high-care needs, fail to see why the State's departure from the disability service sector has to be absolute. Why can it not remain a provider in this brave new world of privatised care, particularly in the specialised area of high-dependency residential care? I have often heard the argument that centres such as Stockton, Tomaree and Morisset are outdated and impractical—past their use-by date, as it were. It has suited successive governments to allow those facilities to run down so they could use this argument to justify foreshadowed closures. The Minister indicated in the House yesterday that the Government intends to redevelop the Stockton Centre. I welcome this commitment, but if the Government could articulate in more detail how and when the development will occur, how the new centre will be managed and to whom it will be open, it would ease a lot of anxiety among current residents and their families. However, I wish to thank the Minister for articulating that quite clearly in his second reading speech and guaranteeing that it will happen.

The impasse in this debate is lack of communication. People in residential facilities and their families and carers do not understand how they will be catered for under the National Disability Insurance Scheme, what care options will be available to them and who will deliver them. The failures of the Richmond report on deinstitutionalisation loom large in their minds. That may be unfair, because I know we have learned from the process and I believe the Government when it says it is committed to ensuring those mistakes are not repeated, but one can understand why people are wary of the Government's intention to leave the disability care sector entirely. The people that I speak for today represent only a small proportion of people with disabilities, but the potential impact on them is huge. We cannot allow people with high care needs to be "auctioned off" to private providers. I know the Minister does not like the term "privatisation", but it cannot be dispensed with. I understand the Minister met with a delegation of parents of residents from the Stockton Centre on 31 October to hear their concerns.

While I acknowledge the Minister's willingness to meet those affected by these reforms and hear their concerns, I contend that it is not good enough to ask these people to take it in good faith that these concerns will be addressed retrospectively. Why not deal with them now? It has been put to me that the urgency to have this bill passed is the imminent renewal of home care contracts and the Government's need to have home care transferred out of the public sector. However, in the *Newcastle Herald* yesterday morning, a ministerial spokesman said the current funding was in place until 2015. Can we not then afford a couple more months to allow for more discussion, to try to eliminate the uncertainties that are giving way to fear?

In closing, I reiterate one important thing: I support the National Disability Insurance Scheme. I support the rights of people with disabilities. I want to support this bill, but I do not wish to support it while surrendering

the concerns of those people who have spoken to me, who are residents of large State-run centres and their parents. It is unreasonable and unconscionable to progress the bill until the very real and heartfelt concerns of the families and carers of people in high-dependency care are met. Unless the Government can provide clients of residential centres, their families and carers with absolute clarity about how the future needs of those people will be catered for under the new regime the bill should be deferred until the next sitting to allow proper consultation to take place.

I would dearly love to be standing here and to be saying that I will support this 100 per cent. I support it 98 per cent, because we are talking about a small cohort of people in State disability care services who have very real concerns. For the 50,000 additional people who will get these services it is absolutely magnificent, and I applaud the Government for its progress on that. If there is a deficit in the process, it is to do with the lack of consultation and the very real fear that is being felt not just by parents of some residents but also by residents who have contacted me, residents who are given care by the State as well as people for whom I have cared in the past who have contacted me and who are very scared. They are smart enough not to understand the detail but they understand that something is happening to their lives and they would have liked to have had a conversation with the Government about this. However, that has not happened. I move:

That the motion be amended by leaving out the word "now" and adding the words "on 25 February 2014 to allow for consultation with affected residents, family, carers and other interested parties prior to, rather than after, the carriage of the legislation."

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Lee Evans): Order! Pursuant to Standing Order 200, when deferring the second reading of a bill only a later date or time is permitted. Therefore, the reason given by the member for Lake Macquarie is out of order and will not form part of the question.

Question—That the words stand—put.

The House divided.

Ayes, 64

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

Noes, 23

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

Pair

Mr Edwards

Mr Furolo

Question resolved in the affirmative.**Amendment negatived.**

Mr GARETH WARD (Kiama) [12.27 p.m.]: As a member of this House with a disability, I am pleased to support the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NSW Enabling) Bill 2013, which will bring much relief to many people concerned about their future. I commend also Andrew Constance, my very good friend whom I have known for many years and who led the debate on this issue, including as the shadow Minister and previously as the responsible Minister.

Ms Noreen Hay: Suck, suck.

Mr GARETH WARD: I am disappointed in the comments of the member for Wollongong because this is a sensitive debate. I am sure the member for Wollongong agrees that the achievements in this sector are commendable. I remember standing with the member for Wollongong at a National Disability Insurance Scheme forum in Port Kembla. I know that she supports this issue. I commend the Minister for his hard work and dedication to bring about this important achievement. I commend also the former Federal Labor Government for its instigation and assistance. This issue is beyond politics. The Government is proud to introduce the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NSW Enabling) Bill 2013 which is necessary to enable New South Wales to take its first steps to ensure the success of the National Disability Insurance Scheme for people with disabilities in our community.

In December 2012 New South Wales became the first Australian State to sign on to the National Disability Insurance Scheme through a heads of agreement with the Commonwealth. The agreement represents a historic milestone for people with disability, their families and carers not only in New South Wales but also throughout the country. It establishes the means to deliver equitable and adequate support for people with disability, many of whom have struggled for a long time without access to the necessary supports they need to live with dignity and respect. This agreement places real choice and control in the hands of people with disability over supports they need to live their lives the way they want.

The reforms will be delivered through a partnership between the New South Wales and Commonwealth governments and will benefit approximately 140,000 people with disability in New South Wales. The New South Wales commitment of \$3.1 billion will be directed exclusively to enable people with disability to plan individual funding packages to purchase supports, based on an assessment of their capacity and circumstances. In addition, the Commonwealth will provide \$3.3 billion, making the total funding \$6.4 billion. I acknowledge the wonderful disability service providers in my electorate, which include Flagstaff, CareSouth, Essential Personnel and Greenacres Disability Services, as well as many others. The staff at Flagstaff are excellent, including the chief executive officer, Roy Rogers, whom I met during a visit to the Flagstaff facility at North Nowra. They have excellent products and provide wonderful services for people with disability.

Last Friday evening I had the enormous privilege of attending the twenty-first anniversary celebration of CareSouth at the Shoalhaven Entertainment Centre. It was a fantastic event to celebrate the great work that they do in our community. I pay tribute to their coordinators and staff, particularly my good friend James Parrish, who is a member of the board. I have been to several Greenacres Disability Services graduation ceremonies to acknowledge the fantastic achievement of those participants who complete its Joblink Transition to Work program. I acknowledge Lisa Vaughan and the hardworking staff of Greenacres, who do an outstanding job for the people they assist.

In July this year I was very pleased to visit Northcott Disability Services in Oak Flats to present them with a \$500 cheque to help purchase new kitchen utensils. I think the former Minister for Disability Services, Andrew Constance, provided that discretionary grant. I acknowledge program coordinator Shea Hanson, Deirdre Cowan-Brown, and Tordis Bulger, who do a magnificent job with these young people. I also acknowledge the outstanding role that the KidzWish foundation plays in the Illawarra to support sick, disabled and disadvantaged children across the region. I acknowledge the wonderful staff of KidzWish, including its executive director, Chris Beavan, who started the charity in the backroom of her home and has been incredibly dedicated to it. I recently presented her with a much-deserved community service award for her contribution over many years.

I will be attending the KidzWish annual dinner this Friday night in Wollongong, as I do every year. I look forward to that event. I acknowledge events manager Glenn Meznaric, business manager Kristy Sharman and marketing manager Karouna Micheal.

The launch of the National Disability Insurance Scheme occurred in 2013 in the Hunter area. An estimated 10,000 people will begin to access the scheme over the next three years. The launch in the Hunter and in other locations across Australia will enable us to design the approach to progressively rolling out the scheme across the remainder of New South Wales from July 2016. The New South Wales Government is contributing \$585 million towards the first-stage launch. The launch process is critical to ensuring that we have policy and operational partnerships before we move to the full State rollout. Importantly, we are moving towards a monumental shift in the way people with disability are supported in our community to plan for their lives and achieve their goals.

For people with disability the National Disability Insurance Scheme is more than insurance, it is a fundamental human rights issue. It means that people with disability will have choice and control over their supports instead of having services prescribed for them. Ultimately, it will lead to more positive outcomes in their lives. This will be fostered through the promotion of a vibrant and competitive market of service and support across communities in New South Wales that will need to respond to the desires and aspirations of people with disability and bring new approaches, innovation and flexibility to bear in how support is arranged.

The New South Wales Government is by far the largest provider of disability services and community care support in the State. There is already a diverse disability and community care non-government sector in place, made up of everything from small, local volunteer organised services to large, complex non-government providers that provide a suite of supports. For the National Disability Insurance Scheme to be truly innovative and responsive to the needs of people with disability, the non-government sector needs to grow and flourish. I will take a moment to explain why this is necessary. Non-government organisations are mainly inclusive, participatory and quality focused. They have the capacity to generate social capital in a way that the government and private sectors cannot. Social capital is critical to maximising advantages for people with disability and other vulnerable groups.

There are thousands upon thousands of non-government organisations across New South Wales, each with their own philosophy, specialisation and collaboration. The rich diversity of the sector provides economic and social benefit for New South Wales. They can take risks where a government service may be conservative and they can influence the views of the community and Government about the people they support, which can lead to greater inclusion, acceptance and knowledge transfer. These organisations have their finger on the pulse of local communities. They work directly with local communities and individuals to make inclusion and choice for people with disability a reality.

The role of the New South Wales Government in future needs to be as an enabler for the non-government sector. We have an obligation to support the sector in accessing a skilled and experienced workforce to help it achieve the innovation that people with disability require. We, the New South Wales Government, also have an obligation to people who currently need support. Our obligation is to do everything within our power to ensure that when the time comes for them to engage with the National Disability Insurance Scheme they have the chance to make choices about their future and are not constrained by the models of support that are now in place.

From 2018, New South Wales will no longer provide or fund disability or community care support and the National Disability Insurance Scheme Agency will take over responsibility for the development of the sector and the funding of support for people. This means that the existing State service capacity workforce and expertise need to be placed in the hands of the non-government sector and reinvested in the marketplace for the National Disability Insurance Scheme to succeed. The key purpose of this bill is to provide for this transfer. Importantly, the bill is designed to achieve three critical objectives: to ensure that the implementation of the National Disability Insurance Scheme delivers maximum continuity of service for people with disability as they make decisions about the future; to promote the retention of the skilled disability service workforce; and to maximise the capacity of the disability service sector. This is a necessary step in meeting this Government's commitment under its heads of agreement.

The New South Wales Government has already committed \$3.13 billion to the implementation of the National Disability Insurance Scheme. This will be matched by the contribution of \$3.3 billion from the Commonwealth. The total commitment of New South Wales represents the largest contribution of its kind. We

are committed to making the National Disability Insurance Scheme work. The types of transfers enabled by the bill are designed to boost the sector and guarantee the success of the scheme. Should any income be generated under the bill, it would be used to support the inclusion of people with disability across New South Wales. At present, the New South Wales Government funds and delivers support to over 90,000 people with disability.

This bill, and the Minister's hard work on it, will be one of the defining achievements of Minister Constance's political career, although he may not know it at this point. His effort, empathy and energy are some of the reasons that we are debating this bill today, in addition to all the families and communities across the State who have pushed for this scheme to become a reality. This is a truly defining moment in our State, where we put people with disability and their needs first, where this House shows its empathy and compassion, and where governments of all levels work together to obtain a truly Australian and unique outcome. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE (Bega—Minister for Finance and Services) [12.37 p.m.], in reply: I acknowledge and thank the members representing the electorates of Myall Lakes, Wollondilly, Pittwater, Camden, Cronulla, Gosford, Menai, Bathurst, Blue Mountains, Newcastle, Port Macquarie, Northern Tablelands, Davidson, Cessnock, Balmain, Fairfield, Wallsend, Lake Macquarie, Oatley and Kiama for their contributions to debate on the National Disability Insurance Scheme (New South Wales Enabling) Bill 2013. I particularly acknowledge and thank the members who have raised specific issues of concern. I acknowledge Mrs Barbara Perry, the shadow Minister for Disability Services, and Mr Greg Piper, the member for Lake Macquarie. I will refer particularly to Mr Greg Piper's contribution. I also acknowledge Ms Sonia Hornery for raising specific issues relating to Stockton.

In the launch of the National Disability Insurance Scheme and its broader implementation, not all questions have been answered. That is because we are dealing with a scheme that is underpinned by the fundamental human rights principles of choice and control. It must be recognised that no disability system is perfect. The transition before us will see enormous change and it will pose particular challenges. I single out the contribution of the member for Lake Macquarie. The member's experience in this field is vast and no other member of Parliament can bring his level of expertise to the debate. The concerns raised by the member are important and valid. Every member in this and the other place supports the National Disability Insurance Scheme. It is important for members, regardless of their political persuasion, to raise the concerns of the communities they represent or have worked in, as the member for Lake Macquarie has done.

These changes are difficult for a number of reasons, particularly for those who reside in large residential centres. Many facilities in which people live and their carers work are outdated and in some cases unacceptable. The community would be horrified to know that in 2013 a person with disabilities is forced to reside in a facility that has three people sleeping in one bedroom. Some facilities have not been maintained. In one facility a toilet is next to the bed of a person with disabilities. These facilities date back to the 1950s and 1960s and since then nothing has changed. Over many decades we have seen a change in the way in which people with disabilities have been supported. However, for many people with disabilities, the large residential centres in which they live are their home, community and family environment.

I understand the difficult challenges associated with change in relation to large residential centres. They have a lot of history and longstanding and critical relationships exist between staff and residents. The varying degrees of disability and, in some cases, difficult behaviours pose enormous challenges when determining whether the life aspirations of individuals are being met. There is the added burden of ageing parent carers who years earlier made the heart-wrenching decision to have their loved one with disabilities provided care in a large residential centre. Some families are concerned that the intensive care provided to their disabled loved ones in large residential centres will not be ongoing, and that goes to the heart of the issue raised by the member for Lake Macquarie. When we overlay that issue with the complexities of the National Disability Insurance Scheme, it means uncertainty for staff and people with disabilities and their families.

My comments in relation to the Stockton Centre apply to Kanangra and all the other large residential centres across the State operated by both the government and community sectors. Because of the nature and history of those facilities, consultation is the key factor. I am not sure that any government has got that right, particularly in the initial stages. However, I know that once consultation is underway we will see tremendous outcomes. The redevelopment of Westmead and Rydalmere incorporated three models of care relating to age, medical-based needs and challenging behaviours. The decision on those three models of care was made up-front. Following that decision, the process of engagement and individual consultation resulted in important changes, and now many residents from Westmead and Rydalmere cannot wait for their new homes to be built.

I believe that will be the case with the Stockton Centre, but we are not at that point. That is a key factor. Ageing, Disability and Home Care will embark on individual consultation and engage with staff to ascertain individual needs.

I refer to work that was done by the former Government and give as an example in this area the Norton Road group homes. I urge all members to view that facility. It is a redevelopment and the outcomes have been tremendous. Yesterday the member for Newcastle acknowledged that the Government's commitment still stands. We must focus now on ongoing consultation, which needs to take place. It is important that the local members who live in and represent the region are involved in the process. However, there are additional complexities and constraints associated with the National Disability Insurance Scheme. Based on my experience, I know that change is extremely difficult in the disability sector and the more consultation that takes place the better. I refer to the constraints that exist within the National Disability Insurance Scheme. First, the States were asked by the Commonwealth to bring forward their launch sites. That has posed challenges because, first and foremost, we must ensure that the individuals have the capacity to adapt to the new scheme. That is an important point.

For many years, people with disabilities and their carers and families have not been given the opportunity to make decisions on the support they need on a daily basis to achieve their life aspirations. Therefore, we must address the ability of people with disabilities and their carers to make decisions and the way in which resources are invested to support the change. The Stronger Together program, which was initiated by the former Labor Government, is about investing resources into that decision-making capacity. From memory, under Stronger Together 2, approximately \$138 million has been invested in relation to the issue of decision-making. That work, which is currently taking place, will feed the transition to the National Disability Insurance Scheme. Secondly, another challenge, particularly for the Commonwealth, is the workforce capacity. If a \$2.5 billion system is transformed within five years into a \$6.4 billion system, we need an additional 25,000 employees who have the expertise, experience and ability to work in the sector.

It is important that we invest not only in training and education but also in professional development. That involves TAFE colleges through to universities and the work being undertaken in care careers. This is relevant to the message that was expressed last night in the Hunter by the Public Service Association, as well as more broadly. The Government must work with the Public Service Association because it plays an important role in this process. It represents the wonderful staff in the supported accommodations, from the large residential centres to the group homes across the State. It is the Government's desire not only to recognise concerns in relation to the transfer of staff entitlements and staff to the community sector or to the National Disability Insurance Agency but also to recognise the important relationship that exists between clients and staff, as well as the ability of staff to innovate and provide the necessary care.

On every visit I made to large residential centres as the Minister for Ageing, and Minister for Disability Services, I observed staff doing an incredible job. I also observed that they are constrained by the built environment in which they work. The present Minister is also very aware of this situation. It needs to change, and that was part of yesterday's message. I reiterate the point made earlier by the member for Lake Macquarie that, in relation to transfers, consideration is given to the expertise of staff who deal with the challenging behaviours of those with high-dependency disabilities. We are not talking about a transaction. We are talking about human relationships that exist between individuals and professional staff currently working for the State government, as well as future employment opportunities in a National Disability Insurance Scheme environment.

The heads of agreement flagged this change; it is there in black and white. That resulted in me, as the responsible Minister at the time, making the very clear statement that in order for the National Disability Insurance Scheme to work, and work incredibly well, change was vital so that people with disabilities could have choices and purchasing power as to the supports they desired. This meant that the State Government could not remain in service delivery. The National Disability Insurance Scheme has come about because tens of thousands of people with disabilities, their families and carers recognised that the system was broken. Both sides of politics had underinvested for years. The Productivity Commission recognised that the State-based schemes were broken. They were costly, inefficient and fragmented. That does not reflect on the work undertaken by staff within local communities on an hourly basis 24/7 caring for people with disabilities.

This bill facilitates change in the lead-up to the full implementation of the National Disability Insurance Scheme. It gives Ageing, Disability and Home Care the ability to gradually effect that change in a consultative way with people with disabilities, their families and carers, and staff. The trial in the Hunter has been underway

since the middle of this year. This innovation will have teething problems, but eventually it will flourish and continue to flourish into the future. As members know, one of the key drivers for this change is our ageing population and the tens of thousands of ageing parent carers who will no longer be able to care for their loved ones in the home environment. We do not want to see families having to make the heart-wrenching decision to relinquish responsibility of their loved one to the State with no surety about their future.

In essence, the block funding of services, government and non-government, where people are told what they will receive, will cease. Under the scheme, an individualised service plan will be developed in consultation with the individuals with disabilities and their families and carers. Funding will be attached to that plan, and people will be able to engage in activities that can fulfil their life aspirations. That is a major change in the system. As a result of the work of Ageing, Disability and Home Care, under the former Government and this Government, the new initiatives will empower people to change their lives. They will have control over their funding. For example, under the new model, a local area coordinator will be able to assist individuals who want to go fishing or to a dance club so that they can enjoy a life experience that those without disability take for granted. This scheme will result in a marked shift in attitude towards people with disability.

The Public Service Association has expressed concern about the engagement of staff in this process. Indeed, it has made some very loud signals. The leadership group in Ageing, Disability and Home Care wants to work alongside the union. They want the process informed by the union's expertise and knowledge in order to make this scheme flourish for people with disabilities. The media coverage and conversations between staff and people with disabilities can have an unsettling effect on the individuals concerned. Therefore, I ask that all information be accessed from Ageing, Disability and Home Care, Family and Community Services and members of Parliament.

I do not want people with disabilities who reside in a group home or large residential centre being told that because of the changes their present carers will no longer be able to look after them. We have to methodically work through the process. The Government is sensitive to the concerns of staff. We understand this is a major change for everyone. I ask everyone not to lose sight of the purpose of this change, that we are talking about people's human rights, and that the workplaces of the future in relation to support for people with disability will be very different.

I know a lot has been said about my role in this process—and it is most humbling to hear my colleagues speak of my contribution—but there is a group of people who must be recognised and thanked. They are the thousands of people with a disability, their carers and their families. They have worked tirelessly for decades to reach this point. It is important to recognise them and to thank them for their contribution. I have no hesitation in acknowledging the work of John Della Bosca in the previous Labor Government in securing Stronger Together. Without a doubt, introducing that program was the best thing the Labor Government did. It is pleasing that the O'Farrell Government has continued the program and contributed growth money, without which we would be unable to transition properly to the National Disability Insurance Scheme. Yes, there is still a lot of transition work to do in terms of engagement with the Commonwealth about timeliness and the transition of contracts. We must remember that the non-government sector had three-year service agreements. That will change in the new environment. There will be no service agreements in the future; there will be arrangements that exist between clients and the community sector.

These are incredible times in terms of what will happen in the future, but there will also be problems. I make it clear to those opposite that the elevation of concerns in no way, shape or form defines the commitment and the resolve of every member of this Parliament, regardless of their political persuasion, to support the National Disability Insurance Scheme. I cannot put it more strongly than that. I would like to see the bipartisanship that has existed around this issue extend to other areas of government policy. This is a terrific example of people coming together. The temptation is always there to make a political point but this process is a clear demonstration of the fact that bipartisanship, particularly in the social services area, can deliver some tremendous outcomes. I acknowledge all members for embracing that spirit of bipartisanship.

There is no doubt that this change is a good one. The passing of this legislation today is but one step of many to facilitate the necessary work ahead. People bring various degrees of experience to the table in this process. I thank again particularly those who have been involved in the negotiations. Ongoing engagement will occur between staff and the agency into the future. I also again recognise the input of every member who contributed to this debate, which is one of the most important that we will ever have in this House. I commend the legislation to the Parliament.

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

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Third Reading

Motion by Mr Andrew Constance agreed to:

That this bill be now read a third time.

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

COMMUNITY RECOGNITION STATEMENTS

Community recognition statements, by leave, taken forthwith until 1.30 p.m.

PENRITH VALLEY PRIMARY SCHOOLS PUBLIC SPEAKING COMPETITION

Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa) [1.03 p.m.]: The Penrith Valley Primary Schools Public Speaking Competition Finals for 2013 were held on Monday 4 November. Twenty-five schools competed in the competition, which involved thousands of students. Once again the event was hotly contested and featured fierce competition. The variety of topics presented ranged from what teachers did with confiscated items, Christmas lists, inappropriate family moments, and many other humorous and clever stories.

I am proud to announce that the year 3 winner was Caitlin Keenan-Dunn from Glenmore Park Public School and the runner-up was Olivia Auddino from Surveyors Creek Public School. The year 4 winner was Alice Chitos from Orchard Hills Public School, and the runner-up was Billie Kuczynski from Samuel Terry Public School. The year 5 winner was Kayla Fenech from Surveyors Creek Public School, and the runner-up was Tiana Dickson from Samuel Terry Public School. The year 6 winner was Georgia Zeaiter from Glenmore Park Public School, and the runner-up was Ruby Turner from York Public School. I thank the judges—David Bamford, Mark Arnold and Katrina Foley—and also thank the organising committee. My parliamentary colleagues Fiona Scott, Federal member for Lindsay, and Stuart Ayres, member for Penrith, and I were proud to sponsor the competition.

NSW SERVICE FOR THE TREATMENT AND REHABILITATION OF TORTURE AND TRAUMA SURVIVORS

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) [1.04 p.m.]: On Wednesday 9 October 2013 the NSW Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors [STARTTS] held its annual refugee ball at Cockle Bay Wharf. This year marked the twenty-fifth anniversary of the NSW Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors. The service helps survivors of refugee trauma and assists the communities and organisations who work with them. The primary focus of fundraising during the evening was investment for the future through youth and education. School liaison programs are available to provide support to students from refugee backgrounds, as well as to their teachers, by offering them appropriate training and counselling in schools.

Chris North was the master of ceremonies on the evening and there were performances by the Afro Contemporary Youth Dance group, Oscar Jimenez and Unidos Somos Mas. Speeches were given by Mr Jorge Aroche, the Chief Executive Officer of the NSW Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors; Mr Tiep Nguyen, OAM; and Ms Douris Odesho. I congratulate the service on its twenty-fifth anniversary. I commend everyone at the NSW Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors for always being there, for providing a quintessential service to refugees and for subsequently supporting community groups and organisations who help make a real difference in their lives.

HILL TOP COMMUNITY FUNDRAISING EVENT

Mr JAI ROWELL (Wollondilly) [1.05 p.m.]: I take this opportunity to recognise the Hill Top community for inviting me to their fundraiser over the weekend, which raised money for the Hill Top, Balmoral

and Colo Vale Rural Fire Service brigades. I was privileged to attend with my wife, Belinda, and our children, and the Federal member for Hume, Angus Taylor. I tasted the delights of local Hill Top kitchens, participated in raffles and auctions to raise money for local volunteers and heroes, and witnessed performances from dance groups and local schools. I thank the Hill Top community for staging a wonderful event and I thank Seamus Vincent Byrne and his team for organising it. I inform the House that the event raised \$5,727.50.

PAGEWOOD SOCCER CLUB

Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron) [1.06 p.m.]: I bring to the attention of the House the outstanding contribution of Pagewood Soccer Club in providing what is called "Small Sided Football" for boys and girls aged five to 12 years at Jellicoe Park, Pagewood. Starting with 82 children in 2008, the club has grown to cater for nearly 1,200 children. In addition, the wonderful volunteers associated with the club train and organise games for the intellectually disabled children from Windgap, as well as raising many tens of thousands of dollars for charity. Two months ago I was present when they donated \$12,000 to the Sydney Children's Hospital.

