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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Tuesday 25 February 2014

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

The Speaker read the Prayer and acknowledgement of country.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Notices of Motions

General Business Notices of Motions (General Notices) given.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

RIVER 2 RECOVERY

Mr GREG APLIN (Albury) [12.14 p.m.]: Last November I had the privilege of accompanying the Minister for Mental Health, Mr Kevin Humphries, to Albury's Noreuil Park, on the banks of the mighty Murray River, to participate in the St Luke's Anglicare mental health project: River 2 Recovery. We were met by Mr Phil Eddy, senior manager of community programs at St Luke's, and Mr Tom Lawson, manager for foundation studies and creative industries at Wodonga TAFE. Also in attendance were the Hon. Tim Fischer, AC, and Mayor Kevin Mack, the participants, their families and supporters, as well as officers from Roads and Maritime Services and the Albury and Border Rescue Squad. The event being celebrated was the launch of five newly constructed and painted rowing boats for an 11-day journey down the Murray River from Albury to Yarrawonga Mulwala.

The River 2 Recovery program focused on a group of people living with mental health issues who undertook a boat-building project, which was supported by Wodonga TAFE and coordinated by St Luke's mental health recovery services. The program was funded by the Department of Health and Ageing and the Mental Health and Drug and Alcohol Office of the NSW Ministry of Health. A partnership with Wodonga TAFE ensured that participants engaged in an education program to build knowledge, create new employment skills and reduce social isolation. Some of the participants elected to attend the certificate II in woodwork at Wodonga TAFE to become involved in the construction of the five boats. The program aimed to raise awareness in the local region of mental health issues and to reduce the stigma by highlighting the strengths and capabilities of those living with mental illness.

The project aimed to improve the mental and physical health of the participants and to connect them to their community through personal growth and development and enhanced communication, organisational and management skills. Wodonga TAFE partnered with St Luke's to create a certificate I in transition education. This certificate was designed for those living with mental health issues. It aimed to give confidence and skills, including skills in boatbuilding. Participants engaged in the TAFE component studied and completed competencies under the guidance of Wodonga TAFE foundation studies teacher, Bryan Winnett, who created a unique learning environment to instil confidence and promote personal growth. TAFE activities included relaxation techniques and overall health and wellbeing, and has opened up pathways to further education and employment.

As part of the course activities, River 2 Recovery participants develop goals to achieve maximum physical health. Indeed, fitness outcomes were evident when two members lost a total of 50 kilograms between them. Participants showed great personal motivation by joining other St Luke's groups, such as the gym group and low-impact exercise group, and they incorporated fitness and strength-building exercises into their routines. Basic first-aid training was also provided, with all participants keen to undertake the training. In preparation for the river-based project, Wodonga TAFE also conducted a swim and survive program to further enhance abilities and to minimise risks.

One of the participants was 23-year-old Sebastien France. Sebastien displayed courage first to become involved in the course and then to front the large crowd at the launch as spokesperson for the group. He was introduced by Tim Fischer, the master of ceremonies, as "Commander Seb". Sebastien spoke clearly and confidently about the path they had followed and his personal experiences. He later told reporter Sarah Dean from the *Border Mail*:

The first step for me was walking out the door and being with people ... I have suffered depression for most of my life ... Some of us (students) felt that just going out to TAFE was the hardest thing ... I was isolating myself, but then I got to a stage where I realised the only person who could help me was myself.

Sebastien said further:

Everyone has changed from being very isolated to happy and healthy people ... Some of us have even got jobs, like me.

This is a remarkable outcome for this young man and for the others involved. It was not easy; it required the initiative and creativity of both St Luke's and Wodonga TAFE to develop a project that would capture the imagination of the participants. St Luke's also saw benefit in the program for its own organisation, forging stronger connections within the local community and establishing partnerships with organisations such as Wodonga TAFE and local rotary clubs, including the Rotary Club of Wodonga West, which provided a great barbeque lunch at the launch event.

Developing partnerships with other agencies and local businesses and strengthening existing partnerships will assist St Luke's in continuing its role as a leading provider of psychosocial rehabilitation services in the Albury area. As Minister Humphries observed, dealing with mental health is a community responsibility. The River 2 Recovery project was a wonderful example of many sectors working together for a great outcome. While the overriding and biggest benefit was to the participants themselves, as the five boats set off down the Murray to the cheers from those on the riverbank, a new challenge was issued—namely, the Minister for Mental Health and Minister for Healthy Lifestyles said that if others could be attracted to participate in this iconic river experience he would find seed funding for an eco-tourism project. While the 11-day journey to Mulwala had just begun, there may well be a future long-term venture for the River 2 Recovery participants.