It was an honour, as patron of the club, to visit Jellicoe Park, Pagewood, on a weekend morning and see thousands of parents and children participating in sporting activities in such a good and caring environment. Children are taught football skills and, unbeknown to most parents, children are streamed by ability matching. It is a huge administrative exercise. Applying the Football Federation Australia Small-Sided Game guidelines has produced many young players who have made it to representative level. The achievements of these volunteers are made even more significant as football or soccer peak bodies have sought to deter Pagewood Soccer Club from continuing its outstanding programs. It takes very special volunteers to continue to provide their wonderful community services despite attempts by peak football bodies to stop them out of plain jealousy—they are jealous of their enormous success. I pay tribute to Pagewood Soccer Club and all its volunteers, who serve so many children and families in my electorate.

BAULKHAM HILLS CHRISTMAS CARD COMPETITION

TRIBUTE TO JASON MORRISON

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT (Baulkham Hills) [1.07 p.m.]: I advise the House that the eagerly anticipated 2013 Baulkham Hills Christmas Card Competition has been run and won. With the theme "My favourite Christmas carol", it gives me great pleasure to announce that Ronan Duraisamy from year 6 at The Redeemer Baptist School in North Parramatta was the winner this year for his outstanding portrayal of his favourite Christmas carol, *Joy to the World*. Ronan's design will now be printed on my parliamentary Christmas cards and he will receive a \$100 Toys"R"Us voucher. I also congratulate encouragement award winners Ella Fernandez of Our Lady of Lourdes, Baulkham Hills and Amelia Bradley of Baulkham Hills North Public School, who offered pictures of Rudolph the red-nosed reindeer. Both those young ladies will receive a \$50 Toys"R"Us voucher. All 153 entries from this year's competition will be decorating my electorate office from now until Epiphany.

I also pay tribute to another ending—that of Jason Morrison at Radio 2UE. Jason has been a wonderful friend and a major contributor to The Hills community over many years, and I wish him well on his departure and in his yet to-be-announced new career. Fairfax Radio will be the poorer for his departure, but at least members of the Liberal Party will no longer feel obliged to tune in.

TRIBUTE TO BARRY TWOMEY

Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend) [1.08 p.m.]: I congratulate Mr Barry Twomey, who in October 2013 was presented with the very special honour of life membership of the Wallsend Diggers Club. John Hume, the chief executive officer of the club, was pleased to make this announcement at the club's annual general meeting for 2013. Barry has been an active member of the club for 30 years. Barry is a member of the RSL sub-branch and the Newcastle and Hunter Region Vietnam Veterans. He completed a tour of duty in Vietnam. We wish Barry all the very best in the future.

URALLA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands) [1.08 p.m.]: I commend and congratulate the Uralla Historical Society, whose members manage and operate McCrossin's Mill Museum and Function Centre at Uralla. This facility is an impressive example of what can be achieved by volunteers who are passionate about

their community. The facility has been a work in progress for the past 34 years, which has seen the restoration of buildings and the development of museum exhibitions as well as the hosting of an astonishing variety of functions. McCrossin's Mill is now recognised as one of the most progressive and innovative regional museums in the nation—an exemplary museum and example to all other volunteer-based societies.

I had the pleasure of recently opening the latest exhibition "Down in the Shed" about the restoration of the mill's chaff shed from 1881. The committee comprising President Sue Singleton, Assistant Secretary Anne Hacker, the inimitable Kent Mayo and Annie Mayo, Treasurer Erica Barwell, Secretary Kay Sutton and local historian Arnold Good should be very proud of its efforts. I say to them all: Well done and thank you.

CABRAMATTA RUGBY LEAGUE CLUB SENIORS PRESENTATION

Mr NICK LALICH (Cabramatta) [1.09 p.m.]: On Saturday 2 November I had the pleasure of attending the 2013 seniors presentation night at Cabramatta Leagues Club. The club's senior teams did well in this year's round, finishing as minor premiers in the Ron Massey Cup, semi-finalists in the Sydney Cup and grand finalists in grade C. I congratulate the award winners as well as all members of the team. This is not an individual sport but a team effort. The camaraderie on the night between the players and amongst club members showed why the club has produced so many State and international greats. Finally, I congratulate President Mr Wayne Blewitt, Chief Executive Officer Mr Brad Woodhead and the board of directors on their ongoing support of sport and the youth in our area.

PREMIER'S SPELLING BEE

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson) [1.10 p.m.]: This year more than 130,000 students entered the Premier's Spelling Bee competition, making it the largest spelling competition in Australia. Now in its tenth year, the competition is part of the New South Wales Government's strategy to build literacy results in our schools. The regional championships were held in September, resulting in 87 students making it through to the finals. The winner of the senior competition was 12-year-old Stuart Rich of St Ives North Public School in my electorate of Davidson. "Abalone" was the magic word that gave Stuart his second win. This year was Stuart's fourth consecutive State final, having been a junior State finalist in 2010 and 2011 and the senior State champion last year. I congratulate Stuart Rich on his excellent achievement.

PRIMARY SCHOOLS SPORTS ASSOCIATION SOUTH COAST GIRLS CRICKET TEAM

Ms NOREEN HAY (Wollongong) [1.11 p.m.]: I congratulate the Primary Schools Sports Association [PSSA] South Coast Girls Cricket team on their result at the New South Wales carnival last week. During the four-day event the girls went undefeated in their pool. They eventually went on to win the final and were crowned the New South Wales Primary Schools Girls Cricket State Champions. The team is made up of 12 students from across the Illawarra: Kayla Burton, Dharmini Chauhan, Sophie Emery, Madison Greenhalgh, Summer Hall, Libby Hall, team captain Jessica Marsh, Georgia Palmer, Sophie Phillips, Emma Speering, Rhiannon Tungai and Sarah Young. The team was led to victory by their dedicated coach, LeAnn Hanson, with help from her husband, Peter. I extend to the team my sincere congratulations and best wishes for their future success.

TRIBUTE TO SIMON BENNETT

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Parliamentary Secretary) [1.12 p.m.]: I congratulate Simon Bennett, managing director at Southern Waters Legal, who was named Business Person of the Year at the Sutherland Shire Local Business Awards, which I attended on 13 November. Prior to starting Southern Waters Legal, Mr Bennett worked for a national law firm based in Sydney. He has almost 10 years experience in advising on business, superannuation and taxation, and estate incapacity and succession planning. He is also a chartered tax adviser and provides advice on asset protection and structuring. Mr Bennett's Cronulla firm has been a nominee in the professional services category of the awards for the past three years and won the category in 2012.

CANTERBURY MEN'S SHED

Ms LINDA BURNEY (Canterbury) [1.12 p.m.]: I congratulate Canterbury City Community Centre on its ongoing support for the Canterbury Men's Shed in Clissold Parade, Campsie. The men's shed provides a place for men aged 55 years and older to gather for craft activities, including woodworking, and creates social opportunities for these men in a supportive environment. In addition to the funding it receives from the

Canterbury City Community Centre, sales of its wood and toy projects and local business donations help to support the shed's activities. Canterbury Leagues Club has also made a donation of \$12,000. I acknowledge the work that Canterbury City Community Centre is doing through its men's shed program to reduce the incidence of suicide among elderly men by giving them a space where they feel comfortable to speak about their issues without fear, judgement or stigma.

MANNING VALLEY SPORTS ACHIEVEMENTS

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) [1.13 p.m.]: Darrin Lewis of Wingham was named the New South Wales Touch Northern Eagles Administrator of the Year at the annual New South Wales Touch Blues Awards. The Northern Eagles cover an area from Forster in the south to the Queensland border in the north and to Tamworth in the west. Darrin is the president of the Wingham Touch Association. During his term he has worked tirelessly to turn around the financial stability of the association. New lighting has been installed at the club's playing field, the junior competition has returned, and construction of a canteen and storage unit is about to begin.

Ben Ferguson of Bohnock has been selected to play in the New South Wales under-18 indoor hockey team that will play in the national championships in January 2014. Ben, who is 18 years old, also represented New South Wales in the team that won the national championship in Tasmania in January 2013. Ben has already won championships with the Chatham Wolves in the Mid North Coast Premier League and the Manning A-Grade competition this year. Ben has also been selected to represent Newcastle in the State championships.

MOUNT DRUITT HOSPITAL VOLUNTEERS

Mr RICHARD AMERY (Mount Druitt) [1.14 p.m.]: As the year draws to a close it is important for Parliament to recognise the good work of those who volunteer for the good of our community throughout the year. In particular, I thank the volunteers at Mount Druitt Hospital, be they in the kiosk, the gift shop or the ladies auxiliary. Information from Margaret Thurlow reveals that the kiosk has raised \$1,290,211 since 2008 and it is estimated to have raised another \$200,000 more recently. It has some \$300,000 accrued and just bought a new emergency department machine worth \$150,000. These volunteers continually outperform those at much larger hospitals. I am pleased once again to extend a big thank you to our volunteers who support Mount Druitt Hospital.

TRIBUTE TO JANE DUNN

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie) [1.15 p.m.]: I congratulate Jane Dunn of Harrington. She is a registered emergency nurse and she and her husband, Paul, have two boys who share their father's love of short board and bodyboard surfing. After initially becoming involved in bodyboarding clubs as a social outlet, Jane has since gone on to hold many volunteer roles at various times, including secretary, treasurer and finance officer. She has organised the State team for national competitions, compiled draws and performed tallying for Manning Great Lakes Bodyboard Association, Forster Tuncurry Bodyboard Association, Port Macquarie Bodyboarding Association, NSW Bodyboarding and the International Bodyboarding Association Australasian branch. Jane believes developing bodyboarding into a more recognised sport is imperative for its future. Despite living 75 kilometres away from her nearest club, she continues to play an active role in assisting the sport. Her tireless devotion to volunteering saw Jane Dunn listed on the 2013 Hidden Treasures honour roll.

TRANSGENDER DAY OF REMEMBRANCE

Mr ALEX GREENWICH (Sydney) [1.16 p.m.]: This week marks the thirteenth annual Transgender Day of Remembrance, which is a worldwide event to remember transgender people who have experienced violence, hatred, abuse and discrimination. The transgender community experiences higher rates of suicide and crime victimisation. A survey last year found that 87 per cent of Australia's transgender community had experienced stigma or discrimination and one-third had been threatened with violence.

I commend the Gender Centre for its 30 years of providing support to members of this community and for its support of the Transgender Anti-violence Project. A peer-based organisation is vital to help people transitioning, provide community education and support families, especially partners and parents. A Transgender Day of Remembrance event will be held at Parliament House on Friday. I encourage members to attend and to learn about this community's needs and how they can help. I have purple ribbons available in my office for members to wear to show their support.

CENTRAL WEST GYMNASTICS TEAM

Mr ANDREW GEE (Orange) [1.17 p.m.]: The Central West gymnastics team can add a State title to its trophy cabinet after last weekend's Gymnastics New South Wales Sports Acrobatics Levels 1 to 3 State Championships in Sydney. It was the first time that Central West Gymnastics have sent three trios of gymnasts to compete at the tournament. It proved to be a huge success, with one of those trios bringing home gold. Sienna Adams, Leah Cook and Keilee Weymouth finished first overall, having also won both the balance and dynamic routine competitions. I congratulate the entire team that travelled to Sydney to compete, including Elsa Presslaber, Asha Nicol, Tori Writer, Adelaide Nonnemacher, Talia Michell, Caitlin Beatty and coaches Linda Corben, Ali Duff and Lucy Gifford. I congratulate the Central West gymnasts on representing us with great distinction.

CAMPSIE WAR WIDOWS GUILD SIXTIETH ANNIVERSARY

Mr ROBERT FUROLO (Lakemba) [1.17 p.m.]: I congratulate Campsie War Widows Guild on its sixtieth anniversary. It was a great pleasure to attend the guild's celebration lunch on 30 September. The wonderful ladies of the guild are a testament to community spirit at its best, serving others often at times of great adversity. I referenced their motto in my inaugural speech. It states:

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

That is a reflection of their commitment to serve the community and it is a motto we should all live by. I wish the guild members and their president, Elsie Hadley-Ross, the very best for their diamond anniversary.

GAME ON! BOOK LAUNCH

Mr JOHN FLOWERS (Rockdale) [1.18 p.m.]: I congratulate Rockdale Public School on sponsoring the launch of Sarah Tillott's book *Game On!* on Friday 1 November 2013. Present at the launch were the Minister for Mental Health, and Minister for Healthy Lifestyles, the Hon. Kevin Humphries, Rockdale Public School Principal Mr Mark Steed, Dragons football player Trent Merrin, staff and children. At the launch the schoolchildren listened and participated as the staff read the book and gave a presentation. Sarah has used her many years of clinical, educational and research expertise to create a series of books that are innovative and contemporary. The *Dusty and Friends* series promotes positive mental health and is an early intervention and prevention resource for parents and teachers to help combat bullying.

McKELL AWARD RECIPIENT CHRIS LACEY

Mr RYAN PARK (Keira) [1.19 p.m.]: I take this opportunity to congratulate the recent winner of the McKell Award, Chris Lacey, who is president of the Thirroul branch of the Australian Labor Party. All our respective political parties have tireless advocates and members who go above and beyond the call of duty, and Chris is certainly one of those individuals. Recently Chris wrote a book entitled *Illawarra Agitators: A Centenary History of Thirroul Labor (Est. 1913)*, which is a tremendous work on the great history of the Labor Party, particularly in the northern suburbs of the Illawarra. On Friday night Chris was recognised as a McKell Award winner, which is the highest award that the Labor Party can bestow on its rank and file branch members. I pay particular credit to Chris, his partner, Kerryn, and all members of the Thirroul branch of the Australian Labor Party.

WORLD DAY OF REMEMBRANCE FOR ROAD TRAFFIC VICTIMS

Mr JAI ROWELL (Wollondilly) [1.20 p.m.]: I take this opportunity to recognise Eve Langham and her husband, Greg, for World Remembrance Day for Road Traffic Victims. Eve is a former Wollondilly Citizen of the Year who gives her time selflessly to help others. This year she again organised the Day of Remembrance ceremony. I was honoured to speak at the event and share this ceremony with those from across the Wollondilly community. I also thank the Wollondilly Anglican College for performing at the event. I thank Eve for her efforts and to put on record in this place my condolences for those who have lost their lives on our roads.

ASSOCIAZIONE NAZIONALE CARABINIERI

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) [1.20 p.m.]: The Associazione Nazionale Carabinieri in Sydney hosted the first-ever gathering of its members outside Italy on 8, 9 and 10 November 2013. The three-day event

culminated in a gala dinner that was held on 8 November to celebrate the Raduno Mondiale of the association in the Parliament of New South Wales. A solemn mass was celebrated at St Mary's Cathedral on 9 November and on the following day a march was held on the streets of Sydney that ended at Hyde Park in front of the Anzac Memorial. Associazione Nazionale Carabinieri has in excess of 400,000 members scattered across five continents. The festivities in Sydney welcomed association members from Brisbane, Melbourne, Adelaide, Perth and neighbouring countries. The Carabinieri has a longstanding tradition of law enforcement in Italy dating back to 1814. The Carabinieri has taken part in peacekeeping efforts in war-torn countries as part of the United Nations, alongside its allied nations. I commend the association for outstanding service to law enforcement and peacekeeping.

MUSICA VIVA

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson) [1.21 p.m.]: I congratulate Musica Viva on its promotion of lifelong engagement with music through concerts and education. Musica Viva seeks to inspire through ensemble music of quality, diversity, challenge and joy. Earlier this month I witnessed a performance at the Lindfield East Public School following similar recent concerts at the Forestville Montessori School and at the Covenant Christian School in the Davidson electorate. The experienced chief executive officer of Musica Viva is Mary Jo Capps, who is a constituent from St Ives. I commend her and her leadership team for seeing a world shaped by creativity and imagination in which music plays an essential role, inspiring personal fulfilment and cultural vibrancy. From its national office in Sydney, Musica Viva uses sophisticated digital resources, engages highly trained professional musicians and is extending its reach internationally. It also runs many professional development courses for teachers. I note that funding through various sources including Arts NSW allows some 350,000 Australians to be reached by Musica Viva each year, mainly through schools.

SHARE CARE INC.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD (Macquarie Fields) [1.22 p.m.]: Share Care Inc. is a fantastic not-for-profit organisation based in Heckenberg that provides temporary respite for families with a child or young person with a disability. Share Care covers the Liverpool, Fairfield and Bankstown areas and supports 250 families. Share Care has been providing services for 26 years and looks after a wide range of people with disabilities, including sensory disabilities and physical, intellectual or behavioural disabilities. Share Care is now seeking business and community assistance, which can be provided in a number of ways. For example, a \$500 donation can pay for overnight respite for two children per night. One mother who received that care said it was the first night's sleep she had had in more than eight years. Share Care also hopes to raise community awareness of both disability and the need for support groups such as Share Care. I urge all members to support the organisation's fundraising initiatives, such as its charity ball, golf day, and wine and cheese night. This is a great organisation. I commend the work of Share Care to the House.

FERNHILL PICNIC RACE DAY

Mr BART BASSETT (Londonderry) [1.23 p.m.]: On 9 November I attended the Picnic Race Day at the historical Fernhill Estate at Mulgoa in the company of the member for Penrith, the member for Mulgoa, Senator Marise Payne, the Federal member for Lindsay, Fiona Scott, and the Mayor of Penrith, Ross Fowler. More than 6,000 people attended the race meeting, which was hosted by the owners to reconnect with the property's 200-year-old racing history that includes two Melbourne Cup winners. The new owners, Brenda and Simon Tripp, invested more than \$750,000 to bring the property up to race specifications. The race day had a great atmosphere, with entertainment for racegoers, including country music and free rides for children. The Hawkesbury Race Club oversaw the racing, which was called by Ray Hadley. I congratulate everyone who was involved in putting together this historic event, which will be a drawcard in Western Sydney for many years to come.

WALLSEND SPORTIES

Ms SONIA HORNERY (Wallsend) [1.24 p.m.]: I acknowledge Wallsend Sporties for its continuous sporting achievements. The honorary treasurer, Ron Mills, has been nominated for the prestigious New South Wales volunteer awards for his service to the club. The winners will be announced on 28 November and we wish him the best of luck—Ron deserves it. Special congratulations also go to Mark Merchant, who is the winner of the club's Encouragement Award; Alex Backay, who won the Most Improved Bowler of the Year; and Alan Dagwell, who won Bowler of the Year. Congratulations to all the club's winners. We wish you all the best in the future.

PORT HACKING SEAFOOD RESTAURANT

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Parliamentary Secretary) [1.24 p.m.]: On 13 November I attended the Sutherland Shire Local Business Awards presentation evening at which Port Hacking Seafood in Caringbah South was named the 2013 Sutherland Shire Business of the Year. This is a terrific achievement for the 29-year-old owner of the business, Kirrolos Guirgis, who opened the establishment four years ago, and for his dedicated staff. Mr Guirgis told the *St George and Sutherland Shire Leader*:

I've had about 14 years of food industry experience but I wanted to open up my own business that offered something different ... We're a fast food seafood store with a twist. I like to think we're a little gourmet.

I congratulate Mr Guirgis and his team at Port Hacking Seafood on their win.

FAIRFIELD RELAY FOR LIFE

Mr NICK LALICH (Cabramatta) [1.25 p.m.]: I bring to the attention of the House that on Saturday 2 November 2013 I attended the Relay For Life opening ceremony and survivors and carers morning tea, which was held at the Horsley Park Showground, Horsley Park. I congratulate Mrs Allana Filapi and her husband, Lee Filapi, and their committee on again organising this great Cancer Council fundraising function. Relay For Life is an opportunity not only to raise funds for the Cancer Council to help find a cure for this dreaded disease but also to recognise the community members who have courageously taken on the disease and whose achievements deserve recognition. A great vote of thanks must go to the sponsors and those who took part in the 24-hour relay. Their support for this event cannot be overstated.

AUSTRALIA POST AWARD RECIPIENT KENNETH KENDALL

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) [1.26 p.m.]: I inform the House that Kenneth Kendall of Forster is a local postman who recently received the Australia Post Applaud Enterprise Award and is a finalist in another prestigious national Australia Post award. Kenneth received his nomination after a tragic accident in which an 80-year-old Tuncurry man, John Fisher, was killed in a gas explosion that demolished his house and damaged many neighbouring properties. Kenneth was able to identify the man as he had been delivering mail to him for the previous four years. He was on his delivery round when he heard the sudden blast at the house where he had delivered mail just 30 seconds before. Kenneth returned to the scene and began a frantic search with a few other people and was able to give the details he had to the authorities.

FLAGSTAFF GROUP

Ms NOREEN HAY (Wollongong) [1.26 p.m.]: I congratulate the Flagstaff Group on being awarded the Business Achievement Award at the 2013 New South Wales-Australian Capital Territory Regional Achievement and Community Awards. Formed more than 47 years ago, the Flagstaff Group was established to provide employment opportunities to people with a disability. Today the organisation employs more than 350 people and encourages all employees to develop their skills sets to their full potential. The Flagstaff Group has a range of different operations and provides employment opportunities throughout Wollongong and the Shoalhaven in areas such as light engineering and commercial laundry as well as assembly and packaging. The Flagstaff Group has been acknowledged for its staff development as well as its provision of higher education learning opportunities. Furthermore, the group has been identified as a business that rewards staff members and has sound profitability and productivity outcomes, while demonstrating corporate citizenship. I congratulate the chief executive officer, Roy Rogers, and his team on their award and thank them for the important role they play in the community.

TRIBUTE TO GWEN PORTER

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie) [1.27 p.m.]: I take this opportunity to congratulate Gwen Porter of Harrington. Gwen began her life of service to her community in 1978, when she became involved in the formation of the Harrington Day Care Centre and the Harrington Walkers. In 1980 Gwen became a member of the Harrington Community Health Centre Committee, progressing to public officer in charge of running the centre—a position she holds to this day, almost 35 years later. She has overseen huge improvements in the centre, including the appointment of a medical practitioner and other service providers such as a podiatrist, a denture clinic, an early childhood nurse, a dietician, and prostate and diabetes educators. Gwen is a long-term

member of the Harrington and Mid North Coast Country Women's Association branches holding many varied positions, from publicity officer to president. At one stage Gwen was voted the State's best Country Women's Association publicity officer.

Gwen has also volunteered for many other organisations, such as the Harrington volunteer fire brigade, the Harrington Advisory and Liaison Committee, and the Manning Historical Society. She has also organised the Anzac service as secretary-treasurer of the United Services Club. They are just some of the remarkable achievements and thousands of hours of volunteer service to her community that have resulted in Gwen Porter being listed on the 2013 Hidden Treasures honour roll.

FLORAL ARTIST MAX CONNELLY

Mr ANDREW GEE (Orange) [1.28 p.m.]: I congratulate Orange's Max Connolly who at 84 years of age took out the prize for the most outstanding exhibit in floral art at the Orange and District Horticultural Society Rose Show on Saturday 16 November 2013. Mr Connelly first entered the Orange and District Horticultural Society Rose Show when he was just 18 and he is still taking out prizes more than 65 years later. In his most recent title he entered an arrangement featuring his favourite coloured rose mixed with yellow gladioli. It was a fine effort from Mr Connelly. His fellow floral enthusiast, Ian MacKay, was also delighted to win a title for the most outstanding exhibit in pot plants, after carefully nurturing a cymbidium orchid.

CHINESE LANGUAGE EDUCATION COUNCIL

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) [1.28 p.m.]: The Chinese Language Education Council of New South Wales recently celebrated its thirtieth anniversary on 2 November 2013 with a dinner at Parramatta. The Chinese Language Education Council of New South Wales has been providing invaluable assistance to students learning Mandarin and Cantonese. The council has had dedicated and committed teachers providing the best possible quality language education to its students. I commend Mr Ti Banh, chairperson, Mr David Lu, vice-chairperson, and all the committee members for their ongoing hard work and dedication in providing assistance to members of our local community in learning Chinese languages.

AUSTRALIAN GARDEN HISTORY SOCIETY

Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands) [1.29 p.m.]: I commend the Armidale branch of the Australian Garden History Society for hosting a successful annual conference in Armidale last month. The annual conference attracted 250 delegates from across Australia and they were treated to a program of lectures and tours that explored in depth the early settlement of the New England and an Aboriginal perspective of gardens. I congratulate the local conference convenor, Lynne Walker, her hardworking team and all the volunteers who helped make this conference a raging success and a very memorable one for all those who participated.

Community recognition statements concluded.

[Acting-Speaker (Ms Melanie Gibbons) left the chair at 1.30 p.m. The House resumed at 2.15 p.m.]

WHITE RIBBON DAY

The SPEAKER: I remind members that Monday 25 November is White Ribbon Day and marks the start of 16 Days of Activism to Stop Violence against Women, an internationally recognised period of time from 25 November 2013 to 10 December 2013. All members of Parliament and staffers can show their support by wearing a white ribbon on Thursday 21 November 2013. White ribbons will be available from Minister Goward's office in room 912. A gold coin donation would be appreciated, with all proceeds going to White Ribbon Australia.