NEWCASTLE LOCAL GOVERNMENT SERVICES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend) [12.19 p.m.]: My constituents pay the same rates and make the same contribution to council coffers as those who live in the central business district so why does the Liberal and Independent dominated Newcastle City Council continue to act as if Newcastle finishes at Dairy Farmers Corner? Last year Beresfield's pool season was severely cut, reduced to just 20 weeks compared with 30 weeks at Mayfield and Wallsend and 40 weeks at Lambton Swim Centre. Beresfield is a predominantly working-class suburb with more than 3,000 residents who live 22 kilometres away from the city centre. Those residents live further away from the Newcastle central business district and further away from our wonderful beaches than other Newcastle city residents. Why then were they shafted by the Liberal and Independent councillors? Why was their community swimming pool singled out? My petition calling on the New South Wales Minister for Local Government to intervene and compel Newcastle City Council to reinstate full operating hours at the pool garnered 4,800 signatures in only two weeks, showing that our community is willing to fight for our pool.

Being publicly shamed into repealing some of Beresfield pool's major cuts—and only after a vigorous community campaign and advocacy from Councillor Jason Dunn and me—demonstrates Newcastle City Council's disdain for its west. Residents and I are asking not for special treatment but for equality. It is not just our swimming pools that are being neglected by Newcastle City Council; countless minor infrastructure works in the western suburbs have been overlooked or ignored outright. Most of ward four of the Newcastle local government area, including Wallsend, Maryland, Hexham and Beresfield, lacks footpaths; Tuxford Park in Shortland has only one light post; Tarro Recreation Reserve has an unsealed road; and there has been almost no flood mitigation progress in Wallsend since the disastrous floods of June 2007 and the advent of the Independent and Conservative dominated Newcastle City Council.

It seems to be the case that the further people live from the coast the further they appear to be from the thoughts of Newcastle City Council's Independent and Liberal councillors. This ongoing neglect of Newcastle's thriving and vibrant suburb is particularly harsh, given the economic boost provided to the city by these areas.

I am also concerned about Minmi Road and I have repeatedly called for Newcastle City Council to announce a timetable to make it safer for cyclists, pedestrians and motorists. The thought of watching small schoolchildren negotiate the narrow verges of Minmi Road as they walk to the Wallsend campus of Callaghan College in peak-hour traffic is enough to make me shudder. The situation for pedestrians and cyclists has been made more precarious by the extra activity generated by the nearby Bunnings site.

I have long lobbied for improvements to Minmi Road. The road needs to be transformed into a dual carriageway with dedicated pedestrian and cycling areas. Its busiest section, from Wallsend to Fletcher, needs attention now. Tragically, this stretch of road has already claimed the life of a cyclist just last year. We need the road widened now for the safety of everyone who uses it. Unfortunately it does not seem to be a priority for council, which was happy to spend thousands of dollars prettying the facades of Hunter Street shops and decorating the Hunter Street mall for Christmas while ignoring the small businesses in Wallsend, Shortland, Lambton and New Lambton.

Is this what we are to expect in the western suburbs from a conservative-dominated council: services being cut and important infrastructure for working people neglected? In the same way that Newcastle gets the scraps of New South Wales Government funding, losing out to Sydney, the western suburbs of Newcastle lose out to the inner city time and again. It is just not good enough.

Mr DONALD PAGE (Ballina—Minister for Local Government, and Minister for the North Coast) [12.23 p.m.]: As the Minister for Local Government I listened with interest to the contribution of the member for Wallsend. Under the Local Government Act councils are largely autonomous organisations that are responsible for their own economic sustainability, including the services that they offer within their own local government area. If people within the local government area feel aggrieved by any council decisions they should lobby their local council, and I encourage them to do so.

PORT MACQUARIE SCHOOL BUS ACCIDENT

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie) [12.24 p.m.]: This afternoon I speak about a school bus accident that occurred in Port Macquarie last Tuesday afternoon, which many members will have heard about through the local media. Just after 3.40 p.m. a bus carrying 36 students on their way home to Wauchope from school careered into a gully after the driver lost control of the vehicle. The exact cause of the accident is still under investigation but what is clear is that the swift response of all local emergency services personnel and members of the community who were quickly on the scene was exceptional and praiseworthy. Students were pulled out of the bus through smashed windows by a number of students from the Newman Senior Technical College, who helped all 32 passengers.

I am pleased to inform the House that no students were seriously injured in the crash but all students were transported to Port Macquarie Base Hospital, nine by ambulance and the others by bus. One student was kept in hospital for observation overnight and the bus driver, who was kept in hospital for a longer time, has now been released. While there has been some speculation that the driver may have suffered a medical condition at the time of the crash that is yet to be confirmed.

As well as advising the House about this incident I take the opportunity to praise a number of students for their outstanding efforts at the time. William Gardiner, Josh Burtenshaw and Robbie Morrell, all students from the Newman Senior Technical College, acted without fear, helping the other students on the bus who were obviously in a state of shock and some of whom were suffering injuries. Without concern for their personal safety they went about the task of coordinating the rescue of the students until they were all safely out of the bus and on the side of the road, some delivered into the arms of anxious parents and passers-by who had arrived at the scene. While that was occurring the boys also quickly came to the aid of the 63-year-old bus driver and performed first aid until ambulance officers took over.

There has been enormous community support for everyone involved in this rescue operation and praise must be heaped upon ambulance, police and State Emergency Service crews as well as upon those people who stopped their cars to render assistance, some of whom included a number of teachers from the Newman Senior Technical College who were travelling behind the bus at the time of the accident. One can only imagine the thoughts of the staff at Port Macquarie Base Hospital when they were advised that they were about to deal with 37 patients arriving at the accident and emergency unit at the same time. But, like a well-oiled machine, the hospital staff executed their training and experience like the professional people they are, with additional staff being called in to assist with triaging and treating the young patients.

Immediately following the accident, Busways, which owns the school bus involved in the accident, was very active in alerting parents about the accident and keeping them updated on the situation and on the condition of all students. Parents of students who were on the bus have publicly shown their support for Busways and have thanked it for the professional way in which it handled the situation. Last Thursday I met with Busways director Stephen Rowe and, as is to be expected, he is still very concerned about the incident. Last night Busways offered counselling to students and parents, which I am told was both welcomed and accepted.

As recently as this morning I spoke to Andrew Glass, Busways Group Service Development Manager, about the condition of the driver. Mr Glass informed me that the driver has a fracture to his back but that he is doing well and that he is currently providing Busways with his account of what happened. Busways is fully cooperating with police and the Department of Transport during the investigation to determine exactly what led to this incident. As one would expect, there have been renewed calls from a few people in the community for seatbelts to be installed in all school buses. Unlike the former Government we have already made a commitment to progressively install seatbelts and to phase out standing on school buses on almost 1,700 dedicated school services over the next 10 years.

The O'Farrell-Stoner Government is the first government in New South Wales to commit \$208 million to rollout seatbelts in category A school buses. The bus involved in this accident was not a category A school bus. Whilst this accident was terrible it demonstrated that students, teachers and emergency services personnel all pulled together during a time of adversity and it clearly showed how a local community can work well together and can support each other in difficult and unexpected circumstances.

TRIBUTE TO FATHER JAMES STACK

Mr TONY ISSA (Granville) [12.28 p.m.]: I pay tribute to Father James Stack, who served as parish priest to the Holy Family Catholic Church, Granville East, from 1976 until his death on 6 January 2014. Father Stacky, as he was affectionately known, died suddenly just four days short of his eighty-fourth birthday after suffering a heart attack while doing what he loved: swimming at Malabar baths. Father Stack was looking forward to the Diamond Jubilee of his ordination and had no thoughts of retirement. Instead, the oldest active parish priest in the Parramatta diocese insisted he would "prefer to die in the saddle".

I had the privilege of working with Father Stack on many occasions, in particular during my involvement with the Granville Multicultural Centre, which he helped establish, and when I was president of the Holy Family Primary School parents and citizens association with which Father Stack was very involved. The night before he died I was honoured to attend a dinner with Bishop Anthony Fisher and other clergy at the Holy Trinity church to celebrate the professional vows of two Catholic sisters of the Vietnamese Sisters of Mary Queen. My son Steven was Father Stack's altar boy whilst at the Holy Family Primary School and my wife, Sue, had a great deal of involvement with him whilst working at that school. Father Stack baptised members of my family and presided at many of our family weddings.

Born in County Kerry near the Dingle Peninsula, Father Stack was one of 10 children, many of whom went on to serve God in nations across the world. Today Father Stack's twin, Thomas, is the last surviving member of that large Irish and deeply religious family. Father James Stack very much lived by County Kerry's longstanding Gaelic motto, "Comhar, Cabhair, Cairdeas," which means cooperation, help and friendship. His six decades of priestly ministry were marked by cooperation with God, our Blessed Mother, bishops, priests and parishioners. Father Stack was also a model of helpfulness. He was devoted to those entrusted to his care and had a passion for home visitation.

Father Stack may have been slightly shy and a little reserved, but he had a gift for friendship. He loved his parishioners and was loved by them. He will always be remembered as humble and approachable, with a wonderfully warm smile on his face and a friendly handshake. On 14 January hundreds of former students and staff of the Holy Family Primary School and parish attended the funeral of Father Stack to say goodbye to their beloved priest. Following the mass, Father James Anthony Stack was laid to rest at Rookwood Cemetery. God rest his soul.

LOWER HUNTER HOSPITAL PROJECT

Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) [12.32 p.m.]: Rumours are circulating in the community about the new Lower Hunter hospital. People in the Cessnock electorate have asked me about the project many times. It is

well established that the Government has chosen the wrong site for the hospital. How the Government came to the conclusion that this regional hospital did not need to be near the new Hunter Expressway is beyond my comprehension as well as the comprehension of the medical fraternity and the wider Hunter community.

The Hunter Expressway will fundamentally change traffic patterns across the Hunter Valley. It will become the aorta of the region, and yet the hospital will not be located next to it. That is because the Government was determined to take the cheap option—not the good option—and thus condemn health care in the Hunter to the consequences of this second-rate decision. Even more troubling is the scuttlebutt that the new hospital will be privately run. After hearing these rumours and the concerns of my constituents I went to the form guide. Sure enough, the Minister has had a run at this distance. On 2 May last year the Minister announced that the Government would be "seeking expressions of interest from the private and not-for-profit sector to design, build, operate and maintain a 423-bed hospital on the northern beaches".