MR PIP FILM SCREENING

The SPEAKER: I remind all members that the Parliament, under the auspices of its Twinning Program, has arranged for a screening of a new Australian film, *Mr Pip*, on Monday 2 December at 7.00 p.m. The producers and distributors of the film, Paramount Pictures, have generously provided their private cinema in Sydney. The screening of *Mr Pip*, which was shot in Bougainville, will raise funds for the Bougainville Women's Federation, an umbrella organisation for women's groups in Bougainville with the mission of building

productive communities and representing the women of Bougainville. I encourage all members and staff to take advantage of this opportunity to see another very fine Australian production and to assist the region of our twinned Parliament in the autonomous region of Bougainville.

ADMINISTRATION OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE STATE

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

T F BATHURST
Lieutenant-Governor

Office of the Governor
Sydney, 18 November 2013

The Honourable Thomas Frederick Bathurst, Lieutenant-Governor of the State of New South Wales, has the honour to inform the Legislative Assembly that, consequent on the Governor of New South Wales, Professor Marie Bashir, being absent from the State, he has assumed the administration of the Government of the State.

ASSENT TO BILLS

Assent to the following bills reported:

Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards Bill 2013
Crimes Legislation Amendment Bill 2013
Education Amendment (Non-Government School Funding) Bill 2013
Regional Relocation (Home Buyers Grant) Amendment Bill 2013
Building and Construction Industry Security of Payment Amendment Bill 2013
Civil and Administrative Tribunal Amendment Bill 2013
Civil and Administrative Legislation (Repeal and Amendment) Bill 2013
Combat Sports Bill 2013
Residential (Land Lease) Communities Bill 2013

CASINO CONTROL AMENDMENT (BARANGAROO RESTRICTED GAMING FACILITY) BILL 2013

Message received from the Legislative Council returning the bill with amendments.

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

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Notices of Motions

Government Business Notices of Motions (for Bills) given.

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

QUESTION TIME

[Question time commenced at 2.21 p.m.]

RAIL TRANSPORT SECURITY

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: My question is directed to the Minister for Transport. Will the Minister confirm that she has received departmental advice that the number of transport safety officers is not adequate to maintain security on the rail network and that additional officers should be employed?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the question and reiterate that one of the proudest decisions that I stand by since becoming the Minister for Transport in this State is to give police responsibility for security on the public transport network. That happened last May. Already we are seeing the positive difference that the police are making on the public transport network. I take the opportunity the Leader of the Opposition has afforded me to talk about these issues. Ironically, when I made that announcement in this place the member for middle management interjected, "That was our idea. That was our policy." If that were so, why did the Opposition not have the guts to implement it in government? The answer is

that the union movement did not want us to do that. I shall detail the importance of having police managing security on the public transport network than any other entity. An obvious first point is that only police have police powers.

Ms Carmel Tebbutt: There's not enough of them.

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I find it ridiculous that the Opposition interjects on the point that police have police powers, but so be it. Not only do police have police powers but, unlike the old transit officers, police are able to travel in pairs, which means they can increase their spread.

Ms Linda Burney: They're not on the trains.

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Police also have the extremely important ability to use the extensive network of 9,700 closed-circuit television cameras throughout the transport network to match what they find with their own intelligence. That intelligence matching is critical not only in preventing crime, but also in making sure that those who do the wrong thing on our transport network will be held accountable. I take this opportunity to congratulate the Police Transport Command, led ably by—

Dr Andrew McDonald: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Order! I need to hear the member's point of order. I call the member for Oatley to order for the first time.

Dr Andrew McDonald: My point of order is under Standing Order 129. The question was about a report on transport security officers.

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

Dr Andrew McDonald: I ask that the Minister return to the leave of the question.

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I thank and congratulate the Police Transport Command. I had the opportunity to see its new premises based at Central, but I know a number of its outposts are in key areas throughout Western Sydney and our regions to ensure that intelligence gathering and deployment are critically addressed. We will always make decisions in the best interests and safety of the public. In addition, I am very pleased about the memorandum of understanding between the Police Transport Command and Transport for NSW to make sure that day-to-day operational issues are dealt with. The statistics show also that a police presence is clamping down on crime and making our customers feel safer. These police officers are supplemented by 150 transport officers whose main aim is to clamp down on revenue protection. Members opposite can say what they like about public transport and security; we made the decision they did not have the guts to do because they did not want to offend their union mates.

Mr John Robertson: But have you got the part that had your advice on it? Do you have enough? That is the question.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: The member should be embarrassed with his record.

Mr John Robertson: You should be embarrassed.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition will cease shouting and interjecting.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: One point I make clear is that on security issues I will take my advice from the NSW Police Force, not those hopeless excuses for politicians on the other side of the House.

NORTH-WESTERN NEW SOUTH WALES DROUGHT

Mr ADAM MARSHALL: My question is addressed to the Deputy Premier. What is the Government doing to support our farmers and regional communities in the State's north-west?

Mr ANDREW STONER: I thank the member for Northern Tablelands for his question.

The SPEAKER: Order! There is too much audible conversation in the Chamber. The member for Wollongong will come to order.

Mr John Williams: You're wasting your time talking to them.

Mr ANDREW STONER: We know they are not too interested in regional New South Wales or in the Government's support for our farmers, but this side of the House is.

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

Mr ANDREW STONER: We know that a significant part of the north-west of our State is in the grip of a severe drought that is spreading from Queensland. Currently 60 per cent of that State is drought-stricken. Unfortunately, the drought has spread to north-west New South Wales, from where we hear reports of the lowest rainfall over the past 12 to 18 months for a long time. In fact, one property owner between Lightning Ridge and Collarenebri reported the lowest rainfall over the past 15 months since 1889. This drought is serious. In the Walgett district, which normally is one of our most productive regions during a good season in grain output, no crops have been planted this year because of the continuing dry conditions. As the Minister for Western New South Wales and member for Barwon, who represents that district, has advised me, normally in a good season this district would produce a million tonnes of grain currently worth about \$230 a tonne. So this year potentially \$230 million from just that Walgett district is lost due to the drought.

We have heard reports also, through the Regional Assistance Advisory Committee, that in places like Bourke there has been a 300 per cent increase in requests for assistance to welfare groups such as the Salvation Army. This drought is not only hurting our farmers; it is beginning to hurt entire communities in the north-west of the State, including small businesses that rely on those local economies. The Government has been in a process, along with other governments, both State and Federal, of transitioning to national drought support measures that are based on drought preparedness and prevention. These measures are due to begin in July 2014. While many producers in the north-west were, through good farm management practices, reasonably prepared for this drought in that they moved in anticipation to destock their properties and store fodder and water, a great many producers were still caught somewhat unawares. There is an urgent and pressing need on the ground in these communities for assistance with the costs of transporting stock, fodder and water. There is also the issue of mental health—that is, there is a need for rural counsellors on the ground.

That is why today the Minister for Primary Industries and I announced a comprehensive support package for our drought-stricken farmers in the Walgett, Bourke and Brewarrina local government areas. The \$7.6 million package for 2013-14 sees a transport assistance reimbursement, capped at \$20,000 per producer. It also provides an emergency water infrastructure grant, capped at \$30,000 per producer, which the Commonwealth Government has indicated that it will match. There is additional funding for the Rural Support Worker program and a drought incident coordinator. The Government is waiving western lands lease payments for 2013-14, Wild Dog Destruction Board rates and livestock health and pest authority rates. The Government is delivering a transport subsidy for animal welfare. There are a great number of stressed and starving animals in drought-affected areas. We must bear in mind the impact of the drought not only on people but also on animals.

These measures bring us into line with the Queensland Government. We are talking about cross-border areas. It is not appropriate that we have different circumstances between Queensland and New South Wales. These measures are in addition to those announced by the Minister for Primary Industries on 30 October. Those measures included the Farm Innovation Fund, phase 3 of the Cap and Pipe the Bores program and funding for the Mallowa Creek water supply project between Moree and Collarenebri. [*Extension of time granted.*]

Further measures announced on 30 October included the deferral of loan payments to the Rural Assistance Authority, on a case-by-case basis, and funding for the cartage of drinking water to the Grawin opal fields. I know that at the meeting of the Standing Council on Primary Industries last May the Minister for Primary Industries cooperated with the Commonwealth and the other States on an intergovernmental agreement

on national drought reform. This new package is due on 1 July next year. The Government urges the Commonwealth to consider bringing forward aspects of that national program to provide additional support to our farmers. The message from today's announcement is loud and clear: The Liberal-Nationals Government is all about governing for the whole of the State. We are listening. We are observing the plight of our rural producers in the north-west of New South Wales and we are responding with a strong package of support measures.

SOUTH EAST LIGHT RAIL PROJECT

Mr MICHAEL DALEY: My question without notice is directed to the Minister for Transport. The Government's plans for the South East Light Rail project will force bus commuters to change to trams when travelling to the central business district. Can the Minister guarantee that commuters will not pay more for the privilege of changing modes of transport during their trips to and from the central business district?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I appreciate the opportunity to respond to this issue because it gives me a chance to talk about the great South East Light Rail project that this Government is undertaking in the central business district. While the member for Maroubra makes a lot of noise in here, his community is not only supporting the project but asking for it to be extended. That is what I read in the local papers. But that is an issue for another day.

I assure every person who will use light rail in the future that this Government is about not only making transport more reliable but also reducing travel times. Reducing travel times is so important. I advise all residents that, for example, if they sit on a bus in the region in which we are building this project, reliability on the bus will be between 19 per cent and 34 per cent. That is because buses are subject to the congestion on the roads. That means that travel times are much greater than they should be. An extremely positive aspect of light rail is that its reliability is in excess of 90 per cent. When people use light rail they know exactly how long it will take to get them to their destination. This project highlights how we are getting on with the job of improving public transport for the people of this State.

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order: The Opal card will require them to swipe twice. Will they pay more?

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: The Opal card is a different issue. I will get to that. I will give some examples of what the Government has done in relation to light right rail versus the Opposition's record. Within 100 days of coming to office the Government made sure that pensioners and concession card holders were able to use light rail. Under the Opposition's model, pensioners had to pay the full fare for light rail. The Opposition has the hide to get up in this place—

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order: I want the Minister to guarantee that people will not pay more.

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: The Government did that not in its first year or two years; the Government made that change in its first 100 days of office. I see people in the gallery nodding their heads because they know the benefit. I know the Opposition does not like it when it kicks own goals, but how dare the Opposition raise the cost of light rail travel when it did nothing for concession holders. The really interesting point is that, since the Government allowed pensioners to access light rail, patronage on the inner west light rail has substantially increased. We on this side of the House are all about accessibility and convenience. The Opposition has zero credibility on this issue. Look at our record. We made light rail available to people who have pensioner excursion tickets. The Opposition did not.

Another example I bring to the attention of members is that the member for middle management had the hide to raise the Opal card. Under the Opposition's model, light rail was the only mode that was excluded from the contract for the Opal card. Our people in Transport for NSW, under my direction, were asked to negotiate the issue.

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: The point I make is that once again we have to clean up their mess. They signed a contract that excluded the critical mode of light rail from the Opal electronic ticketing system. First, the fact that Opposition members have asked such a question highlights their hypocrisy. Secondly, it demonstrates their lack of action regarding public transport. [*Time expired.*]

STATE INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING

Mr ANDREW FRASER: My question is addressed to the Treasurer, and Minister for Industrial Relations. How is New South Wales leading the nation in infrastructure funding?

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I thank the member for his question which shows what it is like when someone fights for an issue that matters, such as the Pacific Highway. Funding is now flowing after many years of hard work by the member for Coffs Harbour.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will come to order.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: On the night we came to office, which seems such a short time ago, I remember the Premier saying, "We are on our way to making New South Wales number one again." I can proudly say that we are on our way to achieving that status across a range of measures. Economically, the State is starting to move. There are more jobs and there is more economic growth and we are being innovative with our funding. When revenue is down and debt levels are affecting our triple-A credit rating we look at our balance sheet, take an asset and turn it into something new.

It will not surprise anyone in this House that those opposite have opposed these measures. It does not surprise me that in relation to ports the Leader of the Opposition said, "It is economic infrastructure that belongs in public hands." He opposed that measure. The shadow Treasurer, the hero of middle managers, said that we had sold off the family's silver. The contribution of Opposition members to the debate was to say, "No, we are not going to do it." Basically, it will not be funded. Interestingly, when we look around the country we find that people are accepting of this idea; it is starting to gain traction. Some of the icons and heroes in New South Wales Labor have had some interesting things to say. Last week we heard from the former Labor Treasurer. At the weekend I saw Paul Howes on *Sky News*. The Premier was doing a sterling job outlining the achievements of the Government and the incompetence of those opposite.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Paul Howes argued that it made a lot of sense to follow exactly the New South Wales model, that is, to recycle assets and turn them into new infrastructure for the community. However, those opposite might not agree with him. Yesterday I was surprised when I heard the announcement from Victoria. Unlike those opposite, the Victorian Labor Opposition issued a policy and, as did those opposite, it released a brochure. These guys are crackers at brochures that are absolute gems. I think those opposite will want to know what the Victorian Labor Opposition's brochure said.

Mr John Robertson: Point of order: My point of order relates to relevance under Standing Order 129. I have read the document to which the Treasurer is referring. Daniel Andrews' announcement in Victoria bears no resemblance to the question that the Minister has been asked.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Treasurer will return to the leave of the question. Members will come to order. There is too much audible conversation in the Chamber.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: It is how infrastructure is funded. Daniel Andrews made a relevant comment on our model to fund infrastructure, which is making New South Wales number one again. He said, "The lease of Port Botany and Port Kembla by the O'Farrell Government and the subsequent establishment of the Restart NSW fund has given the New South Wales Government the chance to use the State's existing equity to invest in important new transport projects."

Who said that? It was not this Government and it was not my mother; it was the Victorian Leader of the Opposition. He also said, "Victorian Labor believes this approach is a common sense way to get things done without taking on unsustainable levels of debt or compromising investment in other important areas like health

and education." That is an endorsement of our policy by Victorian Labor. It is not just us; Paul Howes and others are talking about it. It will create an independent infrastructure fund managed independently by independent boards such as Restart NSW. It is about time that those opposite stopped opposing and started explaining to the people of New South Wales how they will fund their infrastructure promises. We are doing it and the people of Australia are seeing it. But, most importantly, the community of New South Wales is benefitting from our actions.

TRAIN TIMETABLES

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK: My question is directed to the Minister for Transport. What does the Minister say to the Lowe family of Chester Hill who lost the direct Liverpool via Regents Park train service and is now forced to catch up to four trains each way when travelling to school and work?

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I welcome the interest of the member for Bankstown in trains and public transport because we have known that, traditionally, she likes to catch a taxi or two. I can only go by what is in the papers, but that is where Opposition members get their questions from. It might not be true, but apparently the member for Bankstown claimed more than \$460 for a single—

Mr Guy Zangari: Point of order: My point of order relates to relevance under Standing Order 129. This is irrelevant to the question about train services from Chester Hill.

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I raised that issue to encourage the member to use the train network. If she used the new timetable she would see how it benefits her constituents. I am pleased to have the opportunity to talk about the timetable. I will come back to the member to Bankstown. When we came to office, we had a disjointed set of operators controlling trains, buses and ferries. For the first time we have a timetable that integrates bus, train and ferry services.

Ms Tania Mihailuk: There are no ferries in Chester Hill.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: The member for Bankstown should not interject because when she does I cannot help myself. I recommend that she utilises one of the extra 63 weekly services on the Bankstown line.

Ms Linda Burney: Point of order: My point of order relates to relevance under Standing Order 129. The question was about the Lowe family in Chester Hill. What the Minister is saying is very entertaining but she should be brought back to the leave of the question.

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: I also recommend that the member utilises one of the extra 35 weekly peak services that her constituents received. I would love to have a public network transport where I could provide door-to-door services for every person's needs. In a modern network that is not possible but it is possible to ensure that the Government increases the number of services. We have done that. We have reduced the time between connections. We have improved connections between buses and trains, and trains and ferries. Those are the hallmarks of a modern system. Labor left us with a mess and this Government has laid down the foundation for a modern system.

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

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Should members of Parliament not use trains ahead of taxis when they have the chance?

Government members: Yes.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: Interestingly, \$460 was claimed for one taxi—

Mr John Robertson: Point of order: The Minister should keep her cards closer to her chest instead of waving them around.

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

Mr John Robertson: My point of order relates to standing order 129, relevance.

The SPEAKER: Order! I have ruled on that point.

Mr John Robertson: The discussion of cab fares has no relationship whatsoever to the Lowe family and trains.

The SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. The Minister is being relevant to the question asked. If Opposition members ceased interjecting perhaps such comments would not be made.

Ms GLADYS BEREJIKLIAN: If there is a priority motion on this issue I am sure that there will be plenty more to discuss. I am proud to be part of a Government that has introduced more than 3,500 weekly transport services across the State. That is good news for families and good news for our customers. Those on this side of the House appreciate how important it is for people, no matter where they live or what mode of transport they use, to have greater access to public transport. The record of those opposite on transport services is well known, especially the record of the Leader of the Opposition, which is to cut, cut, cut. [*Time expired.*]

RURAL AND REGIONAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS: My question is addressed to the Minister for Health, and Minister for Medical Research. How is the Government continuing to deliver better health care for the people of regional New South Wales?

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: I thank the member for her question and ongoing advocacy on behalf of her constituents in health care. Yesterday I informed the House about the improvements that have been made in metropolitan Sydney and I am pleased to have the opportunity now to talk about regional and rural health. In the recurrent budget approximately \$6 billion is being spent across the nine rural and regional local health districts. Approximately 40 per cent of local health district funding goes to local health districts in rural and regional New South Wales. In the capital budget for 2013-14, \$380 million will be spent on rural and regional projects and that comprises more than 40 per cent of site-specific capital projects in New South Wales.

In 2012-13 there were 2.6 million emergency attendances across New South Wales and more than 1.4 million of those were in rural and regional New South Wales—that is a pretty even distribution. In emergency department performance seven of nine rural and regional local health districts are already achieving the National Emergency Access Target [NEAT]—namely, the rule for patients to be seen in emergency departments without four hours. Some 71 per cent of patients are leaving emergency departments within that four-hour rule. The top performers were Far West, 86 per cent; Murrumbidgee, 83 per cent—which is absolutely fabulous—and western New South Wales, 81 per cent.

In 2012-13 there were 216,000 elective surgeries across the State and 97,000 of them were in rural and regional New South Wales. That equates to 45 per cent of all elective surgery in New South Wales public hospitals. The latest Bureau of Health Information results for the period April to June 2013 show 100 per cent on-time performance in the Far West; 99 per cent on-time performance on the Central Coast; 99 per cent on-time performance in the Illawarra and Shoalhaven areas; 99 per cent on-time performance in southern New South Wales; and 98 per cent on-time performance in northern New South Wales, which are fantastic results for elective surgery in our country hospitals. I congratulate all the medical staff and others working in the system on that great result.

Almost 17,000 full-time equivalent nurses have been employed in rural and regional local health districts. That is an increase of nearly 1,400 since the O'Farrell Government came to office in March 2011. The Government also recently announced the location of a further 40 new clinical nurse educators and clinical nurse specialist positions in country hospitals. Over the past year we have employed almost 300 more full-time equivalent medical staff in these hospitals, including 70 in Hunter New England, 59 on the Central Coast, and 55 in the Illawarra. Since the start of 2013 we have also recruited 15 new specialist roles in western New South Wales and almost all those have been at Dubbo hospital. The member for Dubbo is shaking his head in agreement. I am particularly proud of that recruitment because those opposite unsuccessfully tried to fill those positions for more than 10 years. The Government recently announced an additional 44 full-time equivalent paramedics for small rural ambulance stations.

I will not go through the details of all the capital works because I have done so many times before. Suffice to say Labor promised but it failed to deliver. We now have a \$282 million upgrade underway at Wagga Wagga hospital; a \$220 million upgrade underway at Tamworth Hospital; an \$80 million upgrade underway at Dubbo hospital; a \$110 million upgrade underway at Port Macquarie hospital; planning is underway for hospitals at Parkes and Forbes, with construction to commence next year; construction has commenced for a \$171 million new hospital at Bega; an \$80 million upgrade to Kempsey hospital; an \$80 million upgrade underway at Lismore hospital; and a site in Metford has been selected for the future Maitland hospital. What great news about capital works in rural and regional New South Wales. Those opposite promised to do this so many times but they never delivered.

BATHURST HOSPITAL

The SPEAKER: Order! I call the member for Macquarie Fields.

Mr Troy Grant: You want to build a multipurpose centre at Inverell. Sit down.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD: While we are on a rural bent—

[Interruption]

We will see who the Independent Commission Against Corruption thinks is silly, mate. My question is directed to the Minister for Health, and Minister for Medical Research. Recently the member for Bathurst told the *Western Advocate*, "I will be fighting for Bathurst hospital and will make sure patient care is our highest priority ..." It sounds good, does it not?

The SPEAKER: Order! I would like to hear the rest of the question.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD: Has the Minister informed the member for Bathurst about her plans to close five beds at the hospital next month? If so, what representations has the Minister received from the member on this matter?

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

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: I thank the member for Macquarie Fields for his question and acknowledgement of the fabulous work being done by the member for Bathurst. I am happy to work with such a fantastic member. In fact I am happy to work with all my colleagues because those opposite know nothing about regional and rural New South Wales. They do not even have any country members.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will cease arguing across the Chamber and come to order. The Minister has the call.

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: There is one very good doctor in country New South Wales. I think he works at Port Macquarie Base Hospital. He is a paediatrician and his name is David McDonald. He is the twin brother of the shadow Minister for Health.

The SPEAKER: Order! I call the member for Kiama to order for the second time. Members will cease arguing across the table.

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: The shadow Minister for Health is referring to the Strategic Health Services Plan, developed by the Western New South Wales Local Health District. This is a fabulous plan. In fact, I went out there and joined in a telephone linkup with all the small country towns that have advisory groups. More than 20 people were involved in that linkup. I have also visited most of the hospitals in the area. The priorities listed in the plan include developing a coherent western New South Wales system of care which is where there are linkages between the large and smaller hospitals, community health and general practitioners in primary health care; supporting high primary health care, that is, our linkages through Medicare locals and others; closing the Aboriginal health gaps, and absolutely brilliant work is being done out there; improving the patient experience, where they bring patients and consumers into their groups; and living within our means. That is where we are at in relation to Bathurst and to other hospitals.

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

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: I will come to the closure of these beds. They have been engaging with the clinical staff through the Medical Staff Council and other bodies to determine how they will do that. They have been living beyond their means, despite their increase in budget, for years. They have had an increase in their budget but they have been overspending.

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

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: They decided to look at how the hospital can live within its means. They have been working with local clinicians to reduce delays in treatment and discharge, developing new models of care, and developing innovative programs to decrease unnecessary hospital admissions and excessive hospital stays. They have been working with general practitioners and other care providers to better support patients at home and in the community.

The SPEAKER: Order! I call the member for Macquarie Fields to order for the third time.

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: They have been working with hospitals and other health services to ensure that staff are located where they will deliver the best care to their patients. At Bathurst and in other areas, hospitals are reviewing staff establishments in order to bring their cost of service provision closer to the State average. Scott McLachlan, Chief Executive of the Western New South Wales Local Health District, has been in constant contact with staff, the unions, the local Medical Staff Council, the Bathurst Health Council, the local shire council and, of course, the member for Bathurst. In fact, the member for Bathurst told me recently how pleased he was with the wonderful support he had from not only the chief executive but also the staff of my office. One of the new services at Bathurst is an outpatients clinic. At one time, the hospital considered closing some intensive care unit beds that were not being used. The clinical staff recommended—

The SPEAKER: Order! I direct the member for Macquarie Fields to remove himself from the Chamber until the conclusion of question time.

[Pursuant to sessional order the member for Macquarie Fields left the Chamber at 3.01 p.m.]

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: The clinical staff recommended closing the beds that now have been closed. Did the member for Macquarie Fields hear that? The clinical staff recommended closing the beds that now have been closed.

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

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER: The medical staff recommended that. They thought it was a preferable option, and I am grateful for their support.

Mr Paul Toole: Point of order: The member for Macquarie Fields has left the Chamber. I am sure he would have sought an extension of time.

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

TAFE NSW

Mr THOMAS GEORGE: My question is directed to the Minister for Education. What is the New South Wales Government doing to ensure that TAFE institutes, especially in regional areas, cater to the educational needs of communities?

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: I thank the member for Lismore for his question. I am delighted today to congratulate TAFE Western Connect, which was awarded the Premier's Award for Public Service last week for "Revitalising Regional NSW". TAFE Western Connect is a brilliant example of the flexible, autonomous and responsive ways that TAFE is working under the New South Wales Government. With more choices in more places—using videoconferencing, mobile delivery units and online training—TAFE Western Connect has provided expanded course options for more than 3,500 additional students across western New South Wales. This includes over 800 additional Aboriginal enrolments. This program is connecting people from remote communities to jobs.

TAFE NSW is and will continue to be the backbone of the training system in New South Wales and the State's public vocational education and training provider. It plays a critical role in the Government's strategy to strengthen the skills base of New South Wales, particularly in our regions. This year the TAFE board undertook a statewide consultation about TAFE NSW called "Let's Talk about TAFE" to find out what people thought about TAFE and what they expected of it. Some 97 per cent of people recognise the TAFE brand and 94 per cent said that TAFE NSW makes a valuable contribution to training in New South Wales. However, the consultations also found that TAFE needs to change to stay relevant and responsive in an ever-changing world.