The private sector will design, build, operate and maintain this hospital. That does not leave much for the Government to do. I would have thought that running hospitals was central to a government's responsibilities, but evidently not. Like any other privately operated service, private hospitals are run for profit. The duty of a private company is to its shareholders, not to the public. When greater profit is sought, charges go up and service levels go down. It is that simple. The New South Wales experience with privately run public hospitals is one of disaster after disaster. The Auditor-General's report on Port Macquarie Hospital, which the Government paid for twice and then gave away, is now infamous. But members need not believe me: they can ask the Nurses and Midwives Association, which would have a fair idea of what does and does not work in hospitals. In January this year the association said, in reference to the Lower Hunter hospital, "We don't want another Frenchs Forest."

There is concern and suspicion in the community. I am part way through a dozen community barbecues that I am staging across my electorate. Every time I visit a village, centre or suburb the subject of the hospital is raised. The public that I serve want to know who will own it, who will run it and whether the general public will be able to access it. I tell them that based on the Government's form and the fact that nobody knows otherwise, it looks as though the Government plans to implement the Frenchs Forest model for the new Lower Hunter hospital. My constituents respond with cool anger towards that idea. Although it is not this Government's usual style, I call on the Minister for Health to end the uncertainty and scuttlebutt, to be clear about her intentions and to address the concerns of the community. Please let them know whether the hospital will be public or private. Will the new Lower Hunter hospital serve all or only those who can afford it?

If the Minister does not answer these questions we will continue the conversation without knowing what the future holds. The site chosen away from the Hunter Expressway is an indication that the hospital will be built based on dollars and not on community need. The chosen site is Crown land, which means in essence that the project will not cost the Government anything. This piece of infrastructure will ultimately cost in the vicinity of \$500 million and last between 50 and 70 years. It will serve a population that over that time will grow towards a quarter of a million people. It therefore seems crazy that a decision at the earliest stages of the project would hinge on \$2 million or \$3 million. In fact, some landowners immediately adjacent to the Hunter Expressway have indicated their willingness to give their land to the Government in the interests of driving a better and more robust health solution for the Lower Hunter.

MYALL LAKES ELECTORATE ORDER OF AUSTRALIA MEDAL RECIPIENTS

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) [12.37 p.m.]: Four outstanding, hardworking and dedicated residents from the Myall Lakes electorate received Medals of the Order of Australia in the 2014 Australia Day honours list. Dr Romney Newman has been in private practice in Taree since 1972 and in Forster since 1996. He was a visiting physician at Cape Hawke Hospital from 1996 to 2013 and an honorary physician at Manning Base Hospital and Director of Intensive Care, Coronary Care, from 1972 to 1996. He is a current consultant at the Taree and Forster Aboriginal medical centres. He was the leader of the Kairos Prison Ministry Program in 2011 and has been a regional committee member, mentor and volunteer since 2006.

Mr Howard Croker was honoured for his service to the sport of rowing. In addition, Howard is a 2014 Greater Taree Australia Day ambassador. Howard was a rower at club, State and national levels and a coach and mentor to many generations of competitors. He rowed for New South Wales in pairs, fours and eights and was a member of the New South Wales Kings Cup crew in 1965. In 1962 he started a world-class oar manufacturing business. Howard has developed computerised technology that assesses the power and technique of rowing strokes. Since 1962 Howard has donated rowing equipment to local, State, national and international crews and

training programs and since 1964 he has supplied oars to Australian Olympic and international crews. Howard was named an Australian Export Hero in sports manufacturing for 2011-12 by the Export Council of Australia. Howard moved to the Manning region in 1977. Today Croker Oars has a staff of 17, including his four children. I look forward to each Olympics to see which crews are using Croker oars.

Lyn Mayo, OAM, was honoured for her service to the community of Taree as a fundraiser for the establishment of a dialysis centre. Lyn grew up in the Manning Valley and has lived there all her life. She and her husband, Don, have two children. Following the birth of her daughter, Lyn began having renal problems and while undergoing treatment she began attending meetings of the Mid North Coast Kidney Association. Lyn needed to travel to Newcastle for dialysis because, at the time, Manning Base Hospital's machines were strictly for emergency use and not used to treat local residents. The dream of building a dialysis centre in the Manning had begun; a group was formed to raise money and it bought a house in Chatham in which to locate the centre.

To raise more money for the dialysis machines, for more than 10 years Lyn and her group took over the running of Taree's Hub markets. The Hub was a great means to raise money, due largely to Lyn's organisational abilities. Soon the group struck a deal with the manufacturer of the dialysis machines and arranged to have nine installed at a cost of \$25,000 each, with the group working to pay off a loan at the rate of \$8,000 per month. It took 12 years from the first day of campaigning to have the machines installed and to see the dream come to fruition. Eventually protocol and the need to meet all health laws and regulations became too big a task for volunteers to manage and the group was forced to hand over the centre to Manning Base Hospital, which has just employed another nephrologist. With stage one of the hospital and the necessary funding, the renal unit will be housed in one place. It also has an outreach program in Forster.