We have set an ambitious reform agenda for TAFE NSW over the next three years, and we have already restored TAFE staff to the employment of TAFE NSW. We have separated the position of managing director from the Director General of Education and Communities. We have released the Statement of Owner Expectations, which clearly sets out how we will ensure that TAFE NSW services are efficient and aligned to the State's interest and to the needs of individuals and communities. It clarifies the role of TAFE and ensures that TAFE's governance and business model fits the times so that it can achieve its role as the public vocational education and training provider and be successful in the more contestable environment we are creating through the Smart and Skilled reforms.

The Government will provide funding to TAFE NSW through a separate and distinct budget, consistent with its role as the State's public provider. We will provide both operational base funding, as well as ensuring TAFE can meet its community service obligations. We are giving TAFE institutes more autonomy to manage their finances, assets and workforces and to respond to business opportunities so that they can strengthen their commercial capability and be less dependent on government funding. These reforms will allow every institute to be more nimble and to meet the challenges of the new world by tailoring their training delivery to meet the needs of students, industry and the community, as they should. This flexibility has been embraced by students, with around 42 per cent of TAFE training now being delivered outside the traditional classroom setting.

I have every confidence in the leadership of TAFE NSW, including our terrific institute directors, and their ability to meet the challenges, to seize the opportunities available and to be extremely competitive in the Smart and Skilled environment. The former Government had plenty of opportunities to bring about a new TAFE but it was always too afraid—it was always beholden to the union movement. That is why I reiterate to the unions' representatives on the other side of the Chamber that the changes we are making to TAFE are happening. Let me be clear: the changes to TAFE are happening. Nothing that the unions have said has had any impact on what we are doing. There will be no delay in the change processes at TAFE because of the staged implementation of Smart and Skilled. Smart and Skilled has not stopped; in fact, the pace of work has increased. Unfortunately, the union's misinformation campaign to its members will only serve to jeopardise \$500 million in Federal funds that may go to TAFE.

The TAFE reforms must continue. All our change processes at TAFE institutes are in line with the Government's savings requirements, changes in demand and Fair Work Australia laws. Some of those sitting opposite would like to turn back the clock and protect the old TAFE system. We will not be doing that. Some TAFE courses are no longer offered. That is not a new innovation. TAFE cannot continue to run every program in every location just because that is what was offered in the past. Where there are very few enrolments in a location, other solutions will be found. For example, courses may be discontinued if those students can study at a nearby campus or online or undertake a blended option. This approach makes good business sense: it works for the students and delivers good value for taxpayers. It is not possible for institutes such as TAFE Western to keep operating the same way they did in the past, with classroom-based delivery and small class numbers. Labor obviously wants us to remain in the past. [*Extension of time granted*].

As I said, it is no longer possible, nor sustainable for TAFE institutes to operate the same way they did in the past, with traditional classroom-based delivery and small class numbers.

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

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: Labor wants us to remain in the past and to continue to run courses for stenographers and switchboard operators. We need to train people in contemporary ways for our current skills needs. I urge the unions, and those opposite, to stop spreading misinformation about the reforms to TAFE and about our Smart and Skilled reforms. The New South Wales Government and I back the new TAFE NSW. Why don't those opposite do so as well? Everybody should get behind the new TAFE NSW.

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

STUDENT WELFARE POLICY

Mr ALEX GREENWICH: My question is to the Minister for Education. Given that around 30 per cent of gay, lesbian and transgender teenagers attempt suicide each year and that gay, lesbian and transgender students in private schools in New South Wales do not have access to the Anti-Discrimination Board of New South Wales if they are discriminated against, how will the Minister protect these students from discrimination?

Mr ADRIAN PICCOLI: I thank the member for Sydney for his question on this important issue. I acknowledge the member for Sydney, the member for Coogee and other members of this House who care deeply about the welfare of all students, including those who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender or intersex. I have read the member for Sydney's second reading speech on his private member's bill regarding this topic. No-one could read the students' accounts of their experiences at school and not be moved and concerned. Bullying, harassment, vilification, discriminatory language and a lack of support for any student or group of students have no place in twenty-first Australia. I know that the leaders of government and non-government schools agree wholeheartedly with that statement. However, the member has raised serious questions and, as a result, the New South Wales Government asked the Board of Studies, as the body that registers non-government schools, as to how it ensures the welfare of students in those schools across the State. I seek leave to table a copy of the advice supplied by the President of the Board of Studies.

Leave granted.

Document tabled.

Student welfare in non-government schools is addressed in the requirements for the registration of non-government schools in section 47 (g) of the Education Act 1990, which states that non-government schools must provide a safe and supportive environment for their students. The criteria are expressed as a series of detailed requirements, with descriptions of the evidence of compliance required in relation to each. The Board of Studies describes a supportive environment as one in which: students are treated with respect and fairness by teachers, other staff and students; members of the community feel valued; positive support and encouragement are provided by members of staff and students; and non-discriminatory language and behavioural practices are defined, modelled and reinforced by members of the school community.

Further, student welfare encompasses the mental, physical and emotional wellbeing of the student. Student welfare policies and programs are essential for developing a sense of worth and fostering personal development. Student welfare policies and procedures include programs that the school provides to meet the personal, social and learning needs of the student; early intervention for students at risk; and student, family and community support networks. Schools must provide evidence of compliance with these requirements in a variety of ways, including codes of conduct for members of the school community which make specific reference to rights and responsibilities of students and staff and anti-bullying. The board advises me:

The Board's requirements cover student welfare for all students including Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex students. If the Board received a complaint in relation to an individual school student's welfare policies not being applied to a particular student or group of students, the Board would investigate the complaint. Complaints in relation to concerns about a school's compliance with the requirements for registration are reported to the Board's Registration and Accreditation Committee and one of that Committee's responsibilities is to review and endorse the findings of any ensuing investigation and any remedial action that may be required.

I assure members that the Board of Studies is broadly representative of all key stakeholders in the education sector and the wider community. It attaches paramount importance to the welfare of students. The board includes representatives from the Independent Education Union, the Council of Parents and Citizens Associations, the Catholic Education Commission, public school principals associations, the New South Wales Teachers Federation, the Association of Independent Schools and others. The New South Wales Government has every confidence in the board and its charter to investigate matters of student welfare. I can inform the House that the board is currently investigating a number of separate and distinct non-government school registration matters with due diligence, fairness, systemic care and scrutiny. I note that the member for Sydney has said in this House that his bill is straightforward and designed simply to protect students. [*Extension of time granted.*]

The Government and I imagine all schools across the State want to ensure the protection of vulnerable students. I urge anyone who has concerns about a school's welfare policy to bring it to the attention of the board

or the department where it will be fully investigated. I thank the member for Sydney for bringing this serious matter to the attention of Parliament. He has engaged in a good and thorough consultative process. I hope the airing of this issue in Parliament will draw people's attention to the board's requirement and the opportunity that students and parents have to raise complaints. Bullying, harassment, vilification, discriminatory language and a lack of support for any student or group of students has no place in New South Wales schools. I know all members echo these sentiments.

YOUNG MOTHERS MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS: My question is directed to the Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Healthy Lifestyles, and Minister for Western New South Wales. What is the Government doing to help young mothers recovering from mental illness?

Mr KEVIN HUMPHRIES: I thank the member for Menai for her excellent question which goes to the heart of good government: supporting the most vulnerable and marginalised people in our community. Few groups are more vulnerable and marginalised than young mothers who are living with a persistent mental illness. I am sure the Minister for Family and Community Services will support me when I say that all too often these young mothers are separated from their babies. Often, the separation occurs around the time of birth and that creates ongoing personal difficulties for both the mother and child. Those issues have long been recognised.

Upon coming to office, the O'Farrell-Stoner Government negotiated with the Federal Government an extension of the Housing and Accommodation Support Initiative. Some \$57 million has been allocated to three tranches of the program. Today I announced the third tranche, which is called Mums and Kids Matter. The first two tranches of the program revolved around boarding houses and targeted people who were homeless or needed access to boarding houses for other reasons. They particularly targeted those in the inner city and inner west of Sydney who often found it difficult to access services. I thank the seven boarding houses that registered and are now providing a host facility for several hundred people who are living with mental health issues.

The Housing and Accommodation Support Initiative [HASI] Plus is another such package, and it was recently launched in the electorate of the member for Epping. It provides accommodation and support for people with complex mental health issues who are sleeping rough, homeless, living in poverty or marginalised from their family. It also provides support to people who are incarcerated. Some \$35 million will go into that project over the next three years. The initial target group are people who are cycling in and out of jail, largely because they do not have access to appropriate mental health care and support.

I remind the House that this week is National Postnatal Depression Awareness Week. Today at the Wesley Mission I launched a new program called Mums and Kids Matter. The Wesley Mission does a fantastic job and has received the contract for this program. Dr Keith Garner will lead the operation. Mums and Kids Matter is a \$12 million program that will provide a suite of options to mothers who are at risk in and around the time of childbirth. It also will provide support to mothers of young children who are in danger of becoming homeless or falling into poverty and losing their connection with their children. The program will focus on three initiatives.

The first initiative is in-house accommodation support that will be based in Sadleir in south-western Sydney. It is no accident that the service will be based in south-western Sydney: there are a large number of young families in that area. It is a great initiative that will be conducted in partnership with Housing NSW. Young mums and their babies will be able to access in-house support at 24-hour accommodation that will target healthy living and provide mental health support. The second tranche is part of a statewide program in which the Wesley Mission will be able to coordinate in-home care no matter where a person lives. Those mums and babies will come through a referral system—our mental health system or general practice—or, in some cases, through self-referral. We put our faith and trust in the Wesley Mission to work with our community providers around the State to provide in-home care for young mums who are at risk.

The third tranche of the program will provide funds to the Wesley Mission to access tertiary care for mothers and children in facilities that the non-government sector cannot provide, such as, private hospitals. If a mother becomes very unwell and needs an extra specialised mode of care, the Wesley Mission will have access to funds to broker packages at those facilities. The three tranches to the program are quite specific and target a vulnerable part of our community. We must support our young mothers, in particular, as well as support our families. As far as possible, we must ensure that mothers and babies stay connected because of the negative outcomes that can occur if that does not happen. [*Extension of time granted.*]

The Housing and Accommodation Support Initiative is a great program. The message we want to send to the community, in conjunction with the Federal Government, is that mental health care should be serviced and administered in the community, where appropriate. This initiative goes a long way towards achieving that end. I also want to comment on drought-affected families and farmers, which the Deputy Premier alluded to earlier. I thank the Deputy Premier and the Minister for Primary Industries for the government support that is being provided. Extended periods of drought can cause mental health issues for people who live on the land. As I said earlier, people who live in the city and earn a wage live from week to week or month to month at worst, and the position is the same for business incomes.

However, as members who represent rural areas know, people who live in rural areas live from season to season. When people experience two years of not deriving a sustainable income, it creates not just hardship but also stress, anxiety and mental ill health. I welcome the assistance package that has been provided and I thank the Government for targeting the three areas of Bourke, Brewarrina and Walgett in my electorate. Other parts of the State, particularly the north-west, seem to be heading in the same direction towards drought—although I hope not. This is a terrific measure from a caring government that supports people experiencing life on the margins.

Question time concluded at 3.22 p.m.

SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE MOTOR VEHICLE REPAIR INDUSTRY

Membership

The Clerk announced the receipt, pursuant to the resolution of 19 November 2013, of correspondence nominating the following members of the Legislative Assembly as members of the Select Committee on the Motor Vehicle Repair Industry:

Government members: Mr Bryan Doyle
 Mr Ray Williams

Opposition member: Ms Tania Mihailuk

Message forwarded to the Legislative Council advising it of the nominations.

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**.

Walsh Bay Precinct Public Transport

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

Pet Shops

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

Workplace Injuries

Petition requesting protection of victims of workplace injuries, received from **Ms Linda Burney**.

Inner-city Social Housing

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

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

Bus Route 425

Petition requesting that full services of bus route 425 to Heffron be reinstated, received from **Mr Ron Hoenig**.

The Clerk announced that the following Minister had lodged a response to a petition signed by more than 500 persons:

The Hon. Robyn Parker—Cabarita Park—lodged 16 October 2013 (Mr Sidoti).

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Withdrawal of Business

General Business Order of the Day (for Bills) No. 4 withdrawn by Mr Alex Greenwich.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders: Order of Business

Mr BRAD HAZZARD (Wakehurst—Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Infrastructure NSW) [3.30 p.m.]: I move:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended:

- (1) To permit the taking of up to 56 private members' statements during this sitting week.
- (2)
 - (a) To provide for the following routine of business for the remainder of this sitting:
 - (i) consideration of the Legislative Council amendments to the Casino Control Amendment (Barangaroo Restricted Gaming Facility) Bill 2013 and the Crown Lands Amendment (Multiple Land Use) Bill 2013 forthwith;
 - (ii) motion accorded priority;
 - (iii) Government business;
 - (iv) private members' statements;
 - (v) matter of public importance; and
 - (vi) the House to adjourn without motion moved at the conclusion of the matter of public importance.
 - (b) To permit the consideration of Government business at any time prior to the adjournment.
 - (c) Provide from the commencement of private members' statements or from 5.00 p.m., whichever is the earlier, until the rising of the House no divisions be conducted or quorums be called.
- (3) On Thursday 21 November 2013 to permit:
 - (a) the Crimes Amendment (Zoe's Law) Bill 2013 (No. 2) to take precedence of all other General Business Orders of the Day (for Bills) and General Business Notices of Motions or Orders of the Day (not being Bills), and to proceed to conclusion; and
 - (b) the interruption of any item of business before the House for the consideration of Government business.

In regard to business of the House and the arrangements for today and tomorrow, we will increase the number of private members' statements for today and tomorrow in order to honour the promise that we made last week that members who missed out then would have the opportunity to make their statements this week during the time normally occupied by Government business.

Before dealing with the motion accorded priority this afternoon, we will deal with some Legislative Council amendments that require some cooperative work between the Opposition and the Government, which has been pre-arranged. At the conclusion of the motion accorded priority there will be two second reading speeches, being the Bail (Consequential Amendments) Bill 2013 and the Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Amendment Bill 2013, including work release program costs. At the conclusion of those second reading speeches, unless other Government business arises—and I do not anticipate it will—we will have private

members' statements. Members who wish to avail themselves of this additional opportunity to speak should do so through the Whips. At the conclusion of that item of business, we will proceed to the matter of public importance. I intend that no divisions be conducted or quorums called this afternoon, from the commencement of private members' statements or from 5.00 p.m., whichever is earlier.

Tomorrow morning when private members' bills commence we will deal with the Crimes Amendment (Zoe's Law) Bill 2013 (No. 2). My motion raises the possibility of that bill proceeding to a conclusion tomorrow morning. We will then deal with other Government business during the day, which will take precedence over private members' business—although at this point I anticipate that that is unlikely. So private members' business will proceed throughout the morning and we will return to Government business in the afternoon.

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

Motion agreed to.

CROWN LANDS AMENDMENT (MULTIPLE LAND USE) BILL 2013

Consideration in Detail

Consideration of the Legislative Council amendments.

Schedule of amendments referred to in message of 19 November 2013

No. 1 Page 3, schedule 1 [2], line 22. Insert "be in the public interest and would" after "would".

No. 2 Page 3, schedule 1 [2]. Insert after line 23:

- (3) Without limitation, the following considerations are relevant to the question of whether the use or occupation of a Crown reserve pursuant to a secondary interest would not be likely to materially harm its use or occupation for the reserved purpose:
 - (a) the proportion of the area of the Crown reserve that may be affected by the secondary interest;
 - (b) if the activities to be conducted pursuant to the secondary interest will be intermittent, the frequency and duration of the impacts of those activities;
 - (c) the degree of permanence of likely harm and in particular whether that harm is irreversible;
 - (d) the current condition of the Crown reserve,
 - (e) the geographical, environmental and social context of the Crown reserve;
 - (f) such other considerations as may be prescribed by the regulations.

No. 3 Page 4, schedule 1 [4], line 17. Omit "6 months". Insert instead "3 months".

No. 4 Page 5, schedule 1 [7]. Insert after line 36:

Period of notice for challenge to existing secondary interests

The prescribed period of notice under section 35A in respect of a lease, licence, permit, easement or right-of-way in force immediately before the commencement of that section is 6 months (despite section 35A (2)).

Mr ANDREW STONER (Oxley—Deputy Premier, Minister for Trade and Investment, and Minister for Regional Infrastructure and Services) [3.34 p.m.]: I move:

That the House agree to the Legislative Council amendments.

The Legislative Council amendments are minor in nature and are agreed to by the Government. They are around definitions of the public interest test as well as the material harm test, and relate to the time frames for dispute resolution. However, in drafting the amendments, which were moved in the other place and to which the Government agreed, a minor error was made in relation to the amendment regarding the public interest requirement. I understand that the member for Marrickville, on behalf of the Opposition, will move a consequential amendment to correct that minor drafting error in the amendment agreed to in the other place.

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

Motion agreed to.

Legislative Council amendments agreed to.

Ms CARMEL TEBBUTT (Marrickville) [3.36 p.m.], by leave: I move Opposition amendment No. 1 on sheet C2013-189:

No. 1 Page 5 schedule 1 [7], line 12. Insert "be in the public interest and would" after "would".

The Crown Lands Amendment (Multiple Land Use) Bill 2013 was amended unanimously in the other place, as the Deputy Premier has indicated, in order to require the Minister to be satisfied that secondary interests are in the public interest. However, the public interest requirement was not inserted into part 7, and it should be. This amendment rectifies that.

Question—That Opposition amendment No. 1 [C2013-189] be agreed to—put and resolved in the affirmative.

Opposition amendment No. 1 [C2013-189] agreed to.

Consideration in detail concluded.

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

CASINO CONTROL AMENDMENT (BARANGAROO RESTRICTED GAMING FACILITY) BILL 2013

Consideration in Detail

Consideration of the Legislative Council amendments.

Schedule of amendments referred to in message of 20 November 2013

No. 1 Page 7, schedule 1 [21], lines 1–3. Omit all words on those lines. Insert instead:

(2) **Poker machines not lawful**

The installation or use of poker machines is not lawful in the Barangaroo restricted gaming facility unless expressly authorised by an Act of Parliament.

No. 2 Page 7, schedule 1. Insert after line 44:

[23] **Section 64A**

Insert after section 64:

64A Staff training facilities and employment program

It is a condition of a restricted gaming licence that the holder of the licence establish and maintain:

- (a) facilities for the training of persons employed or working in the Barangaroo restricted gaming facility in carrying out their duties and responsibilities, and
- (b) a program for the employment of Aboriginal people in connection with the operation of the Barangaroo restricted gaming facility.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD (Wakehurst—Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Infrastructure NSW) [3.37 p.m.], on behalf of Mr George Souris: I move:

That the House agree to the Legislative Council amendments.

I indicate that the Government is in agreement with the amendments moved in another place.

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

Motion agreed to.

Legislative Council amendments agreed to.

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

CONSIDERATION OF MOTIONS TO BE ACCORDED PRIORITY

Regional Infrastructure

Mr JOHN WILLIAMS (Murray-Darling) [3.39 p.m.]: No doubt this will be the last opportunity this year to argue that a motion be accorded priority. In four months this Government will have completed three years in office, so it is important to consider its achievements. Those opposite were in government for 16 years and in less than three years our achievements have exceeded theirs. We hit the ground running and have gone way past those opposite. We have heard about record spending on infrastructure and health, and transport and education expenditure by this Liberal-Nationals Government. Plenty of announcements have been made for the city, which has done very well, but regional New South Wales has been the subject of record spending in areas that those opposite never knew existed. For example, we have the Bridges for the Bush program. Those opposite would not know about the Tooleybuc township or where it is.

Mr Richard Amery: I played bowls there.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! The member for Murray-Darling does not require any assistance.

Mr JOHN WILLIAMS: The member for Mount Druitt knows Tooleybuc, but he does not remember where it is. That is okay because that happens when one reaches your age, Richard. Under Bridges for the Bush Tooleybuc will have a bridge capable of carrying higher mass limit [HML] vehicles to guarantee the transfer of goods between New South Wales and Victoria. The present alternate route involves travelling to Swan Hill or Euston and then crossing the river. But Tooleybuc will have a brand-new bridge because this Liberal-Nationals Government looks after places in regional New South Wales that the lot opposite never knew existed. Those opposite were lost in a 16-year fog, working out who might be leader and the money-go-round to try to guarantee what would happen to those now sitting in the Independent Commission Against Corruption hearings and how they could better themselves. Unfortunately for them, my motion deserves priority to put a peg in the sand and to recognise the record spending by this Liberal-Nationals Government after less than three years in office. [*Time expired.*]

Western Sydney Train Timetables

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) [3.42 p.m.]: My motion deserves to be accorded priority because this Government, having pledged better train services for Western Sydney, has introduced a new train timetable that treats Western Sydney commuters like second-class citizens.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! I am having trouble hearing the member for Bankstown.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK: I am disappointed that the Minister for Transport has left the Chamber. Perhaps her mates Jack Simos and Richard McKinnon from Conrad Capital could pick her up in Willoughby and then swing by and pick me up to go to Chester Hill train station and share the experience of commuters. A journey from Chester Hill to Strathfield used to take 15 minutes by train.

Mr Andrew Fraser: Sh, you'll wake the upper House.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK: Don't tell me to be quiet. Get out. Commuters from Chester Hill now must change trains at Birrong and at Lidcombe and then alight at Strathfield—a total of three trains for a journey that used to take 15 minutes on one train. The Minister is delighted with the new timetable. On 17 September she claimed:

What a great day this is for our rail customers ... this is a wonderful announcement ... We have undertaken the biggest rewrite of the train timetable in a generation which has the benefit of delivering as many opportunities for our customers as possible.

I am looking forward to hearing the feedback.

I shall cite some of that feedback. Robert Pearson, who suffers from cancer, needs to catch four trains from his home in Chester Hill to receive treatment at Concord Hospital.

Mr Guy Zangari: Shame.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK: Exactly—shame. He has to change trains at Birrong, Lidcombe and Strathfield and then take a bus to Rhodes. What a joke. I have an example of what a Macquarie University student experiences. When I attended Macquarie University 15 years ago the journey from Chester Hill involved catching two trains and a bus. Now a student must catch six trains to get to the university. New South Wales is going backwards under the Minister for Transport. Thousands of peak-hour commuters from Campbelltown to Burwood now have to change at Granville and run from one platform to another to try to make the connection. The new timetable has removed the 9.02 a.m. Mount Victoria to city train, leaving Blue Mountains residents with a two-hour gap in peak-hour services. Shame on this Government.

I am glad the member for East Hills is in the Chamber because East Hills, Panania, Revesby and Padstow residents have fewer services under the new timetable. Every time the Minister repeats the mantra that she has fixed the trains, she mocks the thousands of people in Western Sydney who are now forced by her new timetable to endure longer journeys and change trains multiple times. The Minister bellows across the Chamber like a muffled platform loudspeaker that she has fixed the trains. If she stepped out of Willoughby and into Western Sydney she would be in for a rude shock. The people of Western Sydney are unhappy.

Question—That the motion of the member for Murray-Darling be accorded priority—put.

The House divided.

Ayes, 64

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

Noes, 23

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

Pair

Mr Edwards

Mr Rees

Question resolved in the affirmative.

REGIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE**Motion Accorded Priority**

Mr JOHN WILLIAMS (Murray-Darling) [3.57 p.m.]: I move:

That this House notes that the Government is:

- (1) Delivering on its election promises.
- (2) Listening and responding to the needs of regional New South Wales.

No doubt members who represent Sydney electorates have had a good opportunity to talk about the great amount of spending that has gone on in the Sydney metropolitan area. There have been major infrastructure works that would never have been envisaged by the previous Labor Government in 16 years. There is no doubt that in the Government's first three budgets we have seen a record level of funding for roads and bridges. I highlight that across New South Wales, and particularly in country New South Wales, the maintenance funding for roads and bridges is at an historic high. The 2013-14 budget allocation was \$1.5 billion, including more than \$253 million in grants to councils. That is a massive 32 per cent funding increase on the \$191 million spent by the former Labor Government in 2010-11.

We went to the polls in 2011 and we were aware that Labor had done nothing, in particular in regional New South Wales. It would have had no chance of selling any of its policies if it was re-elected because we had seen them all before. We had been subjected to 16 years of empty promises. When the Premier talked about unveiling a new railway project, the poor local member who was roped in knew that nothing was ever going to happen. Rent-a-crowd was there hooking into the scones. The Premier, with a shining face, stood in front of a banner that was advertising the project. In all my experience as a motor dealer I never saw new car releases that were done that well. Motor dealers were happy to spend money advertising their messages but nothing ever hit the road. The poor local member knew he was a goner. He had to say, "They have decided to shelve it." There were 26 of those projects. This Government has not done that.

Mr Gareth Ward: What did they do?

Mr JOHN WILLIAMS: I hear the member for Kiama. Not long after this Government was elected to office members visited the areas where fatal accidents had occurred on the Princes Highway in an attempt to address those issues. This Government hit the ground running. It was left with a decimated bank account but it was still able to direct some revenue into regional New South Wales, which saw record spending in health. The member for Dubbo, who is present in the Chamber, has a new hospital in his electorate.

Mr Troy Grant: Four.

Mr JOHN WILLIAMS: There are four new hospitals in his electorate. I wanted to prove that we are not six-fingered. The level of spending that has occurred in less than three years is amazing. Labor had 16 years in the mist; it was trying to find its way around while lost in the fog. It had no chance of achieving that milestone in 16 years but we have achieved it in less than three years. We implemented the Bridges for the Bush program and improved this State's road transport system. [*Time expired.*]

Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) [4.02 p.m.]: The motion accorded priority was moved by the member for Murray-Darling—one of my all-time favourite members. However, he neglected to mention that more bitumen was laid in the Murray-Darling electorate under former Labor member Peter Black than at any other time in the history of New South Wales. He was probably annoyed about that because as a used car salesman his business relied on people's cars breaking down and becoming defunct so they would have to purchase a new one. So there might be a bit of animosity and regret. He also forgot to mention that the Labor Party restored the train to Broken Hill after it was removed by the former Coalition Government. Those are some of the things that I wanted on the record.

While I am talking about records, recently I had the good fortune to travel to the Gold Coast in Queensland but my trip took much longer because of all the roadwork on the Pacific Highway. Let me give Government members the opportunity to take their feet out of their mouths by informing them that all the projects currently underway on the Pacific Highway were funded by State and Federal Labor governments. Government members whinge and moan that there is no money for the Pacific Highway when they should be

concerned about what is occurring on the New South Wales and Queensland border. When Labor's funding runs out there will be no roadwork and nothing will be happening. The Hunter Expressway, the single biggest piece of road infrastructure in New South Wales, runs through the entire Cessnock electorate. Members would be interested to know that \$1.5 million of the \$1.7 billion that has been allocated for those roadworks has been funded by the Federal Labor Government.

Mr Andrew Fraser: Point of order: As members know, the Pacific Highway is the biggest piece of road infrastructure—

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! What is the member's point of order?

Mr Andrew Fraser: The member for Cessnock claimed it was the M3.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! There is no point of order. The member for Cessnock has the call.

Mr CLAYTON BARR: Let me clarify for the member for Coffs Harbour that it is the biggest piece of road infrastructure. I am happy to note that Government members acknowledged that Labor is funding the road that they love so much. The message that I have is not a message for Labor; it is a message for the Liberal-Nationals Government that is controlling the books and giving so little funding to its members. Importantly, the Hunter Expressway will change the way in which people move around this State, in particular in the Hunter Valley. I note that the Crown Lands Amendment (Multiple Land Use) Bill 2013 had to be amended to reflect the wishes of Labor as there had been a significant amount of scaremongering. Let us not forget that the Regional Relocation (Home Buyers Grant) Amendment Bill 2013 had to be completely rewritten to reflect Labor's suggestions. All the money that was wasted could have been spent on infrastructure in regional New South Wales. However, it was spent on the Casino Control Amendment (Barangaroo Restricted Gaming Facility) Bill 2013 that involves the Star casino—a great use of regional money that was acknowledged by the Deputy Premier.

In addressing issues relating to regional New South Wales it would be remiss of me not to mention the Government's massive job cuts. This Government sacked 300 staff from the Department of Primary Industries in regional New South Wales, three jails have been closed in Kirkconnell, Berrima and Grafton, and about 500 staff have lost their jobs. The Government sacked 30 agronomists and 50 biosecurity officers. Money has been withdrawn from biosecurity. Drought declarations have been abolished, although there were some pleasing announcements in the Chamber today about that. Four staff from Crown Lands based in Goulburn have been sacked; trade and investment offices in Tweed Heads, Broken Hill, Coffs Harbour and Goulburn have closed; catchment management authorities and livestock health and pest authorities have been disbanded; the Lands office in Hay has been closed; jails have been closed; a private investigator was employed to sue Mr Parkes, a member of its own party; the community compliance and monitoring group that monitors some of the most dangerous criminals who are not currently in jail has been disbanded in Bathurst, Wollongong, Tamworth and Wagga Wagga, which is a disgrace. [*Time expired.*]

Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands) [4.07 p.m.]: What a paltry contribution to debate by the member for Cessnock. How many members of Country Labor remain?

Mr Clayton Barr: Just one.

Mr ADAM MARSHALL: Just the member for Cessnock. In his contribution to debate the member for Cessnock raised the issue of the Pacific Highway and the funding arrangements. It was those on the other side of the House who tried to change the funding arrangements. Was it not Federal Labor and a guy called Albanese that tried to dud New South Wales out of the funding it was owed? But the O'Farrell Government put the pressure on. It is good to see that those roadworks are continuing on this important piece of infrastructure.

I am a great student of *Hansard*. I stay up late at night to read it all the time. In fact, even before I entered this place I used to love reading it. The other day I came across a little gem—the speech of the Leader of the Opposition on his infrastructure strategy. How many times in that 20-minute speech did he mention regional New South Wales? The answer is none. Not once did the Leader of the Opposition mention regional New South Wales. That is indicative of how much those opposite care about infrastructure and services in regional New South Wales. But this has not only happened since they have been in opposition. I can recall that

one day during my previous life in local government at Gunnedah Tony Kelly rocked into town. Do members remember that name? He was there to visit AgQuip—aside from the member for Cessnock, none of those opposite would know what that is—and he also looked at a rail overpass.

Tony Kelly said that Gunnedah would get a new bridge to solve all the troubles and woes with all the coal trains going through the area. Hang on; someone else made a speech about trying to close down the coal industry in New South Wales. That is different to our side; we support regional jobs. The bridge Tony Kelly said we would get never appeared. We had to wait until Duncan Gay came along—the best roads Minister we have ever had in this State. Under his watch we have had record funding in roads. Under the \$165 million Bridges for the Bush program, Gunnedah will receive a new \$16 million rail overbridge and Bundurra a new \$3.5 million Emu Crossing Bridge. Country New South Wales is getting a far better deal under the O'Farrell Government than it did under the former Labor Government.

Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend) [4.10 p.m.]: Paragraph (1) of the motion of the member for Murray-Darling asks the House to note that the Government is delivering on its election promises. I am very tempted to amend the motion but I will resist that temptation in the absence of so many Government members. I contend that the motion should read that the Government is delivering on job losses.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! Does the member for Wallsend seek to move an amendment?

Ms SONIA HORNER: No, but I am tempted to move one. I will now give a brief snapshot of the job losses that have occurred in the Hunter over the past few weeks. The Port of Newcastle is being sold off for one-tenth of its worth and only a fraction of that funding will be returned to Newcastle and the Hunter. Forty-three workers have been sacked from UGL in Broadmeadow, and jobs are being slashed at Volgren and EDI in the Hunter. Caterpillar distributor WesTrac has decided to shed 200 jobs and dozens of jobs have gone from the Tomago plant in the Port Stephens electorate. Why did 16 of those 80 jobs lost in the Hunter belong to apprentices? This indicates a failure by the Government to create a climate for investment and jobs growth in not only the Hunter but also regional New South Wales.

The smallest regional preschools in the Hunter will be hardest hit by the Government's changes. Indeed, some will lose half of their base funding. What about the Gonski losses in the region? Morisset High School will receive \$48,521 less in equity funding. Today the nine remaining residents of Muswellbrook District Hospital on-site aged care facility will be moved to make way for its emergency department in what many staff representatives say is the culmination of the Liberal-Nationals Government's underfunding of this hospital. Appallingly, the number of Community Services caseworkers in the Hunter and Central Coast has steadily fallen under the O'Farrell Government despite its public reassurances that no front-line staff have been cut. Yet those on the other side are trying to convince the people of New South Wales that they are delivering on their election promises. The only election promise they are delivering on is job cuts.

Mr GARETH WARD: I seek leave to make a contribution to debate on behalf of my community on the issue of jobs in regional New South Wales.

Leave not granted.

Mr JOHN WILLIAMS (Murray-Darling) [4.13 p.m.], in reply: I am disappointed that the member for Kiama was not given an opportunity to speak. I am sure he would have told the House about the great work the O'Farrell Government is doing in honouring its election commitments in his electorate. The member for Cessnock, Clayton—the member you're having when you're not having a member—went back in history. He reminded us of Peter Black, the former member for Murray-Darling, who put the train in and a bit of bitumen on the Silver City Highway. That hardly compares to the improvements that have been made in my electorate since the O'Farrell Government came into office.

The member for Cessnock was complimentary of the work done by the O'Farrell Government on the Pacific Highway. But let me remind the member for Cessnock that when Michael Egan was Treasurer he funded the development of Fox Studios with regional development money. Money that was supposed to be spent in regional and rural New South Wales was spent in Sydney. The member for Northern Tablelands is a good young member who has done his homework. He looked at all the drivel in *Hansard* that those opposite have spoken over time. Perhaps in his spare time he could research the announcements those opposite have made in this regard and tick off how many were actioned. I can guarantee a nil result.

Unfortunately, the member for Wallsend has become very negative in opposition. She was much cheerier when those opposite were in government, although she did not even get a police station out of the former Government. Even when it was going down the drain she still had a smile on her face. The member for Wallsend is seeing the changes that the O'Farrell Government is making from the wrong side of the Chamber. If she were to have a look from this side of the Chamber she would see that things are going pretty well. In conclusion, the member for Monaro is looking forward to his Jerrabomberra high school, which is definitely coming. [*Time expired.*]

Question—That the motion be agreed to—put.

The House divided.

Ayes, 64

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

Noes, 20

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

Pair

Mr Edwards

Mr Rees

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Motion agreed to.

CRIMES (ADMINISTRATION OF SENTENCES) AMENDMENT BILL 2013

Bill introduced on motion by Mr Greg Smith, read a first time and printed.

Second Reading

Mr GREG SMITH (Epping—Attorney General, and Minister for Justice) [4.30 p.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Government is pleased to introduce the Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Amendment Bill 2013. The object of the bill is to make miscellaneous amendments to the Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Act 1999 to

improve the administration of sentences in New South Wales. I will give a brief overview of the main provisions of the bill before outlining each of the amendments in turn. The bill expressly authorises the Commissioner of Corrective Services to receive remuneration on behalf of inmates on the external works release program and to make deductions from that remuneration to contribute towards the cost of the program and the inmate's imprisonment. The bill also provides for the more equitable operation of parole by enabling the State Parole Authority to deal with offenders who have had their parole revoked in the same way as it deals with offenders who have had their parole refused where not to do so would amount to manifest injustice.

The bill also will improve the efficiency of the parole system by enabling the Secretary of the State Parole Authority to sign commitment warrants and act as a non-judicial member of the authority in urgent circumstances. The remaining provisions of the bill provide for the accommodation of certain classes of offenders in Corrective Services NSW [CSNSW] residential facilities and protection from civil liability claims for those offenders housed in residential facilities who perform community service work. Finally, the bill improves the capacity of Corrective Services NSW to ensure the good order and security of the correctional system by making amendments to the Act in relation to segregated custody directions and the recording of conversations over cell call alarm systems, and for directions to private operators of correctional centres to drug and alcohol test employees. The bill also amends the Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Regulation 2008 to enable biometric identification systems to be used in any correctional centre. I now turn to the specific provisions of the bill in turn.

In relation to remuneration earned from external works release programs, schedule 1 [1] to the bill makes provision with respect to remuneration earned by an inmate while he or she is a participant in the external works release program. The external works release program has been administered by Corrective Services NSW since the 1960s. The program gives inmates the opportunity to gain meaningful employment that may be ongoing after release and to participate in vocational training. The program assists inmates with their rehabilitation and reintegration into the community. Under clause 7A, remuneration that is paid by an employer to an inmate must be paid to the commissioner on behalf of the inmate.

From such remuneration the commissioner may deduct a contribution towards the cost of administering the external works release program, expenses related to the inmate's participation in the program, such as travel fares, and the costs of the inmate's imprisonment. These contributions are currently made with the consent of the inmate. The proposed amendments will ensure that the longstanding practice carried out by most jurisdictions in Australia of making deductions from money earned by inmates attending work release is supported by express statutory authority in New South Wales.

Schedule 1 [24] to the bill validates any deductions from remuneration earned by an inmate as a participant in an external work release program that were made before the commencement of new section 7A (2) if such deductions would have been validly made had they been made on or after the commencement of that provision. Schedule 2 [1] to the bill also extends the definition of prison earnings in the Fines Act 1996 to include remuneration earned by inmates as participants in external work release programs to allow for the enforcement of victims support levies that are payable by inmates. The payment of contributions will assist Corrective Services NSW to defray the costs of the program and the inmate's incarceration and ensure that the State is not exposed to compensation claims from former and current inmates for money deducted from their wages and salaries for purposes of the program. Victims will benefit from the amendments to the Fines Act 1996 because victims support levies may be taken directly from the remuneration earned by inmates on the program.

In relation to segregated custody directions, schedule 1 [2] to the bill modifies the basis on which the Commissioner of Corrective Services may direct that an inmate be held in segregated custody so that the commissioner may make a segregated custody direction if of the view that the direction is necessary to secure the safety of others, or the security of a correctional centre, or good order and discipline within a correctional centre. Under the current provisions of the Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Act 1999, the commissioner may only direct that an inmate be held in segregated custody if of the opinion that the association of the inmate with other inmates constitutes, or is likely to constitute, a threat to the personal safety of any other person, or the security of a correctional centre, or good order and discipline within a correctional centre.

The purpose, however, of a segregated custody direction is to ensure personal safety, security, good order and discipline within a correctional centre by providing a "time-out" or "cooling-off period" during which an inmate who has exhibited threatening conduct can be segregated from other inmates until such time as the risk is no longer present. The bill amends the Act so that an inmate's association with other inmates is

not the sole criterion upon which the commissioner is able to make a segregated custody direction. For example, an inmate may engage in conduct that constitutes a threat to the personal safety of another person, such as a staff member, or the security of, or good order and discipline within a correctional centre without the involvement of any other inmate and it is the conduct itself, or likelihood of the conduct, and not the association with other inmates, that gives rise to the risks which can be obviated by the imposition of a segregated custody direction.

In relation to the recording of conversations made over cell call alarm systems, schedule 1 [4] to the bill provides for an exemption from the Surveillance Devices Act 2007 to allow conversations made through cell call alarm systems in correctional centres to be recorded. This amendment implements a deputy State coroner's recommendation that recordings be retained in cases where inmates use the cell call alarm system for an emergency. Presently, the Surveillance Devices Act 2007 prohibits the recording of a private conversation by a listening device unless all the parties to the conversation consent, expressly or implied, to the listening device being so used. The Act also prohibits the possession of a record of a private conversation obtained in contravention of the Act.

The requirement for the consent of all parties to a private conversation to the recording of the conversation in order for the recording to be allowed by the Surveillance Devices Act 2007 requires inmates to consent to the recording of any conversation using the cell call alarm system. This is problematic given the emergency purpose for which the alarm system is installed. The proposed amendment will resolve this issue. It is noteworthy that cell call alarm conversations are recorded in correctional centres in Queensland and the Australian Capital Territory, as this is expressly permitted by legislation in those jurisdictions.

I turn now to the issue of civil liability protection in respect of certain community service work. Schedule 1 [5] and [6] to the bill extend the general provisions of the Act dealing with community service work to work performed by offenders housed in declared residential facilities under the Act. As a matter of practice, Corrective Services NSW requires residents, on admission, to sign an undertaking to abide by certain rules: for example, a requirement to abide by curfew requirements and participate in programs. One of the undertakings is to perform unpaid community work. Residents are encouraged and assisted to gain paid employment. However, for those without paid employment, voluntary community work is encouraged as a means of adaptation to a work ethic and a structured lifestyle. It is provided by community agencies that also provide work for the community service work scheme.

The Act currently protects a person involved in community service work from civil liability towards third parties for acts and omissions of the offender performing the work. The Act also protects a person involved in community service work from civil liability towards the offender performing work. However, community service work is currently defined as work performed by an offender who is in full-time detention, or under an intensive correction order, or under a home detention order, or under a community service order. The amendments extend the definition of community service work to capture offenders housed in residential facilities who perform voluntary community work at the direction or request of Corrective Services NSW.

I turn to the topic of parole orders in exceptional extenuating circumstances. At present, there is no provision under the Act for Corrective Services NSW to monitor parolees who are released to parole in exceptional extenuating circumstances, or to revoke that parole, if the grounds that led to the making of an order to release an offender to parole no longer exist. Schedule 1 [8] to the bill amends the Act and imposes a statutory condition on parole orders made on the grounds that the offender is dying or because of exceptional extenuating circumstances that require the offender to be subject to supervision for the whole period the parole order is in force. Schedule 1 [12] to the bill also enables the State Parole Authority to revoke a parole order made on the grounds that the offender is dying or because of exceptional extenuating circumstances, if satisfied that those grounds or those circumstances no longer exist.

As to consideration of parole so as to avoid manifest injustice, the Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Act 1999 currently prevents the State Parole Authority from considering parole to avoid manifest injustice for offenders who have had their parole revoked, following release on parole, in the same way as it deals with offenders who have been refused parole prior to release. This anomaly arises from the definition of "parole eligibility date" in the Act. The current definition means that a parolee whose parole order is revoked and who is returned to custody effectively is prevented from reapplying for parole for 12 months after the date on which he or she was returned to custody, regardless of the circumstances. By contrast, if an offender is refused parole, the offender can be considered for parole at any time if manifest injustice grounds exist. Those grounds are set out in the Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Regulation 2008.

This issue previously has been raised by the New South Wales Sentencing Council and the State Parole Authority. Therefore, a parolee revoked for breaching supervision conditions—such as not reporting, changing address without permission, or failing to comply with the directions of a mental health team—would serve, on their return to custody, 12 months before being eligible for re-release or until the expiry of his or her sentence, whichever is the earliest. While the 12-month requirement for the reconsideration of parole following revocation is appropriate in some cases, in certain other circumstances it may be considered unjust. It is arguable that the 12-month requirement in some cases is punitive as it removes the opportunity for conditional liberty for at least 12 months, or for the remainder of the sentence, as the case may be.

Schedule 1 [9] to the bill amends the manifest injustice provisions of the Act to overcome the difficulty presented by the definition of "parole eligibility date" so that the State Parole Authority can consider the granting of parole to avoid manifest injustice in relation to an offender whose parole has been revoked at any time after revocation. The circumstances that will constitute manifest injustice whereby an offender's parole order has been revoked are to be prescribed by the regulation. Regarding the signing of warrants committing offenders to correctional centres, schedule 1 [13] and [14] to the bill make effective warrants issued by the State Parole Authority that commit offenders to correctional centres on their signing by the secretary of the State Parole Authority rather than by a judicial member of the State Parole Authority.

Occasionally, the current warrant check and verification process results in judicial officers being detained at the State Parole Authority for some hours while they await warrants to be returned for signing. The proposed amendment overcomes this issue and is intended to make the operations of the State Parole Authority more administratively effective. The proposed amendment is not intended to remove the judicial member as a signatory of the warrant, but to include the secretary of the State Parole Authority as an alternative signatory in place of the judicial member, when necessary.

As to security of certain information, schedule 1 [15] and [16] to the bill will now enable a judicial member of the State Parole Authority or of the Serious Offenders Review Council to prohibit the disclosure of any information relating to the content of a report or document, only if the judicial member considers that non-disclosure of the information is necessary in the public interest and that the public interest outweighs any right to procedural fairness that may be denied by non-disclosure of the information. The State Parole Authority and Serious Offenders Review Council often receive sensitive criminal intelligence information from the NSW Police Force and Corrective Services NSW about the activities of offenders and their associates, some of whom are violent, dangerous and at a high risk of reoffending. This information is relevant and necessary for the functions of those bodies to be exercised in the public interest.

However, it will often be the case that disclosure of the information is contrary to the public interest. The NSW Police Force and the Ministry for Police and Emergency Services support these amendments. The public interest in preventing the disclosure of sensitive criminal intelligence information, including information summarising or indicating the nature of such information, has been long recognised by the courts. As such, there is a need to ensure that the State Parole Authority and the Serious Offenders Review Council may rule that no information whatsoever that relates to sensitive material before them be disclosed. The proposed amendments strike an appropriate balance between the protection of sensitive information and the need for procedural fairness by retaining the discretionary power of the State Parole Authority and Serious Offenders Review Council to weigh up those two considerations when considering the disclosure of information.

As to the constitution of a quorum of the State Parole Authority, under the Act a quorum is required for a State Parole Authority meeting to convene. In an emergency situation, such as an urgent parole revocation hearing that has been scheduled on a weekend when the State Parole Authority does not normally sit, a quorum may be difficult to gather. In addition, the New Year holiday period, during which the State Parole Authority does not normally sit, has traditionally proven to be a particularly problematic period to bring together a quorum in emergency situations.

To ensure the efficiency and consistency of the operations of the State Parole Authority, schedule 1 [22] to the bill amends the Act so that the secretary of the State Parole Authority may act in the capacity of a non-judicial member at the discretion of the judicial member. The secretary of the State Parole Authority, as an employee of Corrective Services NSW, is generally available at all times, as opposed to official and community members, and has a very wide breadth of knowledge and experience that is of great value to the State Parole Authority.

As to the accommodation of offenders in residential facilities, schedule 1 [20] to the bill extends the classes of offenders who may be accommodated in premises declared to be residential facilities under the Act to

include offenders who are subject to an extended or interim supervision order, a home detention order or an intensive correction order, or offenders in community custody who are subject to a community supervision order. This amendment will give effect to the current practice of Corrective Services NSW of providing offenders serving extended supervision and other community based orders with temporary accommodation in a residential facility. I point out that it is not unknown for persons subject to such orders to experience accommodation disruption during the period of the order, and to be accommodated in a residential facility on a short-term basis as an alternative to revocation of their order and subsequent imprisonment. In all such cases, temporary accommodation in a residential facility may assist with the rehabilitation of the offender.

Regarding alcohol and drug testing of staff at privately managed correctional centres, schedule 1 [21] to the bill now requires operators of privately managed correctional centres, whether management companies or sub-management companies, to prepare and implement a program approved by the commissioner for the testing of their correctional centre staff for alcohol and prohibited drugs, and to ensure that staff are not under the influence of alcohol or prohibited drugs when on duty or when present at their place of work and about to go on duty. The bill also enables the commissioner to direct a private operator to require staff to undergo such testing in accordance with the operator's approved testing program or in accordance with the testing regime provided for in the Act for correctional officers and other persons employed by Corrective Services NSW.

Corrective Services NSW currently does not have the legislative capacity to give a direction to a private management company to conduct drug and alcohol testing. In addition, there may be circumstances or staff performance-related issues which necessitate Corrective Services NSW staff conduct the testing. The proposed amendments therefore give the commissioner the statutory power to be able to direct management companies at correctional centres to conduct drug and alcohol testing of staff, and also for Corrective Services NSW to be able to conduct drug and alcohol testing at privately managed correctional centres if the commissioner considers it appropriate to do so.

As to biometric testing, the Crimes (Administration of Sentences) Regulation 2008 enables the commissioner to authorise the operation of a biometric identification system only in correctional centres in which high-security, extreme high-security or extreme high-risk restricted inmates are accommodated, or in which inmates are received into custody before they are classified. Schedule 3 [4] to the bill broadens the commissioner's authority under the regulation to use a biometric identification system in any correctional centre. This amendment is made in recognition of the fact that biometrics have now been in use successfully for approximately 15 years. At least one mobile telephone manufacturer, for example, is using biometric technology to enable the user to unlock his or her phone.

For Corrective Services NSW, the biometric identification system ensures that each person who enters a correctional centre for the purposes of conducting a visit or carrying out duties or activities requiring access to the centre is the same person who leaves the correctional centre after conducting that visit or carrying out those duties or activities. There are existing safeguards in the regulation, including penalties for breaches of privacy, to ensure that appropriate privacy practices are adhered to. Finally, the bill makes a number of other amendments of a consequential nature, and enables regulations of a savings or transitional nature to be made. I commend the bill to the House.

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

BAIL (CONSEQUENTIAL AMENDMENTS) BILL 2013

Bill introduced on motion by Mr Greg Smith, read a first time and printed.

Second Reading

Mr GREG SMITH (Epping—Attorney General, and Minister for Justice) [4.55 p.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

The Government is pleased to introduce the Bail (Consequential Amendments) Bill 2013. The purpose of the bill is to make a number of minor amendments to the Bail Act 2013 and to make miscellaneous amendments to other Acts to reflect the passage of that Act and the repeal of the Bail Act 1978. The Government's new Bail Act 2013 was passed by Parliament on 22 May 2013 and received assent on 27 May 2013. The Government intends

for the new Act to commence operation 12 months after its passage by Parliament in May 2014. The process of implementing the proposed legislation and preparing for its commencement is underway. As a result of that activity, some minor drafting issues with the proposed legislation have been identified and this bill will make amendments to the Act to clarify those issues.

The bill also makes a number of consequential amendments to other Acts which are needed to reflect the passage of the new Bail Act. Many of the Acts which require amendment relate to aspects of the criminal justice system, such as the Children (Criminal Proceedings) Act 1987 and the Crimes (Sentencing Procedure) Act 1999. However, whilst the determination of bail generally arises in the context of criminal proceedings, it also arises in a number of other contexts, such as where a warrant is issued for a witness in proceedings before the Coroner's Court or where a person is apprehended for failing to provide details to an authorised officer under the Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997. Consequently, there are a number of pieces of legislation, criminal and otherwise, which provide for the determination of bail under the Bail Act, all of which need to be updated in order to ensure a smooth transition to the new Act upon its commencement. This bill will make the necessary amendments to ensure this occurs.

I now turn to the main detail of the bill. Schedule 1 to the bill contains a number of technical amendments to the new Bail Act 2013 to clarify aspects of that Act. Schedule 1 [1] and [2] will amend section 26 of the Act to clarify that a person other than the accused, who is required by a bail authority to provide security pursuant to a bail condition, must be an acceptable person. Pursuant to section 26 (4) of the Act, the determination of whether or not a person is an acceptable person for this purpose will be made by the bail authority imposing the bail condition, or if the bail authority does not make this decision, the officer or court to whom the bail acknowledgment is given.