Rodney O'Regan, OAM, was honoured for his service to the welfare of veterans and military history. Rodney served as a sapper in Vietnam and later joined the Police Force where he received a Commissioner's Medal of Valour. Rodney was suffering from lymphoma and during his long period of treatment he began to think about his future. He was discharged from the Police Force due to critical eye conditions and he became concerned that others in a similar predicament were not receiving the same disability allowances as he was. His compassion and a high work ethic evolved to a commitment to service to the community, and the citation for his Order of Australia Medal reflects that commitment.

Rodney was president of the Manning Valley-Great Lakes Totally and Permanently Incapacitated Social and Welfare Club; director of the Australian Light Horse Association; a member of the Vietnam Tunnel Rats Association, the Fort Scratchley Historical Society, the Taree Legacy Club, and the Coo-ee March Re-enactment Group; and a former member of the Veterans and Family Support Link Line. Rodney has participated in numerous Light Horse re-enactments, including at Villers-Bretonneux in France and at Beersheba in Israel. I commend each of these four people for their outstanding commitment to and work for the community. I congratulate them on receiving the Medal of the Order of the Australia in the recent Australia Day honours list.

HUNTER NEW ENGLAND HEALTH COUNSELLING SERVICE

Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie) [12.42 p.m.]: Following the very sad death of model and media personality Charlotte Dawson on the weekend there has been a lot of discussion about mental health. As tragic as the circumstances that have prompted this debate are, it is an important issue for our society to discuss and relevant to the matter I raise in the House today. In the past week in the Hunter region we have had an announcement that a free and highly accessible public counselling service is to be dismantled. On 17 February Hunter New England Health announced that the Community Health Social Work and Psychology Counselling Service would close at the end of the financial year. For the past 30 years this service has provided free and unlimited counselling to people in the communities of Newcastle, Lake Macquarie and the Hunter Valley.

The 30 counsellors employed by this service provide therapy to 1,400 clients each year in counselling centres based across the region, including in Toronto in my electorate. The other centres are in Maitland, Cessnock—I note the presence of the member for Cessnock, who is interested in this issue—Kurri Kurri, Newcastle, Windale, Raymond Terrace and Nelson Bay. While statements from Hunter New England Health over the past week have tended to downplay the role of this service, the truth is that these counsellors provide an important and highly professional service to a great range of clients who in many cases come from marginalised and underprivileged groups in our society. These services will be sorely missed and their withdrawal will leave many of those clients with nowhere else to turn.

The service typically sees community members who are experiencing issues that significantly impact on their emotional wellbeing or ability to function in everyday life. These conditions are categorised as "non-acute" but that certainly does not mean they are not serious. Among the issues for which these counsellors regularly provide therapy are anxiety, depression, relationship issues, domestic violence, recent or past sexual abuse, physical assault, end-of-life or palliative issues, school or peer group issues, family separation and divorce, removal of children, grief and loss, adjustment to chronic health or mobility and disability conditions, stress, parenting concerns, discrimination and/or marginalisation, suicidal thoughts, self-harm, disordered eating, agoraphobia, critical incidents such as being involved in or witnessing car accidents, home invasions or shootings, and more.

The staff, who have been referred to somewhat dismissively as "generalist" counsellors, are degree-trained social workers and clinical psychologists, most with vast experience in their fields. They provide evidence-based therapies for clients suffering from chronic and complex mental health and psychological issues. Hunter New England Health says the clients will be absorbed by other government and non-government operated services, including Hunter Medicare Local, Relationships Australia, Hunter Women's Centre in Newcastle, Headspace Maitland, Headspace Newcastle, CatholicCare and the University of Newcastle Psychology Clinic. Staff of the community counselling service, however, believe that the transition will not be as smooth as the press releases from Hunter New England Health have suggested.

Most of the services mentioned as alternatives already have waiting lists and to date there has been no indication that staffing levels at those services will be increased. Indeed, many of those services have, until now, been in the practice of referring clients, particularly those with long-term needs, to the Community Health Counselling Service. The community counsellors currently provide 70 counselling sessions a day—or more than 16,700 per year—across the region. Which of the replacement services suggested by Hunter New England Health will be in a position to pick up that caseload? The Community Health Counselling Service is the only free service that does not limit the number of sessions a client can have. Many of the alternative services have fees or rigid exclusion criteria. Through Medicare local clients can access up to 10 sessions per year with a psychologist but only if they meet criteria and are referred by a general practitioner.

The very important issue of accessibility arises here. Many clients from disadvantaged backgrounds do not have a regular general practitioner and the prospect of having to book an appointment, sit in a waiting room, divulge their fears and concerns to a doctor they have never met before and perhaps pay a gap fee for the consultation is obstacle enough to prevent them from taking that critical first step. We need to be removing barriers to mental health services, not putting up more. Early intervention is critical. As well, the replacement services nominated by Hunter New England Health are all based in Newcastle, whereas current community health clients are spread across the region.