The Bail Act 2013 already requires that the security provided for bail must be acceptable and that a person who provides a character acknowledgement must be an acceptable person, and these reforms will simply align the requirements as to acceptability. Further, the requirement that a person who provides security for bail be acceptable is already imposed by the existing Bail Act 1978 and it is appropriate that it be retained. Schedule 1 [3] will amend section 33 (4) (a) of the Act to clarify the standard information that must be included in a bail acknowledgement. In particular, it will require that the bail acknowledgement contain a warning that committing an offence while on bail could result in a more severe penalty on conviction for that offence rather than a more severe penalty for the offence for which bail is granted.

Schedule 1 [4] will amend section 50 of the Act to insert a provision which makes clear that a prosecutor may oppose a release application by an accused person without having to make a detention application. This provision will not alter the intended operation of detention or release applications under the Act. It has been included simply to remove any doubt about whether a detention application is required in order to oppose a release application so that this issue does not create confusion when the new Act commences. It is not the intent of the new application procedure provided for under the bill that a prosecutor who wishes to oppose a release application will have to make a detention application in order to do so. Nor for that matter would the accused need to make a release application in order to oppose a detention application by the prosecutor. If an application is made by a party then that application can be opposed without a cross-application having to be made.

Schedule 1 [5] to the bill will clarify in proposed section 64 of the Act that an authorised justice may hear a variation application for an offence even if a bail decision has previously been made by a court, so long as the condition subject to the variation application is one that can be reviewed by an authorised justice. Schedule 1 [6] makes a small amendment to proposed section 88 of the Act to make clear that after a finding is made as to the guilt of a person accused of an offence, the court must ensure that consideration is given to the return of any bail money or bail security deposited in connection with the offence. The existing wording of that provision requires the court itself to consider those matters. However, in practice this activity is often undertaken by registry staff at the relevant courthouse. The proposed amendment reflects this reality. Schedule 1 [7] makes a further amendment to proposed section 88 to allow for the regulations to make provision for the return of bail money and bail security.

Finally, schedule 1 [8] will insert a provision in proposed section 98 stipulating that the regulations can make provision for the forms to be used under the Act. The regulations to support the new Act are presently being settled and they will need to make some provision for the forms required by the Act, such as the bail acknowledgement. This amendment will ensure that the regulations can provide for these forms and that they can legally be made under the regulation. Schedule 2 to the bill contains miscellaneous amendments to other

legislation that are necessary to reflect the enactment of the Bail Act 2013. I will not set out these amendments in detail as many are minor or technical in nature, including updating references to provisions of the existing Bail Act 1978 with references to relevant provisions in the new Act. However, I will address briefly some of the more noteworthy amendments contained in this schedule.

Schedule 2.2 [2] includes amendments to remake sections 109U and 109V of the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998. These sections provide for the making of a bail decision in relation to a person brought before the Children's Court pursuant to a warrant issued under that Act. As these proceedings do not relate to offences, proposed section 109U stipulates that the Bail Act 2013 is to apply to the person as if they were accused of an offence and the proceedings before the court are proceedings for that offence. This means that the unacceptable risk test for determining bail under the new Bail Act will apply to the determination of bail for such a person. Existing sections 109U and 109V of the Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act have the same effect by deeming the person an accused person under the Bail Act 1978. The bill remakes similar provisions also whereby proceedings following execution of a warrant are deemed to be proceedings for an offence so that bail can be determined in relation to the Coroner's Act 2009, the Criminal Procedure Act 1986 and the Local Court Act 2007.

Further, the bill remakes provisions that facilitate the making of a bail decision for people brought before the court by an authorised officer under the Local Government Act 1993, the Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997 and the Water Management Act 2000. Item [4] of schedule 2.4 contains amendments to the Children (Criminal Proceedings) Act 1987, including remaking section 33 (1) (c2) of that Act. This amendment will preserve the Children's Court's power to adjourn sentence proceedings for up to 12 months from the date of a finding of guilt for particular purposes, where a person is on bail or has had bail dispensed with under the new Bail Act. The permitted purposes for such an adjournment include to assess the person's capacity and prospects of rehabilitation and to allow the person to demonstrate that rehabilitation has taken place.

Such an adjournment was previously permitted under the common law, and was known colloquially as a Griffiths remand or bond. Similar amendments are made to equivalent adjournment provisions in the Crimes (Sentencing Procedure) Act 1999 and the Criminal Procedure Act 1986. This bill represents another step in the Government's comprehensive overhaul of bail laws in New South Wales. It will help to ensure a smooth transition to the Government's new regime for determining bail when the Bail Act 2013 commences operation next year. I commend the bill to the House.

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

MENTAL HEALTH (FORENSIC PROVISIONS) AMENDMENT BILL 2013

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

CROWN LANDS AMENDMENT (MULTIPLE LAND USE) BILL 2013

Message received from the Legislative Council agreeing to the Legislative Assembly's amendment.

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): Order! Government business having concluded, private members' statements will now be proceeded with.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ST GEORGE HOSPITAL

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) [5.07 p.m.]: I congratulate organisers David Horton and Theresa Jacques on last week's successful Fight for St George Hospital forum held in Kogarah. It was wonderful to see the local community so concerned about this important local institution and supporting the New South Wales Government's commitment to rebuild it. The \$800,000 planning stage has begun—certainly a lot of money. Planning a new hospital is a difficult and complex process; planning to rebuild an existing hospital is even more difficult. But for the sake of the St George community we must get it right once and for all, and get it done now.

One point made repeatedly at the forum was that the St George Hospital staff are world class. I know that certainly is the case, as does the Premier and the Minister for Health, Jillian Skinner. That is why after decades of Labor neglect the New South Wales Government is committed to making sure that the hospital is world class. I will continue to fight for further upgrades to St George Hospital.

St George Hospital is a major trauma centre for the State—a facility that serves the growing population of the St George area and the Sutherland shire. The emergency department is one of the busiest in New South Wales, each year treating more than 62,900 patients and admitting around 22,000 patients. That is why the New South Wales Liberal-Nationals went to the last election with a commitment to build a new emergency department at St George Hospital. The promise was that an O'Farrell Government would fund, build and deliver a new emergency department. We are doing just that. Progress on a new \$39 million emergency department is underway: Construction has started. The new emergency department at St George Hospital will provide increased capacity and improved facilities for patients, with up-to-date systems and models of care.

Ms Noreen Hay: You haven't lifted a paint brush.

Mr MARK COURE: Actions speak louder than words. The project has a capital budget of \$39 million and is entirely funded by the O'Farrell Liberal-Nationals Government. Construction of the main works for the new facility has started already, and completion is scheduled for 2014. The project includes five resuscitation bays, a paediatric zone with 12 treatment spaces, an adult fast-track zone, an acute ward with 34 beds, an emergency medical unit, relocation of the Psychiatric Emergency Care Centre, satellite imaging, expanded waiting and triage facilities, eight off-street zones for ambulance drop-offs, and the potential for up to six additional future projects. That is very important.

The new emergency department will provide an enhanced model of care, improve relationships to other hospital functions and make improvements to the entrance of the hospital. The project also provides long-term planning for flexibility for the hospital. The new building will strengthen St George Hospital's role as a tertiary referral centre and as the level one trauma centre for the South Eastern Sydney Local Health District. The existing emergency department on Kensington Street will continue to operate without interruption throughout all stages of the project until the new facility is operational in late 2014. St George Hospital is a perfect example of the former Labor Government's underinvestment in hospital infrastructure. It was, unfortunately, left untouched during Labor's 16 years in government, which proves that Labor is no friend of St George Hospital. I am proud to be a member of this Government that is delivering better health services in my electorate and across southern Sydney.

I am part of a Government that is delivering on health for the St George area, with a commitment to St George Hospital through the recent opening of the mental health unit, the new emergency department and the reopening in February last year of the hydrotherapy pool—a pool that was closed under Labor. I congratulate the Government and, in particular, Premier Barry O'Farrell and Minister for Health Jillian Skinner. We are seeing the biggest capital investment in St George Hospital since 1993, when another Liberal-Nationals Government opened the new wing and entrance along with the seven-story addition to the hospital. That was opened by then Liberal Minister for Health, Ron Phillips. This proves that only a Liberal-Nationals State Government is a true friend of St George Hospital. There is more to be done, of course. As the local member, I will fight to ensure that the next stages of development for St George Hospital are funded over the coming few years.

TRAIN TIMETABLES

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) [5.12 p.m.]: The changes that were introduced by this Government to our bus, train and ferry timetables on 20 and 21 October 2013 have had a significant impact on the commuters of Western Sydney. Since the timetable changes came into effect, there has been public outcry from commuters who use our train services on a daily basis. In some instances commuters need to travel up to five times more often than before as they are now forced to change lines several times in order to reach their destination. The issues with the recent timetable changes have been voiced publicly, as seen in a recent newspaper article about Chester Hill resident Mr Phillip Waters. He could catch a train from Chester Hill to Homebush in approximately 20 minutes before the changes. Since the changes, he must change lines at Birrong, Lidcombe and Strathfield before finally arriving at Homebush. A commute that would take approximately 20 minutes now takes Mr Waters between 55 and 75 minutes. Shame, Minister, shame.

We hear negative feedback from commuters time and again as they voice their unhappiness and frustration with our rail network. The impact that these new timetable changes are having on their day-to-day

commutes is really just the icing on the cake. There has been a continual stream of concerns and complaints from local commuters who are unhappy with the timetable changes. I have heard such complaints from Mr Phu, Mrs Le and Mr Deng—constituents who have all felt the impact of the timetable changes. What does the Government say in response to the multitude of unhappy commuters voicing their concerns? It tries to spruik its profoundly unbelievable message that services have not been cut. In fact, the Government is trying to sell the idea that services have increased and we should be happy. All the while, it is hoping and believing we are all gullible and will not notice the adverse effects that the new timetable is having on our rail network in Western Sydney.

I have heard the concerns of my constituents and residents from neighbouring electorates. They recount their horror stories. They provide feedback, detailing their attempts to hop on the train to travel to destinations that would normally take 10 to 15 minutes to reach by car and 15 to 20 minutes by train. Those trips are now taking constituents from 45 minutes to an hour and require them to change trains several times to reach their destination. How this is an improvement for our rail network is beyond me. The Government made many promises before coming to office. It has made even more while it has been in power. This Government has also broken many of those promises and failed to deliver on so many fronts. The new timetable falls into that category—a failure.

Mr Mark Coure: It's fantastic in my area.

Mr GUY ZANGARI: I note the interjection by the member for Oatley. I ask the member for Oatley, who is laughing, why he does not come to speak to my constituents in Chester Hill or Carramar. Instead, he sits there and interjects. The people of Western Sydney deserve better than this. The new timetable needs to be revoked, reviewed and rewritten. Since the timetable changes have come into effect, we have for some reason seen an increase in the number of old, non-air-conditioned carriages being used. This has resulted in breakdowns, causing delays on the network and leaving a large number of commuters very disgruntled and late for their commute. I do not understand how this Government believes it is acceptable to provide its customers, the commuters on the rail network, with old and outdated carriages that offer little to no ventilation.

Mr Mark Coure: You are not a good local member. That is your problem.

Mr GUY ZANGARI: Oatley, why not come to Fairfield and explain that to my constituents? You sit there, drinking chardonnay and eating pate and caviar. Rather than sitting in an ivory tower, why not come to Western Sydney and explain to my 90-year-old constituent from Chester Hill who visits her daughter on the Central Coast why she now has to catch not two or three trains but six? Oatley, why not come down and do that? You can sit here and talk all you like, but you are gutless.

Mr Mark Coure: My commuters love it.

Mr GUY ZANGARI: Come to Fairfield. You are gutless.

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): Order! I remind members that it is customary during private members' statements not to interject and to treat one another with respect. I remind the member for Fairfield that the correct form of address is "the member for Oatley", not "Oatley". I remind the member for Oatley that he was not interjected on while he was giving his private member's statement.

TAMWORTH ELECTORATE SALVATION ARMY

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth) [5.17 p.m.]: Now to share some love.

Ms Noreen Hay: You always say that.

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON: I am happy to help. On Monday 18 November I had the pleasure of joining the Salvation Army and the organisers of the Kmart Wishing Tree Appeal. This event has been organised for more than 20 years by the great Jenny Cross. The Kmart wishing tree is set up at the front of Kmart and people place gifts under it. Those gifts go to the Salvation Army, which then distributes them to less-fortunate families and others who are unable to receive gifts at Christmas. Last year 1,900 gifts were placed under the tree and distributed to needy families during the festive period. This year we are hoping for 2,000 gifts so that we can spread the joy to those who may not otherwise be in a position to receive a gift. The Anderson family proudly donated a gift and placed it under the tree. We have started the gift giving for 2013.

The Salvation Army does a magnificent job, particularly in the period coming up to Christmas. I pay tribute to it. Major David Rogerson and Major Cathy Rogerson are in charge of the Tamworth corps at the moment. They do a fantastic job.

I was pleased to attend the special service at the Salvation Army chapel on Sunday 17 July. On that day the Salvation Army joined the Nashos. The Oxley Sub Branch of the National Service was in attendance and Jim Jordan and Don Smith, in particular, did a great job. Fifteen to 20 Nashos marched proudly to the Salvation Army chapel. Nearly 300,000 Australian men and women completed national service between 1951 and 1972. Mr Norm Hill read the prayer for the fallen and Cliff Styne read the prayer for the nation. I was the guest speaker and relayed my six years of experience in the Royal Australian Air Force as a signals operator. I spent my time at No. 3 Telecommunications Unit in Perth and Joint Telecommunications Unit in Melbourne. It was a pleasure to join the Nashos to acknowledge and pay tribute not only to the Nashos but also to all service personnel who have fought—from World War I to the ongoing conflicts—for us to live in this great country. We pay our respects by remembering them.

The Tamworth, Gunnedah and Baraba corps of the Salvation Army do a magnificent job across our region and have my full support. The Salvos work in areas such as aged care and counselling, and offer assistance with domestic violence, drug and alcohol problems, financial troubles, problem gambling and youth issues. They also run the Salvos stores. We appreciate their great work. I make a plea for people to donate their time to the Salvation Army to staff the stores in the lead-up to Christmas. In Tamworth they struggle to keep the stores open five days a week. Many more people and community organisations are offering to help at the Salvos stores. Again, I thank the Salvation Army for its great work. I pay my respects and acknowledge the Oxley Sub Branch of the Nashos. I particularly commend the Kmart Wishing Tree initiative, which does a magnificent job providing gifts for those in our community who are less fortunate.

Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.22 p.m.]: I commend the member for Tamworth for his ongoing commitment to the local community, particularly his support of the Kmart Wishing Tree and, more importantly, the Salvation Army. I commend it for the great work it does at all levels in our local community. I encourage members to support local organisations that help people. I have been a patron of the Salvation Army for 17 years and have collected money for it—as I am sure the member for Tamworth has also. When people see the Salvation Army logo they are more than happy to make a donation. The Salvation Army is always one of the first aid agencies to turn up to natural disasters. Well done to the member of Tamworth.

CHICKEN HATCHING PROGRAM

LIVE ANIMAL EXPORT TRADE

Ms CHERIE BURTON (Kogarah) [5.23 p.m.]: I bring to the attention of the House two issues about which I have been inundated with letters from my local constituency: first, the Chicken Hatching Program; and, secondly, the Federal Government's commitment to the live export trade. As many members know, I am a long-time campaigner for animal welfare and animal rights. I believe that teaching a child about the intricacies and wonders of the life cycle is an exciting and valuable experience, but today some schools are approaching this lesson differently. Chicken Hatching Programs bring embryos and incubators into childcare centres, kindergartens and schools so that chicks may hatch in the classrooms.

These educational programs provide electronic thermostats in place of mother hens and can deliver the eggs two to three days from hatching so that children do not have to wait the 21 days it usually takes for a chicken to hatch. The artificial hatching boxes not only compromise the educational value of these programs, but also are an extremely poor substitute for a mother hen. Mother chickens are highly protective of their young and go to great lengths to lay their eggs in safe, private locations, turning them constantly to maintain the right temperature. The RSPCA reports that it is not uncommon for chicks in hatching boxes to die or to be born with deformities as a result of inadequate care and incubator malfunctions. Classroom situations are unable to replicate the special care given by mother hens and in some instances incubators have been switched off accidentally, resulting in death or crippled hatchlings.

In New South Wales the program is run by Living Eggs, and there are similar programs in other States. Each year thousands of chicks are hatched in incubators at childcare centres and schools throughout Australia. When the eggs hatch the chicks are kept until the end of the hire period and then are either taken back to the supplier or adopted. Approximately 50 per cent of the adopted chicks will grow to be roosters. It is illegal to keep roosters in most suburban areas so, of the thousands of roosters that hatch, a small percentage find

long-term homes. Because of their growing numbers, it is becoming increasingly difficult for unwanted roosters to be taken to shelters and pounds. Most are killed as waste products of chicken hatching programs. As well as providing a highly compromised education about the natural lifestyle of chickens, these programs teach children that chicks are disposable objects and exist only for our use. Further, they reinforce the troubling mentality that it is acceptable to end our responsibility to others when a problem or inconvenience arises.

Frustrated parents, education professionals and animal welfare groups are joining forces to ban these programs and implement humane methods of providing valuable education, such as field trips, documentaries and books. Another useful alternative includes egg-hatching model kits, in which students are able to see the stages of development of a real chick via several cross-sectional eggs that are able to be opened up and explored. School visits to animal sanctuaries offer children the experience of witnessing the incredible life cycle of a chicken in a more natural state, thus providing a more meaningful insight into the life of animals and birds and encouraging a sense of curiosity and respect for the natural world.

In respect of the Federal Government's commitment to the live export trade, we have seen many videos containing disturbing footage of the way the animals are treated. It is disgusting. On behalf of my electorate I call for the live export trade to be banned. The argument that the animals must arrive live is not acceptable considering the trauma, fear and cruelty that they are subjected to when they arrive in other countries. An Islamic constituent said that it would be perfectly fine for the animals to be slaughtered in a halal fashion in Australia and then exported, but it is more cost effective to export the animals alive. Hiding behind claims of protecting the meat industry is not acceptable. I will continue this campaign on behalf of my constituents. The community outrage at live animal exports must be noted, which is why I raise the matter today. I will also continue to lobby the Federal Government to change its position on this issue and to find a more humane way to ship meat overseas.

NYMBOIDA HYDROELECTRIC POWER STATION

Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS (Clarence) [5.28 p.m.]: The closure of the Nymboida hydroelectric power station is having an impact in my electorate of Clarence. The Nymboida power station, which is owned by Central Energy, opened on 19 November 1924 and has been supplying hydroelectric power to the grid in varying forms at various times ever since. Water for both the power station and Clarence Valley Council's reticulated water supply is extracted from a weir on the Nymboida River. The water from the power station is then discharged into Goolang Creek, which flows into Blaxland Creek and, ultimately, into the Orara River.

The current Nymboida River extraction licence does not permit any extraction for either generation or water supply when the flow is below 225 megalitres per day. Before the extraction limit was imposed to ensure environmental flows for the Nymboida River during low-flow periods, water could be extracted for generation even during low flows. Because council is using the extraction for town water supply purposes, and electricity generation is inefficient at low flows through the station, Essential Energy generally stops extracting water for generation purposes when the Nymboida River flow is below about 450 megalitres per day.

The Nymboida power station is not eligible to receive green energy credits due to the age of the station. This is because the facility was operating prior to the national green energy credit market. Unfortunately, the station is only able to gain black pool energy pricing. Currently any output of electricity from the station is under contract with a retailer. The power station is not producing electricity due to a failure in one of two concrete bulkheads associated with one of the tunnels. This failure occurred during severe flooding in February 2013. In May 2013 Essential Energy commissioned independent engineers to carry out routine testing. It identified that a number of material components had reached "end of life" and a decision was taken to cease operations at the station. Whilst the regional water supply is not affected in any way by the closure of the power plant, a major tourism attraction, Nymboida Canoe Centre, has been severely affected by the decision to cease operations at the station.

The canoe centre, which is run by Rob Delderfield, is an internationally renowned whitewater canoeing facility and has hosted State, Australian and Commonwealth championships. In addition, it attracts more than 20,000 tourists each year and makes a significant contribution to the local economy. I have met with Mayor Richie Williamson onsite and have had discussions with Essential Energy's chief operations officer, Gary Humphreys, to try to resolve this matter. Unfortunately, the issues surrounding the continuing operation of the power station and the water flow into Goolang Creek for environmental, recreational and domestic use are somewhat complex. They are regulated by a series of licences issued by the New South Wales Government through various agencies, including the Environment Protection Authority, Office of Water, Office of Environment and Heritage, Catchment Management Authority, Fisheries NSW and Crown Lands.

Essential Energy is now investigating a number of options and issues, including whether the power station, which will remain closed in the interim, is commercially viable without capital injection. Essential Energy should be investing both in the Nymboida power station and a proper maintenance regime for the continuation of electricity production from the site. Clarence Valley Council supports this view and, judging from the significant correspondence that has come through my office, so do most of the residents of the Clarence Valley. Essential Energy has convened a stakeholder group, consisting of Clarence Valley Council, the Environment Protection Authority and Fishing and Aquaculture, Primary Industries. It also includes the affected landowners who incurred damage following the incidents of February 2013.

As I said earlier, this complex issue involves multiple stakeholders and government agencies. It is incumbent on all organisations to work cooperatively and expeditiously to reach a resolution so that the power plant can commence operating again. This is important for a number of reasons: the power plant is an integral part of the history of the Northern Rivers region; it maintains an environmental flow downstream to the Goolang and Blaxland creeks; farmers downstream have relied on the flow through the power plant to sustain their farms for the past 89 years; it sustains the internationally renowned Nymboida Canoe Centre, which hosts over 20,000 visitors each year; and it has been a source of clean energy for 89 years, and it still can be if all parties are committed to this goal.

LIONS CLUBS

Mr BART BASSETT (Londonderry) [5.33 p.m.]: Last month we saw some of the worst bushfires in this State's history. When the chips are down Aussies from all walks of life pitch in to help. I, together with a number of other members, recently attended a dinner in the Strangers Dining Room, hosted by the New South Wales Parliamentary Lions Club, to honour Barry Palmer, OAM, the first Australian Lions club president. Service club members work without pay to make our communities better places in which to live. For example, during the recent fires I came across Ern and Beryl Payne. I have known them for a long time. Ern and Beryl are very active members of Hawkesbury Lions Club. They are always on hand for anyone in need of help. During the fires Beryl and other Lions volunteers were making sandwiches and packing eskys, and I found Ern delivering those packed eskys at the Yarramundi fire shed for the fireys. Many small businesses chipped in as well, and students from Richmond High baked more than 200 muffins.

Over the years I have always enjoyed going to the Richmond Lions Club community market days, which are now held at the Hawkesbury Showground. Cambridge Park Lions Club is also in my electorate. Earlier this year Charles Kennaway, an active member of that club, approached me about a fundraiser to help Ben Marshall and his family. Ben has severe disabilities and requires constant care. His primary carer is his mum. Last year Ben was hospitalised, having suffered a viral infection. Ben's mum and dad, Dianne and Chris, are truly inspirational people. I was honoured to visit them recently at their home in Cambridge Park with Charles Kennaway when I presented Dianne with a carers award during National Carers Week.

The hospital would not let Ben come home unless he had a wheelchair to help with his mobility. The cost was \$15,000. Charles and the Cambridge Park Lions Club got straight to work and in no time a trivia night was arranged at the Henry Lawson Club, Werrington County. I raised this issue with the Premier and was pleased that he approved a small grant of \$2,500 on behalf of the New South Wales Government. This money went towards the purchase of a wheelchair for Ben. The fundraiser was a success. The Lions club has also set aside an additional \$5,000, which will probably be used to help make modifications to the family home and thus make life just that much easier for Ben and his family.

Lions clubs are on the ground in our communities but little is known about the collective efforts of service clubs to solve some of the greatest medical and social challenges of our generation. Millions of dollars have been raised through the Rotary Foundation for polio, which has almost been eradicated. Rotary's work to fund research into the cause and effects of mental illness and its mental health awareness programs are truly amazing. Lions clubs also have a number of foundations that raise funds for things such as medical research into childhood cancer and to provide hearing dogs, as well as running drug awareness programs for teenagers and parents.

Since 1996 the Lions Cord Blood Foundation in Australia has raised more than \$1.3 million for vital medical research. The Australian Lions Childhood Cancer Research Foundation has also done some great work. Sadly, each year more than 600 children are diagnosed with cancer and 25 per cent of those children will not survive. The foundation has set a goal to raise \$1 million annually to fund the best clinical research by our

highly regarded Australian researchers. Prior to the 1960s, childhood cancer was almost always fatal but survival rates are now about 75 per cent across all types of childhood cancer. Like Rotary did with polio, the aim of the Lions foundation is to one day eradicate childhood cancer.

As members know, I am a dog lover. I am very passionate about the support of dogs to help people with disabilities. The Lions club provides dogs to assist the hearing impaired. Since 1982 the lives of hundreds of Australians have been transformed and more than 500 specially trained dogs have been provided. These dogs alert their owners to sounds in their home. They touch their owners with their paws in response to things such as knocks on the door, a baby crying, a phone ringing and smoke alarms—things we take for granted. One dog named Ted saved the life of a newborn baby girl by alerting his carer—the baby's mother—to a blockage in the baby's feeding tube. A dog named Ray sensed and indicated that his owner was going to have an epileptic seizure 20 minutes before it occurred. In another case the persistence of a dog named Oliver stopped his owner from sleeping whilst there was a fire in the kitchen.

The dogs act not only as the ears of their carers but also offer safety, security and independence. Indeed, they give people the confidence to participate more fully in the community and offer years of faithful and friendly companionship. These dogs and the follow-up support required are provided free of charge. Indeed, the majority of funds are donated through local Lions clubs, like those at Richmond and Cambridge Gardens. This funding enables highly effective dogs that assist the hearing impaired to be trained at a specialist facility. I am a very strong supporter of assistance dogs. For many years I have also supported Guide Dogs NSW/ACT which has a training facility in the Hawkesbury. Like Lions dogs that assist the hearing impaired, they provide the eyes and the ears that enable people with disabilities to go about their everyday activities. They also help to prevent major health and safety problems. I congratulate Lions Clubs International and all the other service club organisations in our local communities.

APIA LEICHHARDT TIGERS FOOTBALL CLUB

Mr JOHN SIDOTI (Drummoyne) [5.38 p.m.]: It gives me great pleasure to talk about a local club in the inner west of which I am very proud—the APIA Leichhardt Tigers Football Club. It was founded nearly seven decades ago, even before the time of the member for Heffron, and is a multicultural club that reflects its great Italian heritage. Football continues to grow not only in New South Wales but also in Australia. Over 250,000 players will take to the field in New South Wales this season alone, which makes it one of the largest participation sports in our State. The great thing about football is that it is played by people of all ages, abilities, genders and backgrounds. My connection to the APIA Leichhardt Tigers goes back many years when I was a young chap attending the football at Lambert Park in Leichhardt with a group of friends. We had our hardhat brigade there and followed the team in the good old days of Tony Pisano and Peter Katholos. The other great thing about soccer is the contribution made to the sport by volunteers.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr John Barilaro): Order! The member should remember that the sport is called football and not soccer.

Mr JOHN SIDOTI: It is estimated that some 40,000 people volunteer their time and effort to support soccer and to help the game. The APIA Leichhardt Tigers have over 1,000 registered players and are at the forefront of growth in the game to which I am referring. I am proud that the New South Wales Government has delivered on its election commitment to the APIA Leichhardt Tigers and to the broader football community in the inner west. The \$2.2 million upgrade to Lambert Park includes a new full size synthetic football pitch, new perimeter fencing, a new warm-up facility, change rooms, office facilities and grandstand modifications. This significant upgrade to Lambert Park has secured the long-term future of the APIA Leichhardt Tigers in Leichhardt.

The New South Wales Government is firmly committed to football in this State. Last financial year over \$800,000 was provided to football administration and projects. These included the Kellyville Kolts Soccer Club, the Ourimbah United Football Club, the Wollongong United Football Club and the Wyoming Football Club, to name just a few. Major football projects are great for this State. Recent major projects include \$1.8 million of a \$3 million commitment to upgrade Pluim Park on the Central Coast and \$5 million towards the redevelopment of Valentine Sports Park. These are exciting times for football in New South Wales. The New South Wales Government is pleased to be involved with such a great community-based sport. On that note, it was great to see Australia win the international friendly match the other night against Costa Rica. It was very fitting and appropriate that Tim Cahill slotted in the winning goal. I wish the coach, Ange Postecoglou, and the team all the best in the upcoming World Cup in Rio. Go the Aussies!

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr John Barilaro): I congratulate the APIA Leichhardt Tigers on all that they have done for football in this State. My connection to football is through the Inter Monaro Soccer Club side from Queanbeyan. They played the APIA Leichhardt Tigers in the former New South Wales State league. We were State champions there for a while. I also congratulate the Socceroos on their great victory last night and of course Mr Tim Cahill, who also plays for the Everton Football Club.

Mr Ron Hoenig: Apart from the sycophantic comments about the Government, I join the member for Drummoyne in commending APIA Leichhardt Tigers Football Club, an essential ingredient to football in this State. When my son was 12 he played there. I am sure that one day the member for Drummoyne and I will share a pizza at Tony Raciti's.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr DARREN WEBBER (Wyang) [5.43 p.m.]: I wish to address some of the unfortunate, outrageous and untrue statements that have been made recently by the Leader of the Opposition, John Robertson, relating to the changes being made to education funding as a result of the Gonski reforms. In a cynical attack on public education, the Leader of the Opposition, John Robertson, falsely claimed recently that the New South Wales Coalition Government is cutting funding to schools in the Wyong electorate under its Resource Allocation Model—a totally false claim that is politically motivated and designed simply to mislead parents and teachers on the Central Coast.

It is an absolute disgrace that the Leader of the Opposition has deliberately singled out the only two schools in the Wyong electorate that have seen a small decrease in program funding, based on student socio-economic and demographic enrolment numbers, and has deliberately ignored the overall huge funding boost for all schools in the Wyong electorate, just for the sake of trying to gain a cheap headline or score some political points. When one looks closely at the full list of program funding for all schools in the Wyong electorate one clearly sees that most schools receive a significant increase in funding. For example, Gorokan High School has received the largest boost of over half a million dollars—that is, \$574,820—and Wyong High School will receive an increase of \$371,398. Both Toukley Public School and Wyong Public School, the two schools singled out by Opposition leader John Robertson in his media release, will continue to receive the highest program funding of any schools in the electorate. Toukley Public School will receive \$739,785 and Wyong Public School will receive \$709,757 in socio-economic and Aboriginal funding allocations for the 2013-14 financial year.

In total, the government schools in my electorate of Wyong have received a massive boost in their 2014 program funding for socio-economic and Aboriginal allocations. The boost to the socio-economic program is an extra \$2,584,255 while the Aboriginal allocation has increased by some \$297,308, making a combined program increase of almost \$2.9 million. In addition, these changes allow the individual schools much greater flexibility to ensure funding is used where the need is greatest. Local principals and school communities will have a much greater say in how their funding is spent from next year, giving students a greater opportunity to succeed. Principals, school staff and parents know their students best; they know how their needs can best be met to improve their performance. That is why, upon the full implementation of the new Resource Allocation Model, schools will manage more than 70 per cent of the State public school education budget compared with just 10 per cent now.

The whole concept of the Gonski funding model is that funding is allocated on an individual student needs basis. Therefore, funds are allocated for each student's needs and will follow students from school to school if they move. As a product of the public education system, I fully support the Gonski school funding increases for schools in the Wyong electorate, which clearly demonstrate the acute need in my area. This highlights just why the Gonski reforms are so important to the Central Coast. When I say that I support the Gonski reforms I am not talking about waving a hand-shaped billboard and saying "I give a Gonski"; I understand these reforms and the need for them in my area. That is why this is so important and that is why I am standing in the Chamber today and saying that I support the Gonski reforms.

The false claims of the Leader of the Opposition completely undermine his own party's campaign to support the Gonski reforms. On one hand he claims that he supports the Gonski reforms but on the other hand, and as soon as the O'Farrell Government moves to implement these positive changes, he goes into the community and attacks funding increases in the Wyong electorate. Instead of calling on Central Coast members to justify these changes, the Leader of the Opposition needs to apologise to local parents, teachers and students for deliberately misleading them in relation to these significant funding increases.

CANTERBURY BOYS HIGH SCHOOL INVESTITURE OF PREFECTS

Ms LINDA BURNEY (Canterbury) [5.47 p.m.]: I thank the member for The Entrance for his indulgence in allowing me to speak before him in this debate. I speak today, as I do every year, on the Canterbury Boys High School Investiture of School Prefects 2014. In the 10 years that I have been the member for Canterbury I think I have missed this ceremony only once or twice. It is one of the most inspiring events to which I go and I know that members go to many events each year. Canterbury Boys High School is an important school in the Canterbury electorate which I visit regularly. Each year the school takes seriously the investiture of new prefects. These young gentlemen are a great source of pride not only to the Canterbury electorate but also to public schools in New South Wales, their parents and their community. This year the acknowledgement of country was done by Sunny Sharma, who is also one of the new prefects. Sunny spoke about the importance of true Australians and core values.

Year 11 adviser Ms Anne Christofides welcomed the attendees and Principal David Hill made a fabulous speech to the young men and parents. I got to know outgoing captain Mr Tiago Martins and vice-captain Philip Ta somewhat during their time at the school. They set a wonderful example and led the 2013 prefecture body brilliantly. I congratulate the new captains Rochdi Noun and Michael Wright. Several years ago Michael Wright did two weeks work experience in my office. I also congratulate new vice-captains Brandon Le Nguyen and Faraan Mirza, senior prefects Aram Aldrouich and Sunny Sharma and sports captain, Badi Khamis. Finally, I congratulate Shane Hua, Tauu Marearai, Quang Ngo, Chris Pilios and Dylan Sousa, who are the newly appointed prefects.

During the speeches by outgoing captains Tiago and Philip and incoming captains Rochdi and Michael I felt so proud to be the member for Canterbury with such fine young men in my electorate. Their maturity and the seriousness with which they take their responsibility of looking after one another were clearly on show. In my speech I spoke about leading by example, working hard and doing one's best. I told them how important it is for people in leadership positions to be able to walk in other people's shoes. I also said that manners cost nothing and nor did kindness. During the ceremony the incoming prefecture took the following pledge:

I promise:

That I shall do my best to prove myself worthy of the honour that has been granted to me.

That I shall carry out my duties conscientiously, fairly, without favour or discrimination and that I shall never misuse my office.

That by my conduct and example, I shall try to preserve always the traditions of, and add lustre to, the name of Canterbury Boys High School.

That fine pledge is applicable to people in many other leadership positions. The philosophy at Canterbury Boys High School is one of the best. They are serious about not bullying, keeping an eye on each other and caring for all students at the school. I am sure that the 2014 Canterbury Boys High School prefects will carry on the tradition of former prefects and be wonderful leaders. I look forward to their achievements.

CENTRAL COAST GROUP TRAINING

Mr CHRIS SPENCE (The Entrance) [5.52 p.m.]: On 1 November I had the pleasure of attending the 2013 Central Coast Group Training [CCGT] awards night. It was a wonderful event to recognise the achievements of apprentices, trainees and employers. I was impressed to see the great benefits the program is providing to the community through employment opportunities for young people and how it is helping to grow the region's business community. Central Coast Group Training assists employers who are seeking staff by screening candidates and providing recommendations about young people who are suited to their requirements. It saves businesses time and resources by taking care of the paperwork and ongoing development and support for the employee, which allows the employer to focus on providing quality on-the-job training.

Central Coast Group Training is the only group training organisation on the Central Coast and it is dedicated to finding employment solutions for businesses and career seekers. For more than 30 years Central Coast Group Training has been highly successful at placing thousands of young people into apprenticeships and traineeships across a broad range of industries including automotive trades, carpentry, engineering, building trades, retail and information technology. The program is made possible under a unique group training program where Central Coast Group Training recruits, contracts and employs all apprentices and trainees for placement with participating host employers. Central Coast Group Training provides quality assistance, support and opportunities for young people who are seeking gainful employment through its apprenticeship and trainee program.

Young people involved with Central Coast Group Training have the opportunity and flexibility of working with more than one host employer thereby extending their experience and diversifying their skills within their chosen industry. Registered Central Coast Group Training apprentices and trainees receive free TAFE and/or registered training organisation fees, free basic personal protective equipment, regular occupational health and safety assessments in the workplace and free access to the trainee and apprentice assistance program. Central Coast Group Training recognises the difficulties faced by young people on the Central Coast in gaining meaningful employment with quality on-the-job training as well as the barriers faced by young people in low socio-economic situations. Young people may be experiencing homelessness or long-term unemployment, or they may have incomplete high school education or disabilities. The group offers employee assistance programs where needed.

The annual Central Coast Group Training awards showcase the achievements and dedication of young people in their chosen career paths through participation in its program and the commitment of employers. Andrew Spicer was the 2013 Apprentice of the Year. Andrew's achievements are an outstanding example of how Central Coast Group Training and host employers work together with young people to create opportunities. Andrew completed his apprenticeship in Certificate III Horticulture (Turf) five months early through Wyong Shire Council and achieved exceptional results.

Andrew was recently named the Australian Sports Turf Associate Graduate of the Year. This win has provided Andrew with the opportunity to attend the International Sports Turf Forum in America next year, which will provide him with invaluable knowledge and experience within his industry. He is still employed by the council and has just begun mentoring its new first-year apprentice. Through his own initiative, Andrew was able to secure a volunteer work placement with ANZ Stadium at the Rugby League grand final. The fields that he has been working on have been rated higher than that of Sydney Olympic Park.

Sarah White, who is currently undertaking a Diploma of Children's Services with Erina Baptist Pre-School and Long Day Care, won the Trainee of the Year for 2013. Sarah is another accomplished achiever who has a proven commitment to reaching her goals. Sarah has plans to continue her training in children's emotional and psychological development and to work alongside families with special needs. Sarah has worked at Gosford Baptist Pre-School for the past four years and has already attained qualifications such as a Certificate II in Community Services and a Certificate III in Children's Services. She has undertaken additional courses in the healthy lifestyle of children and behavioural management, which she has been able to actively apply to her workplace. Her ultimate dream is to write a children's book as a creative outlet that will provide a fun and educational tool to aid in children's development.

Local businessman Peter Willcockson from Express Lube Auto Service Centre, who pioneered the fast servicing industry by establishing the first "no appointment" and "while you wait" auto service outlets on the Central Coast, won the Small Host Employer of Year. Express Lube's mission is to provide all its customers with expert advice, efficient service and quality products at an affordable price. Express Lube joined Central Coast Group Training as a host employer in 2011. It is a great example of a business being able to develop while being a host employer. The support and assistance received by the business in finding the right apprentice, screening and recommending candidates suitable for employment as well as taking care of all administrative responsibilities for the apprentice, including ongoing development and support for the employee, has allowed it to grow and expand. Express Lube currently has six apprentices working with it, including a school-based apprentice.

I am encouraged and inspired by the commitment of Central Coast Group Training as a not-for-profit organisation to create wonderful opportunities to assist young people on the Central Coast to learn and become skilled in their career development, help facilitate businesses to grow through hiring and training employees and benefit the community as a whole. I congratulate the award winners on their outstanding results and on their commitment and dedication to their careers. I am sure they are proud of their achievements and I wish them well for their future careers.

Mr STUART AYRES (Penrith—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.57 p.m.]: I acknowledge the contribution made by the member for the Entrance about Central Coast Group Training. Vocational education and training is important to communities such as the Central Coast and upskilling and training future generations through group training has been an outstanding success. Organisations such as Central Coast Group Training that have an ability to integrate with local organisations to create job opportunities will allow the Central Coast to go from strength to strength. Similar to the people of Western Sydney, people on the Central Coast are incredibly practical. We just roll our sleeves up and get on with the job. We have the same attitude and it is organisations such as Central Coast Group Training that make things happen. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

I acknowledge the contribution by the member for Canterbury in which she recognised the great leadership qualities of students at Canterbury Boys High School. It would be remiss of me not to take the opportunity to recognise the work that the O'Farrell Government has done in allocating funds to schools such as Canterbury Boys High School. Under the resource allocation model that has just been announced by the O'Farrell Government and the Minister for Education, Mr Piccoli, in 2013 the socio-economic status funding allocated to Canterbury Boys High School was \$13,875, whereas in 2014 under the new and more equitable model that supports schools such as Canterbury Boys High School in Western Sydney the funding allocation will be \$114,304.

REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

Mr JOHN BARILARO (Monaro) [5.59 p.m.]: This evening I wish to speak about the fantastic contribution from the great country of Macedonia to the development and prosperity of my town, Queanbeyan, in the electorate of Monaro in the State of New South Wales, and of course to Australia. It is a significant contribution that is not always widely recognised. More than 84,000 Australians claim Macedonian ancestry. In fact, Macedonian ancestry is more than six times more prevalent in Queanbeyan than anywhere else in Australia. Many areas of the Monaro region have been enriched by the Macedonian culture, heritage and traditions. The Macedonian community always has made significant contributions to business, sport, education and industry in my community.

In 1949 many Macedonian migrants were targeted for work on the Snowy Mountains Hydro-Electric Scheme. Dams, power stations and tunnels were built so that water from the Snowy River could be used to provide power and irrigation—a project that at the time was quite visionary. One hundred thousand people worked on the scheme. Sadly, 121 of those lost their lives in industrial accidents associated with this great nation-building project, and they included people of Australian, German, Greek, Irish, Italian, Norwegian, British, Polish and Macedonian descent. Most migrant workers on the scheme arrived under the assisted migration scheme—a positive legacy of the strong migration policy of this great country at that time. Many of them, including descendants, are still a valued part of the Monaro community today.

Macedonia is a country that is located in the central Balkan peninsula in the south-east of Europe. It is one of the successor States of the former Yugoslavia, from which it declared independence in 1991. That leads me to a current issue and the reason for my address to the House: Macedonia's official name. Unfortunately, Macedonia is recognised by many nations, including Australia, as the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, which many Macedonians find demeaning and inconsistent with prevailing international practice. The recognition by the Australian Government of Macedonia by her constitutional name, which is the Republic of Macedonia, will conclude its journey to independence.

It is vital that we acknowledge the importance of our Macedonian community to our history and culture by recognising Macedonia by her proper name. Currently, 135 nations and the United Nations have recognised the Republic of Macedonia by its constitutional name, including the United States of America and Canada. Australia's recognition of the Republic of Macedonia would be an important milestone for the Macedonian community, especially those living in the Monaro. It is now time for Australia to acknowledge the importance of our Macedonian community to our history and culture by acknowledging Macedonia by her proper name as the Republic of Macedonia.

I urge all my colleagues and, more importantly, the Federal Government, to do so now. I will again write on behalf of the Macedonian community to the new Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Hon. Julie Bishop, MHR, requesting that the Abbott Government proceed to ratify the proper name of the Republic of Macedonia. Tomorrow I will be delighted to welcome to the New South Wales Parliament the new Macedonian Ambassador, His Excellency Mr Vele Trpevski, along with Mr Majkl Sibinovski, who is the first secretary. I will host a luncheon in their honour, and I am sure this topic will be part of our lunchtime conversations and deliberations.

I am confident the ambassador will enjoy his time in this country and will do a great deal of good to foster even closer relations between the two countries, given our shared history of some decades standing and the enormous contribution Macedonians have made to the development of our country. I am proud to represent Queanbeyan and its vibrant Macedonian community in the New South Wales Parliament. As members have heard, the local Macedonian population is a major feature of our town and plays a key role in all aspects of the life of our community.

I am proud to enjoy the friendship of many in the Macedonian community, whom I have met through my previous career in business, my involvement in junior sport and now as a member of Parliament. I acknowledge Queanbeyan councillor Mr Velice Trajanoski and Queanbeyan Football Club president Mr George Spaseski—two gentlemen whose efforts have been instrumental in forging closer links between the Macedonian and wider communities. I look forward to continuing to representing their interests and the interests of the Macedonian community of my electorate in this House.

Mr STUART AYRES (Penrith—Parliamentary Secretary) [6.04 p.m.]: I acknowledge the private member's statement made by the member for Monaro and his recognition of the Macedonian community in his electorate. I may be betraying my roots as the member for Penrith, but I must acknowledge that I grew up in Canberra and as a young man played a little Aussie Rules football. I also may be betraying my support for the Greater Western Sydney Giants in that I am actually a devout Collingwood fan, which means that I grew up a strong follower of Macedonian marvel Peter Daicos. I spent plenty of time at the Ainslie Football Club trying to emulate the skills of Peter Daicos. Clearly, I was never good enough—so I came to this place instead.

DON'T DIS MY ABILITY BUTTERFLY BALL

Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands) [6.05 p.m.]: It is with pleasure that I inform the House of a great night last Saturday in Armidale when the inaugural Don't DIS My ABILITY Debutante Butterfly Ball was held. It was a great evening that celebrated diversity in our society and affirmed that everyone, no matter who they are, where they come from or whether they have a disability, can participate in society. It was a marvellous evening and I put on the record my tribute to the Butterfly Ball planning committee members Sue Bannon, Margaret Kennedy and Ruth Blanch and all of the great team who helped to stage the celebration. Of course, it would not have been possible without the support of Armidale Dumaresq Council, the Armidale Ex Services Memorial Club—the ball was held in its magnificent auditorium—Ageing, Disability and Home Care, Best Employment, the Community Mutual Group, and the House with No Steps. Apart from the valuable contribution that all those organisations made to the success of the ball, they also make a continuing contribution to the Recreation Access Dance Ability Project, which culminated in the Butterfly Ball.

Twenty-three debutantes were presented on the evening. It was magnificent to see the debutantes walk through the guard of honour, which was provided by the local Freemasons, and under the steel arch as the Freemasons held their swords high. It was truly uplifting and heartwarming to see the smiles on all the debutantes' faces, and there were not many dry eyes in the auditorium that night. The flower girl was Faith Joliffe and the Butterfly Princess was Ariel Schultz. Both did a magnificent job looking after the debutantes as they were presented to the Deputy Mayor, Armidale Dumaresq councillor Jenny Bailey, and Mr Kevin Dupé, who is the chief executive officer of the Community Mutual Group. I also acknowledge Mr Steve Widders, who is an Anaiwan elder. He did a magnificent Welcome to Country, as he always does. He is a true gentleman, a true elder and a great representative of his people.

I will read onto the record of the House a list of all the debutantes and their partners at the Butterfly Ball last Saturday night: Ms Sheila Kemp, who was partnered by Mr Greg Drake; Miss Jessica Landsborough, who was partnered by Mr Alan Wilkinson; Mrs Debbie Quinn, who was partnered by Mr Brenden Quinn; Miss Linda Widders, who was partnered by Mr Steven Widders; Miss Trudy Rogers, who was partnered by Mr Mark Fookes; Ms Lee Arandale, who was partnered by Mr John Forrester; Miss Nikalee Dennis, who was partnered by Mr Ian Dennis; Miss Alice Strelitz, who was partnered by Mr James Sheehan; Miss Sarah Williams, who was partnered by Mr Greg Blanch; Mrs Chris Dennis, who was partnered by Mr Nick Bavea; Miss Phyllis Jeminez, who was partnered by Mr Joe Lancaster; Miss Deborah McMahon, who was partnered by Mr Brett Voysey; Miss Merry Abrams, who was partnered by Mr Josh Smith; Miss Dianne Bell, who was partnered by Mr Max Wayte; Miss Rose-Marie Lewis, who was partnered by Mr Greg Wild; Miss Genevieve Tavener, who was partnered by Mr Ian Walker; Mrs Gaye Sheehan, who was partnered by Mr Tony Sawyer; Miss Lesley Bell, who was partnered by Mr Oliver Brooks; Mrs Jenny Wild, who was partnered by Mr Ray Enks; Miss Denise Bell, who was partnered by Mr Peter Wright; Miss Allana Verey, who was partnered by Mr Jason Timperley; Miss Amanda Devlin, who was partnered by Mr Blake Nelson; and Mrs Sue Bannon, who organised the evening, was a partner for Mr William Brunsdon.

It was a magnificent evening and a true sign of the community spirit that exists not just in Armidale but throughout the whole region. As I said in my remarks on the night—and I had the great privilege of opening the ball—a society is judged on how it treats and regards its most vulnerable members. It was their night. The

23 debutants were so happy, and they did themselves and their families proud. It was a pleasure to attend the ball. I congratulate the organising committee—Sue, Margaret and all the team—on a magnificent job. Well done and congratulations.

Mr STUART AYRES (Penrith—Parliamentary Secretary) [6.10 p.m.]: The member for Northern Tablelands is clearly a passionate advocate for people with disability in his community. It would be remiss of me not to acknowledge that this year is the tenth year of Don't DIS My ABILITY, which has been consistently running programs throughout New South Wales. It is fitting that on the day that the member for Northern Tablelands has spoken so eloquently about his community and its support for people with disability through the Butterfly Ball this House saw the passing of the enabling legislation for the National Disability Insurance Scheme. I am sure the member for Northern Tablelands will take that news back to his community. He continues to be a strong advocate for people with disabilities, as we have seen through his attendance at the Butterfly Ball.

COMMUNITY BUILDING PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) [6.11 p.m.]: I draw to the attention of the House the significance of the Community Building Partnership program in my electorate, an important program that was established by the former Labor Government in 2009. Labor recognises that investment through small community grants can be one of the most valuable building blocks that a government can offer, particularly to regional communities such as Shellharbour. The Community Building Partnership Program empowers community organisations and local councils to deliver projects that would have been financially out of reach. The projects are picked by the community for the community, such as, the upgrade and improvement of infrastructure and facilities that are used and enjoyed by many local groups. These grants have the added value of providing opportunities for local employment, supporting the small business sector and stimulating the local economy.

Community Building Partnership funding has provided vital assistance to many community groups in my electorate. I have seen the smiles on the faces of kids from the Shellharbour City Sharks Rugby League Football Club, the Oak Flats Tennis Club and the Shellharbour Swans Junior Australian Football Club as they step out onto their new sporting areas. I have felt the delight of patrons over the installation of a canteen and amenities block at Reed Park. I have heard the exciting plans of volunteers for a new kitchen at the Horsley community hall. I have observed also the selfless appreciation of the Dapto Rural Fire Brigade for their renovated fire station office, workshop and storage area. I have seen the relief of workers and the joy of children at Illawarra area childcare centres, who finally saw their outdoor equipment and play area plans come to fruition. These are all projects at grassroots level, facilitated by organisations that run on the smell of an oily rag. They are projects where the community can do with a hand up.