Community health provides services to many people who might otherwise slip through the service cracks and not receive any service at all. Although the axe is hanging over their heads, the dedicated counsellors who staff the community service have not given up their fight to retain the service. In less than two weeks they have collected nearly 4,000 signatures on an online petition. I ask the Minister for Health to take heed of their pleas and urge Hunter New England Health to reconsider its action. At the very least, these experienced psychologists and social workers should not be lost to the public health system but redeployed to continue the good work they are doing in community health.

KERRY MOORE AND SUEANNE ROSE, SCHOOL CROSSING SUPERVISORS

GOSFORD SERVICE NSW CENTRE

Mr CHRIS HOLSTEIN (Gosford) [12.47 p.m.]: I draw to the attention of the House how delighted I was to meet last week with two wonderful ladies in my electorate of Gosford who have shared the role of school crossing supervisor at Woy Woy South Public School for the past 14 years. They are affectionately known as the "lollipop ladies", and I thank them for their part in keeping thousands of children safe as they made their way across the very busy Ocean Beach Road on their way to and from school. They are Kerry Moore and Sueanne Rose, who between them have had seven children attend Woy Woy South Public School.

Last Tuesday morning new pedestrian lights became operational. This was the final stage in a pedestrian safety upgrade, which included a median strip and improved access to the car park near the school. As these two wonderful ladies finished their role, they remembered the past 14 years and all the schoolchildren

with great affection. The two of them told me that it had been a joy to do the job and they loved every minute of it. Not bad to have experienced that level of job satisfaction! Acting principal Kim Whealey had kind words to say about Kerry and Sueanne when she joined with me in recognising them and thanking them for their years of commendable service to the Woy Woy South Public School community. It is noteworthy that our community on the Central Coast is a much better place for people such as Kerry Moore and Sueanne Rose.

In the same week I had the opportunity to visit the Service NSW site in Gosford on the Central Coast. I congratulate the staff of the new service centre, especially its manager, Anna Grono. The Service NSW centre, which was officially opened by the Premier on 15 November last year, had opened its doors to the public from 25 October. To date the centre has served almost 25,000 customers, with an average waiting time of approximately five minutes and 30 seconds and an overall customer satisfaction rating of 98 per cent. They are brilliant statistics that are a credit to all the staff who work there. On weekdays the centre tracks between 300 and 400 customers daily and on Saturdays the centre attends to between 170 and 200 customers. My colleagues in this place who have Service NSW centres in their electorates no doubt will back my endorsement of the great work done at all the Service NSW centres across the State.

The Service NSW centre initiative has turned on its head the perception of many members of the public—though at times it may be the reality—that dealing with government departments is a drawn out, bureaucratic and frustrating experience. The Service NSW centres in Gosford and across the State are doing an outstanding job. This is an initiative that is a credit to both the Premier and the Cabinet of this Government. I say to my colleagues whose electorates are earmarked for future Service NSW centres that they should welcome them because the centres are doing an outstanding job. The centres are changing the way government departments deliver service in this State. The Service NSW centres are a credit to all involved.

BEE ORSINI, YOUNG WOMAN OF THE YEAR FINALIST

Mr JOHN SIDOTI (Drummoyne) [12.51 p.m.]: Recently I had the pleasure of meeting a very impressive young lady who lives in Five Dock in my electorate of Drummoyne. Bee Orsini has endured a tough life, but through sheer courage and determination she has turned her life around—as well as the lives of many others—from tragedy and dismay to one of advantage and hope. Bee is one of four finalists in the 2014 Young Woman of the Year Award out of a record total of 239 nominations this year. In itself, this is a great achievement. At the age of just 24, Bee's biography reads like that of a person who is much older.

Bee left home when she was very young due to a family breakdown. For many years she remained homeless, exposing her very young life to dangerous and self-destructive situations. Finally, having run out of options, she discovered the Salvation Army Oasis Youth Support Network. This experience, far from turning her into a bitter and defeated human being, ignited her passion to raise awareness about the serious social problem of youth homelessness. I was shocked and appalled to learn that in this State there are as many as 44,000 homeless young people under the age of 25. I repeat: 44,000 young people who are homeless. People like Bee Orsini have devoted their lives to turning this around. Governments also need to take greater responsibility for this problem.

Bee now works as a school liaison officer with the Salvation Army. She shares her life experiences and advice so that other young people do not have to feel as though their life is meaningless and hopeless. She strongly believes that awareness does not necessarily equal change, but it does equal the opportunity to create change in our lives. In her quest to help disadvantaged young people, Bee has shared the stage with the likes of the Dalai Lama and Sir Richard Branson. In addition, she has worked with actress Cate Blanchett on a youth homelessness initiative. Since joining the Salvation Army, Bee has presented to more than 30,000 students. She gives them not only hope but practical options to help them overcome life's adversities. She teaches them about concepts such as building resilience, overcoming adversity and how to support themselves and others.

She believes that stereotypes and attitudes can create social problems. She has made enormous inroads into challenging stereotypes that act as barriers for young people wishing to access help. Bee has participated in mission trips and hosted the national Youth Homelessness Awareness schools tour and is a 2014 ambassador for Youth Homelessness Matters Day. With the benefit of her firsthand experience, Bee has become an inspirational role model for other young people who are facing a bleak future. She is able to show them where to access information and resources they need to turn their lives around and to look to a promising future. It was a great pleasure indeed for me to chat with Bee. I came away with a great deal of admiration for this remarkable young lady and all that she has achieved against the odds.

TARONGA WILD! RHINOS ART EVENT

Mr TROY GRANT (Dubbo—Parliamentary Secretary) [12.54 p.m.]: In February a huge herd of 125 wildly colourful rhino sculptures charged into Sydney, spreading a trail across the Blue Mountains, Bathurst, Orange, Cowra, Parkes and Dubbo, and they will remain until April. The trail begins at Taronga Zoo in Sydney and extends to the real rhinos—the real deal—at Taronga Western Plains Zoo in Dubbo. The amazing artworks bring colour, life and, more importantly, awareness of rhinoceros conservation. The program is called Wild! Rhinos and is part of a mass public art exhibition to help raise awareness and valuable funds for Taronga's world-leading black rhino breeding program and in situ conservation projects.

Rhinoceros poaching is continuing to escalate in Africa and Asia at an alarming rate. Three out of five rhino species now are critically endangered due to habitat loss and illegal poaching. If we do not act, by 2016 the number of rhinos poached will exceed the birth rate, tipping them towards extinction. Fifty-five adult rhino sculptures have been decorated and painted by leading Australian artists and designers, including Ken Done and Camilla Frank, while 70 calf-sized sculptures were decorated by New South Wales school students from Wagga to Wenona. Parliament House has its own painted rhino named Idol, which has found a home in the Fountain Court. Idol is a life-size effigy of a rhinoceros, painted black and decorated by a repetitive chain motif. The pattern, which is pompous in appearance, belongs to the stratum of luxury fashion houses and in particular references Chanel's radiating scarf design. Its flashy gold evokes a sense of grandiosity that often is associated with expensive luxury items, but its presence simultaneously objectifies the animal, reducing it to a bipedal idea of material worth.

When we consider the material value of rhinoceros horn on today's black market, it is not hard to get an immediate sense of what first inspired the making of Idol. However, below the surface lies the question: What is value, and how is it gauged? Idol challenges society's treatment of animals as commodities and explores the collision between the economic value and the intrinsic value of non-human living things. It was painted by Australian-born visual artist Bridge Stehli, whose paintings portray a hallucinatory world where animals and humans are interchangeable. In her paintings, we see aspects of ourselves and consequently we are reminded of the similarities that exist between our own social lives, hierarchies and instincts and those of the animals. In May the sculptures will be auctioned to help to support Taronga's breeding and field conservation programs for rhinos.

Taronga Western Plains Zoo holds one of the most significant groups of rhinos in the world. With 15 rhinos—including black, greater one-horned and white rhinos—and its expertise in managing the species, the zoo is now playing a leading role in the conservation of rhinos worldwide. In 1992 Taronga launched its black rhino breeding program. Six female rhinos were airlifted from Zimbabwe to form a zoo-based insurance population. In 1996 breeding males arrived from the United States of America. In 2002 Bakhita, the first female calf, was born. Bakhita has grown into a strong and confident rhino. I have visited her on a number of occasions. On 17 February 2010 Bakhita gave birth to a female calf named Kufara, who represents the second generation born to Taronga's black rhino breeding program. Kufara weighed in at approximately 30 kilograms. She has grown steadily, both in size and personality, and definitely has taken on the personality of both her parents, having her mother's confidence and her father's gentle nature.

Last week I met and got up close to Bakhita and Kufara and I introduced them to the Minister for Sport and Recreation, the Hon. Gabrielle Upton. It was an amazing experience. It was extremely sad to be up close and personal with these amazing creatures, yet knowing the rhino is slowly dying out due to poaching. We can all do our bit to help by tweeting about the sculptures or taking a photo of them and putting it on Facebook. I commend to everyone downloading the trail map from the Taronga Zoo website or app store. Follow the rhino trail, tick off each rhino found along the way and learn plenty about rhino conservation. I am up to 15 rhinos. All this could not have been done without the amazing work of staff and volunteers at Taronga Western Plains Zoo. I personally thank and congratulate them on this outstanding initiative. I look forward to the official launch on Thursday of Idol in the Fountain Court of Parliament House.

BREAST CANCER RESEARCH

Mr TIM OWEN (Newcastle) [12.59 p.m.]: I speak today with a deep sense of hope. Few among us have avoided witnessing the ravages of cancer, either through our own diagnosis or by supporting a friend or family member struck down by this insidious disease. Breast cancer is one of the most commonly diagnosed cancers in Australia, and one that has taken far too many of our mothers, wives, sisters, daughters and friends. However, today I am happy to report we can celebrate a small victory over this determined enemy and allow ourselves for a moment to imagine a world without breast cancer.