In my experience, these types of community organisations are able to make a small amount of money go a very long way. They are motivated to do so because of the genuineness of their cause and their awareness of the hard slog of raising money through fundraising activities such as selling raffle tickets and cooking sausage sizzles. These grants are gifts that keep on giving to the community. Labor knows the power of these investments in the community. That is why it introduced the program in the first place. In 2010 my electorate received \$400,000, and in 2011 it received \$700,000 of Community Building Partnership funding. In 2013 and now in 2014 the Shellharbour community has received less than half—\$300,000. Before the 2011 State election this Government promised to continue the Community Building Partnership program. However, it did not disclose that it would be at a significantly reduced rate. The latest rounds of funding are for substantially less. They have stagnated at a time when this investment could and should be growing.

The best part of being a local member is meeting and helping local volunteer, community and not-for-profit groups. Since becoming a local member, I have had the pleasure of seeing many community infrastructure projects get off the ground with the help of the Community Building Partnerships program. It has been a privilege to help worthwhile organisations by supporting their applications, but every year the range of applications for community infrastructure projects grows. This year there were 24 project applications totalling more than \$1.3 million in my electorate alone. With only \$300,000 on offer, there will be disappointment, and worthy organisations and projects in Shellharbour will miss out.

Most community groups have had project plans on their books for years while trying to navigate other programs, and this funding can make or break those projects. Many of those pivotal plans and projects will never see the light of day. I sincerely hope that comments made by the current Minister for the Illawarra in October last year are nothing to go by in regard to the future of this program. The Minister

described the much-needed Community Building Partnership funding given by the former Labor Government as "money thrown at communities with no consideration whatsoever of the long-term effect in an attempt to buy votes".

That is an affront to members of my electorate and across New South Wales who continue to enjoy the benefits of previous successful local Community Building Partnership projects. It is an affront to each of the projects and to the community groups who seek this funding to make the most of every dollar in the interest of bettering their community. I thank all the community groups and volunteers in my electorate for their tireless work in making Shellharbour a better place to live. I strongly encourage the Government to increase the funding for this very worthwhile program, and I am certain that all members in this place would endorse my remarks.

Mr STUART AYRES (Penrith—Parliamentary Secretary) [6.16 p.m.]: I note that the member for Shellharbour pointed out that the last time there was an increase in the Community Building Partnership program was just before an election, which might have been an incentive. I also note that when the O'Farrell Government was elected it identified a black hole of more than \$5 billion in the State's budget. One of the key points the Treasurer has made very clear is the ability of New South Wales to live within its means. He has demonstrated also time and again that this is a fiscally responsible government that monitors its expenditure. The Treasurer has ensured that the Community Building Partnership Program continues across the entire State, and members can play a role in allocating important funds to their community. That will continue.

MACARTHUR 24 HOUR FIGHT AGAINST CANCER

Mr JAI ROWELL (Wollondilly) [6.17 p.m.]: Before commencing my private member's statement, I acknowledge the Mayor of Wingecarribee, Juliet Arkwright, and councillor John Uliana and his beautiful wife, who are here today. I look forward to catching up with them later this evening. I pay tribute to the participants of the 2013 24 Hour Fight Against Cancer walkathon. With every tick of the clock more money rolled in to support this wonderful Macarthur and Wollondilly-based fundraiser, which annually raises money to assist those who need it most. This year, more than 2,000 walkers and 100 teams took part—a great success by any measure. I was proud to represent Premier Barry O'Farrell and donate a \$5,000 cheque in support of the event. The Premier has attended the event three years in a row, but he had a clash in his diary this year.

The 24 Hour Fight Against Cancer relies on simple principles. The Macarthur community comes together each year and participates in a continuous walk around the Western Suburbs League Club athletics track for 24 hours. Participants range from pre-schoolers—who exhaust themselves after running a lap, chased by their parents—to elite athletes walking non-stop continuously for hours, and everyone in between. Fundraising stalls are set up inside the oval with cakes, drinks and countless other delights for sale to help raise vital funds, which, importantly, stay in the local area. This year, my four-year-old son, Menzies, indulged in a few of those cupcakes and embarked on several high-paced laps around the oval. I was happy to make another donation to buy him more cakes simply for the good night's sleep I had later that evening.

On a serious note, this annual fundraising event has raised a significant sum of money, with estimates of a combined total of more than \$2 million. All of this money stays in the local Macarthur region to support locals. Teams come from Campbelltown, Camden and Wollondilly. Young people dominate the event, with many school teams returning each year—the largest being the 56-strong John Therry Catholic High School team from my electorate. The event was opened by Samantha McGarrity of Rosemeadow, whose daughter Niamh, aged four years, died in January after a battle with brain cancer. Niamh attended the same childcare centre as my son Menzies. As the captain of Team Green, Samantha touched the crowd with her story of Niamh's fight. The following are excerpts from Samantha's speech about what the event means to her:

I have experienced firsthand what the funds raised through the 24 Hour Fight can do

...

Instead of taking two hours to travel [to Randwick Children's Hospital] and two hours to travel home, we were able to access PACS and Paediatrics at Campbelltown Hospital for Niamh's blood work and port care after her treatment was complete. It was also the place where we accessed palliative care in the end stages.

Without funds from the 24 Hour Fight, these services and wonderful health care professionals would not exist.

...

I have lived in this community from the day I was born and have seen firsthand the love and generosity of the human spirit and I have experienced that in abundance here in Campbelltown.

So I take this opportunity, on behalf of all cancer patients and their families to thank all of you here today for your time and your generosity; in particular the committee of volunteers who make this event happen every year.

This is not a time for sadness and mourning. The next 24 hours are about celebrating loved ones who have gone before us in the fight against cancer. It is about raising vital funds that will assist in the fight against all cancers for there is still so much to do.

Herein lies the raw, personal testament of a mother who has put into words just what community spirit means. The member for Macquarie Fields, who is in the Chamber, supports this worthy cause; it is beyond politics. Like him, I look forward to this event each year. For participants these sentiments should be used as fuel to return next year, get the word out, raise funds and impact positively on the lives of many locals in need of our help and support. Finally, I take this opportunity to thank and congratulate the members of the organising committee who, each and every year, work tirelessly to make this event successful: councillor Fred Borg, Associate Professor Stephen Della Fiorentina, Christine Edge, Adam Galway, staff and councillors of Campbelltown City Council led by current mayor Councillor Clinton Mead, and the *Macarthur Advertiser* reporters and editor, Jeff McGill, who is a stalwart of the event. I always look forward to this annual fundraiser, along with the member for Macquarie Fields, the member for Camden, the member for Campbelltown and the Federal member for Macarthur who all support this wonderful event. I commend the event to the House.

BANJO BUSINESS AWARDS

Mr ANDREW GEE (Orange) [6.22 p.m.]: It is the time of year when Orange celebrates its business and industry achievements. On Saturday 2 November the who's who of business and industry from Orange gathered to celebrate the 2013 Banjo Business Awards. Of course, Banjo Patterson is a favourite son of Orange born 150 years ago—which we will celebrate next year—at Narambla Station just a stone's throw from the residence of my predecessor, the great Russell Turner. They are two great luminaries of the Orange electorate. On the evening, 25 awards were handed out across a variety of categories and I mention those winners tonight. The great Ron Finemore of Ron Finemore Transport took out the top prize of CGU Banjo Business of the Year. General Manager, the great Darren Wood, was on hand to accept the award. Ron Finemore Transport was a winner also in the Automotive and Logistics category. I certainly salute the entrepreneurial spirit of Ron Finemore for setting up his operation in Orange.

Orange residents nominated and voted for the People's Choice categories. Outstanding Orange Business was awarded to the Victoria Hotel. Outstanding Orange Tradie was awarded to Duncan Logan from West Orange Motors and Wayne Hill from Wayne Hill Electrical—congratulations to both gentlemen. Outstanding Customer Service was awarded to Dr Tim Gray from Peter Smith Chemmart. Excellence in Business Operations Franchise Award went to Job Centre Australia. Excellence in Community Services went to Huntley Berry Farm, which is owned by OCTEC and operated by the Australian Disability Enterprise. Excellence in Construction and Trade went to L-Con Building and Construction—congratulations to Leonie Knight and her team. Excellence in Hospitality and Tourism went to Taste Orange with the hardworking Rhonda Sear, who does so much to promote Orange with her team of hardy volunteers. I congratulate all of them.

The Excellence in Manufacturing Mining and Industrial Service award went to Electrolux Home Products. Excellence in Personal and Lifestyle Services went to Extraordinary Beings Success Creation—congratulations to Vanessa Talbot and her team. Excellence in Professional Health and Wellbeing Services went to McCarthy's Pharmacy. Excellence in Business and Financial Services went to Sandra Kelly Conveyancing—congratulations Sandra Kelly. Excellence in Retail and Shopping, fewer than 10 employees, went to Printflow Pty Ltd—congratulations to Marcus Brouggy and his team. Excellence in Retail and Shopping, more than 10 employees, went to Officeworks Orange. Business Leaders Awards went to Spine Alive. Who could forget Alison Bennett's advertisements on Orange radio? Employer of Choice went to Jeff Hort Engineering—congratulations Jeff Hort. He makes a wonderful contribution to the economic wellbeing not only of Orange but of the whole central west.

Excellence in Innovation went to Six Chickens, an online country classifieds website for rural and regional Australia. Excellence in Small Business went to Canobolas Locksmiths—congratulations to Ian Stapleton and his team. Excellence in Sustainability went again to Electrolux Home Products. Outstanding New and Emerging Business went to Extraordinary Beings Success Creation, led by Vanessa Talbot. Young Business Executive went to Ben Jenkins from Yates Baker McLean—well done to them. Young Entrepreneur went to Brett Carslake from B and C Carslake Plumbing Services. I congratulate all winners and also all finalists nominated in their categories, many of whom were present on the night. I make special mention of the Orange Business Chamber and its hardworking committee. The great Tony Healey from radio 2EL 1089 as president leads that great organisation in fine style. Vice-president Mark Madigan is a great entrepreneur in his

own right and was instrumental in putting together the De Russie Hotels in Orange and Mudgee. Where would we be without our regional entrepreneurs who work so hard to provide jobs, growth and prosperity to our region?

Congratulations also to secretary Phil Robertson from Identify Design Solutions on all his work and, of course, to treasurer Greg Taylor from Taylor Starr Partners. I mention also the executive members of the Orange Business Chamber. Jeff Hort from Jeff Hort Engineering, whom I have mentioned already, is one of our city's leading entrepreneurs; Mark O'Kane from Electrolux with whom I worked very closely in recent times; Fiona Rossiter, former councillor on Orange City Council; and Rhonda Sear, who is a leading light doing so much to promote our great city of Orange. I mention also past president Mr Chris Morrison; Reg Kidd, Orange City Council representative, who also makes a wonderful contribution; and the NSW Business Chamber representative, Vicki Seccombe. Our entrepreneurs in Orange contribute much to the economic wellbeing of our region. It is only fitting that we salute them at the Banjo Business Awards. Again, I congratulate all the winners and finalists.

BATHURST HOSPITAL

Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst—Parliamentary Secretary) [6.27 p.m.]: Tonight I speak about the excellent Bathurst Hospital facility and its innovative clinicians, staff and nurses who provide high models of patient care. I notice the member for Macquarie Fields is in the Chamber. Today was the first time since we referred to him as an ostrich with his head stuck in the sand that he asked about Bathurst Hospital during question time. The unions told him he needed to ask a question about the hospital. However, he forgets that Bathurst Hospital has delivered quality care to our growing local community, which rightly expects this level of care to continue. Recent discussions with the Western New South Wales Local Health District, doctors, staff, nurses, the health council, the Medical Staff Council and Bathurst Regional Council agreed to a number of new solutions that will lead to better patient outcomes and care.

Dr Andrew McDonald: It's not going to work. No, they're not.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr John Barilaro): Order! The member for Macquarie Fields will come to order.

Mr PAUL TOOLE: From these discussions, Bathurst Hospital will have a new outpatient clinic to coordinate care for patients discharged from hospital, encourage patients to return home sooner, bolster care in the community setting and reduce avoidable readmissions to the hospital. A new structured daily rounds program will be introduced. This new model of care delivers better patient outcomes while enhancing the rapport of senior doctors, nurses and allied health staff on the ward. This team will visit patients daily to ensure they receive the best quality care.

As a result of the discussions there will be no changes to the hospital's intensive care unit but there will be an independent review to examine Bathurst Hospital services and how best to deliver efficient, effective patient care into the future. Several weeks ago I said that an independent review would be required. It will provide a great opportunity to look at the hospital services that must be delivered to meet local patient demand. This review is important. It needs to be conducted by an external consultant. It needs to be independent of NSW Health and the local health district so that the changes proposed are transparent. That takes personalities and politics out of the equation and will deliver the right outcomes for the people of Bathurst. It will ensure that, regardless of politics, we have a hospital that delivers the highest patient care to the area. I thank the medical staff for their input into the discussions. Bathurst Medical Staff Council Chairman, Dr Ray Parkin, said:

We must give credit to the executive for going back on the proposed cuts and collaborating with us to find ways of saving that do not affect patient care.

They agree the proposed cuts to intensive care would not be workable.

The ability to manage critically ill patients is essential to every part of the hospital, from theatres and emergency to obstetrics and paediatrics.

Dr Parkin also said that an independent review of the rehabilitation unit would look more at outpatient use of rehabilitation over inpatient rehabilitation but that there would be no closure of rehabilitation beds unless the review recommended it. The data will be reviewed and collected after six months. I thank the Bathurst Medical Staff Council Chairman for being involved in this process.

The council also recommended other services that would be needed at our hospital. For example, it is important that we continue to increase orthopaedic services at Bathurst, including surgery. The Government wants to make sure that the future is bright for Bathurst Hospital. We want to ensure that the discussions are ongoing and that new services continue to be provided in the area. Bathurst Hospital will recruit three new anaesthetists through a recruitment program early next year. I want to ensure that decisions are made in the interests of the community and are about providing health services at a local level to address the needs of our community. We want a hospital that meets the demands of the community. I am determined to ensure that Bathurst Hospital provides the care we require and deserve.

Mr STUART AYRES (Penrith—Parliamentary Secretary) [6.32 p.m.]: I acknowledge the work and efforts of the member for Bathurst in his strong advocacy for his local health services. I also recognise the significant amount of funding that the New South Wales Government allocates each year to health services across the State. It constitutes roughly 27 per cent of the annual spend in the New South Wales budget. It is great to hear that some initiatives of the O'Farrell Government, particularly the establishment of local health boards, are having an impact on the delivery of healthcare services in the Bathurst region. A big advantage of the devolution model put in place by the O'Farrell Government is that it puts local people back in control of their futures. We heard from the member for Bathurst how the boards can work with local clinicians, nurses and communities to ensure that they make the decisions that are most appropriate for their community and that the dollars are spent where they have the greatest effect.

Private members' statements concluded.

REGIONAL DEMENTIA SERVICES

Matter of Public Importance

Dr ANDREW McDONALD (Macquarie Fields) [6.33 p.m.]: Dementia is the single greatest cause of disability in Australians aged over 65. It is the third leading cause of death in Australia and one that is, rightly, feared by older people more than any other health condition. That is because dementia causes loss of memory, intellect, rationality, social skills and emotional reactions. Dementia is fatal, with no cure. Some 50 per cent to 70 per cent of dementia cases are due to Alzheimer's disease. It gives me great pleasure to raise, with the member for Port Macquarie, the issue of living with dementia in regional New South Wales. This was the subject of a discussion paper launched in this place last week by Alzheimer's Australia NSW.

The generation at greatest risk of Alzheimer's disease are those who live to be over 85. It is expected that about a third of these people will have dementia at some stage in their remaining years, and another third will need to care for someone with dementia. Rural New South Wales has an older population than urban areas. On average, symptoms of dementia are noticed by families three years before a firm diagnosis is made. In New South Wales there are 109,000 people with dementia. This number is expected to grow by 30 per cent, to 132,000 people, by 2020 and to 341,000 in 2050. These are the baby boomers. Many support services are ill-prepared for this incredible increase in demand, even in the well-resourced city areas. Dementia affects every part of the healthcare system. Australia faces a shortage of more than 150,000 paid and unpaid carers over the next 30 years, and by 2060 spending on dementia will exceed that of any health condition.

However, rural New South Wales faces even greater challenges. There is a limited choice of aged care living; there is limited access to respite or residential care. The decision to move a loved one with dementia into residential care is usually cited by families as the most difficult and stressful decision that any family will have to make. More than half the people in residential aged care facilities have dementia. This number will increase over the next 50 years. There are few services to support those with dementia who wish to age at home, and there is often a lack of understanding of the challenges of living in the country by city-based colleagues and bureaucrats who administer the services. For this reason, rural New South Wales needs services that are flexible, meet local needs and are locally appropriate and culturally safe for the Aboriginal community.

A good example that was presented at the launch is the mobile respite service provided by the Bega mobile respite team. Barbara Williams, the regional manager of the Bega office of Alzheimer's Australia, gave the presentation. In Bega the average age is 48—which is well above the State average—and 30 per cent of the population are aged over 60, compared with 20 per cent for the rest of New South Wales. This is in common with many coastal areas of regional New South Wales. The Bega service uses two staff—one to support the person with dementia and one for the carer—who make home visits on a flexible basis, either as part of a group or individually. Having two staff at each visit is vital: It means that the carer gets the support they need. This is

the sort of arrangement that city-based bureaucrats question. It may appear wasteful to some, but the reality is that dementia takes a major toll on carers, who are often elderly with their own health needs and who require the support of such a service.

The Whiddon Group run the Frank Whiddon nursing homes in my electorate and 19 others in rural New South Wales. Joanne Caughtry from the Whiddon Group also spoke at the launch. She said that the tyranny of distance, the lack of comprehensive transport infrastructure, and the difficulty in finding and retaining staff present unique difficulties for rural and regional aged care. Dementia is a disease that makes things once familiar feel alien, which is why it is vital that people in regional areas remain in their communities. The rise of telehealth will make a significant difference to dementia care in rural New South Wales, where there are very few geriatricians and those who visit do so infrequently. I commend Alzheimer's Australia for its wonderful work and its very useful discussion paper.

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie) [6.38 p.m.]: I thank the member for Macquarie Fields for bringing this very important matter to the attention of the House today. As a member from a regional area, I know the significance of this issue and the need for all levels of government to recognise the challenges facing rural communities as the prevalence of dementia continues to increase. For example, the electorate of Port Macquarie has the second-highest incidence of dementia in the State and this is set to increase by 350 per cent by 2050. This equates to enormous challenges not only for those living with dementia but also for their carers and local communities.

I commend Alzheimer's Australia NSW and the Whiddon Group for working in collaboration to produce this discussion paper, entitled "Living with dementia in regional NSW" and for highlighting the complex issues faced by people living with dementia. As with many other health issues, the statistics also reflect the anomalies between those living with dementia in metropolitan areas and those living with dementia in regional areas. The discussion paper refers to data sourced by Deloitte Access Economics and emphasises the key issues and challenges. By 2050 it is projected that 2.9 per cent of people living in metropolitan areas will have dementia compared with 3.8 per cent in regional areas. Where we see growth in the ageing population, such as in coastal areas, we also see an increased prevalence of dementia, so the dementia prevalence rates follow an exponential growth rate with age.

The issues of concern for people living with dementia in rural areas are assessment; diagnosis and management of dementia; education and awareness of dementia; opportunities for social engagement and community participation for people with dementia and their carers; access to community, respite and residential aged care; and workforce issues for community, respite and residential aged-care services. These issues are pertinent to those living with dementia in metropolitan areas but, not surprisingly, they are exacerbated in regional areas due to distance, access to transport and specialist services, limited choice in aged-care and respite places and limited resources. I will share an excerpt from the discussion paper about Steve's story. It states:

Steve lives on a farm on the mid-north coast of NSW. Five years ago Steve's mother and father, who lived in Sydney, were both diagnosed with dementia. Soon after their diagnoses, Steve's father lost his driver's licence and his mother was hospitalised. Steve left his farm and moved into his parents' house to care for them. However, after several months his parents moved in with Steve and his wife in country NSW.

In hindsight, Steve now believes he made the wrong decision. He says he "removed them from their comfort zone, friends, in fact, their whole way of life as they knew it". Living on a remote property, Steve was quite isolated and had to deal with a system that was not well equipped to service clients in rural and remote areas. The nearest regional centre is a 100 kilometre round trip and he faced challenges in accessing respite and home care services for his parents. Sadly, Steve says he "only gave them unhappiness for their final years". Steve believes that there are benefits to living within the boundaries of a large regional service centre but there is little to support and assist both the carer and the person with dementia if you "live out of town".

The recommendations at the conclusion of the discussion paper certainly demonstrate that all levels of government have a role to play in improving the outcomes and quality of life for people living with dementia. However, just as importantly, the community has a role to play. I am pleased that people in Port Macquarie have responded to the challenges and are coming together to work towards developing a dementia-friendly community.

On 2 December the inaugural steering committee will join representatives of the Aboriginal community, carers, consumers, educators, emergency services, local clubs, service organisations, Medicare Local, public hospitals and aged-care facilities to discuss how, as a community, we can work cooperatively to deliver change that will make a real difference to people living with dementia. I thank the New South Wales Government, particularly the Minister for Ageing, and Minister for Disability Services, the Hon. John Ajaka, for the financial support provided for the Mid North Coast dementia project. I am confident that he will be pleased

with his investment. I also thank the team at Alzheimer's Australia NSW, including chief executive officer the Hon. John Watkins, board members and staff, particularly for the services they provide throughout regional New South Wales and for their strong advocacy for people living with dementia, their carers and their families.

Mrs BARBARA PERRY (Auburn) [6.43 p.m.]: The member for Macquarie Fields and the member for Port Macquarie have drawn on the significant paper by Alzheimer's Australia NSW entitled "Living with dementia in regional NSW". I will do so also because it is a significant body of work. The age profile in rural populations is older than in urban areas and the average age is increasing at a more rapid rate. An increase in the proportion of people living with dementia in rural areas is expected over the next few decades, and we must be prepared for this. It is a challenge, but we should view it as a positive challenge. The challenges facing people in rural and regional areas in accessing health, education and social services are even more pertinent for people with dementia. Sadly, rural communities have poorer health outcomes compared with cities as a result of lower socio-economic status, lower levels of education, environmental risks and poor access to health services. We need to take seriously the combination of lack of services and the increasing number of people with dementia in rural and regional areas.

Making a difference does not always mean big funding increases—although they do help. One issue I raise tonight is using competitive tendering and contestable contracts for funding in rural and remote areas. We need to take the issue seriously. I was involved with a committee that inquired into outsourcing community services. The inquiry was concerned about the evidence of competitive tendering. Numerous studies have found there is a link between erosion of quality and regimes that focus on competitive tendering. I refer Parliament to the Productivity Commission's 2010 study into the job network, which also found a link. We have to find a better way. Competitive tendering means that small, strong community providers with access to social capital miss out. If we go to competitive tendering or contestable funding—whatever it is called—we are not valuing our social capital in smaller non-government organisations. It appears that Health is still going down this path. I think that is a short-sighted view. It will impact on many people, particularly the elderly, in the community. There are specific issues with home care, but time does not permit me to explore them further tonight. The discussion paper outlines those issues on page 21. I am concerned about the impact of competitive tendering; we need to do better. I thank members for their encouragement and their contributions to the discussion on this matter.

Dr ANDREW McDONALD (Macquarie Fields) [6.46 p.m.], in reply: I thank the member for Port Macquarie and the member for Auburn for their contributions to the discussion on this matter of public importance. It is an absolutely vital issue that is not going away. As one specialist said, the tsunami of cases of dementia is already baked in the cake. The risk factors for dementia are already present, and have been present for many years, in the baby boomer population of 50-year-olds to 70-year-olds who are expected to have long lives. However, they will develop dementia. I pay tribute to the Hon. John Watkins, Chief Executive Officer of Alzheimer's Australia NSW, and also Kylie Sait, who wrote this paper and other interesting reports. As the paper's conclusion states:

People with dementia and carers living in regional, rural and remote NSW have a right to equity of access to dementia care and support services.

This is recognised by all members of Parliament and all parties. It is one thing to recognise it but it is another to do something about it. The challenge for all members is to ensure that it happens over the next 20 years. There are some innovative programs in rural New South Wales such as the Play Up program, which is a play program for people with dementia, and Replay, which supports Indigenous people to undertake training in aged care. These programs are run by the Whiddon Group, so it is not all doom and gloom. But there should be more such programs.

The provision of services to people with dementia cannot be a one-size-fits-all model in rural New South Wales because there is such diversity throughout the State. The challenge is to provide systems of care that work for local communities. That requires input from the local community and the ongoing commitment of government at all levels and of all political persuasions to ensure that dementia is recognised as a problem and that adequate services are put in place because, as I said earlier, it is the most feared complication of old age for the aged population. The baby boomer generation will have to deal with the increased incidence of dementia over the next 50 years. This problem must be addressed because it will not go away. I thank members for their contributions to this debate and again commend Alzheimer's Australia NSW for the wonderful work it does for the people of this State.

Discussion concluded.

**The House adjourned, pursuant to resolution, at 6.49 p.m. until
Thursday 21 November 2013 at 10.00 a.m.**