This is due, in large part, to the groundbreaking work being carried out in the Hunter by the Australia and New Zealand Breast Cancer Trials Group. The group is Australia's national organisation dedicated entirely to breast cancer research and I am extremely proud of the fact that it is based in my electorate of Newcastle. Led by pre-eminent medical researcher Professor John Forbes, the group recently conducted an international prevention clinical trial, titled International Breast Cancer Intervention Study-II, or IBIS-II. IBIS-II is being coordinated globally by Cancer Research, United Kingdom, and locally by Professor Forbes and his diligent and hardworking team of experts. The trial has involved 21 countries including Australia, New Zealand, India, Chile, Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom. Hunter women have made a significant contribution to the trial with 179 of the 818 participants coming from Australia and New Zealand.

Many of those women are patients of the Calvary Mater Hospital Newcastle and the Breast and Endocrine Centre at Gateshead. IBIS-II involved almost 4,000 postmenopausal women worldwide who were at high risk of breast cancer. Half of the group were given one milligram daily of a drug called Anastrozole and the other half a placebo. Many breast cancers are fuelled by the hormone oestrogen. Anastrozole works by preventing the body from making oestrogen and has for many years been used to treat postmenopausal women with oestrogen receptor positive breast cancer. In the five years of follow up to the initial trial, 40 women in the Anastrozole group developed breast cancer compared to 85 women in the placebo group. Professor Forbes said:

This research is a very important development in breast cancer prevention. We now know Anastrozole should be the drug of choice when it comes to reducing the risk of breast cancer in postmenopausal women with a family history or other risk factors for the disease. This landmark study shows that Anastrozole could be valuable in helping to prevent breast cancer in women at higher than average risk of disease. We now need accurate tests that will predict which women will most benefit from Anastrozole.

Professor Forbes is grateful to the hundreds of women who volunteered for the trial. As he said:

Almost a quarter of the women who participated in this international trial came from Australia and New Zealand and the highest recruitment area was the Hunter region.

The people of Newcastle and the Hunter are very fortunate to have one of the world's leading breast cancer researchers in Professor Forbes, who is living and working in our region. As Professor of Surgical Oncology at the University of Newcastle and Director of Surgical Oncology at the Calvary Mater Hospital, over his 40-year career Professor Forbes has been responsible for a number of pioneering breakthroughs credited with saving millions of lives. He has dedicated his life to reducing breast cancer mortality rates and improving the quality of life for women with the disease. In 2006 Thomson Scientific, an international organisation that governs and oversees biomedical research publications, named Professor Forbes one of the hottest top 10 researchers in the world.

Under the guidance of Professor Forbes the Australia and New Zealand Breast Cancer Trials Group, the only independent breast cancer group of its kind in Australia, has substantially contributed to major international clinical trials over the past 35 years. The group's program involves multicentred clinical trials and collaboration with more than 80 institutions and more than 600 researchers throughout Australia and New Zealand. More than 14,000 women have participated in the group's breast cancer clinical trials. The primary goal of Professor Forbes is the complete eradication of breast cancer and the IBIS-II breakthrough is a testament to his tireless dedication to achieving that aim. Professor Forbes has said many times, "I want a world without breast cancer: No-one at risk; no-one getting it; no-one dying from it." From what I have seen Professor Forbes and the Australia and New Zealand Breast Cancer Trials Group will not stop until they have succeeded, which fills me with great hope.

BLUE MOUNTAINS BUSHFIRES

Mrs ROZA SAGE (Blue Mountains) [1.04 p.m.]: I want to update the House on what is happening in the Blue Mountains post the recent horrible fires. As we all know, the worst bushfires in living memory occurred in the Blue Mountains on 9 October last year when 211 homes were lost and 109 were damaged but miraculously no lives were lost. However, the communities of Springwood, Winmalee, Yellow Rock and Mt Victoria were left traumatised.

I take this opportunity to again thank and praise all the emergency services that protected our communities. The lead agency, the Rural Fire Service, and NSW Fire and Rescue, State Emergency Service and police did an outstanding job at the time and after the fires. The Government quickly appointed a disaster recovery coordinator, Mr Phil Koperberg, to oversee the clean-up process. The New South Wales and Commonwealth governments through the National Disaster Relief and Recovery Agreement allocated \$1.2 million to the first "make-safe" phase when structures with asbestos, unsafe buildings and unsafe trees were

marked and identified. Buildings containing asbestos were stabilised until they could be removed and dangerous trees were initially removed by the State Emergency Service and the Australian Defence Force. After they had been assessed they were removed by council contractors. The noise of chainsaws could be heard, which is still occurring and which creates great mounds of chips.

In the second clean-up phase the Commonwealth and State governments allocated a further \$11.4 million to the removal of rubbish from fire-affected blocks in concert with insurers and the Blue Mountains City Council. To date all but eight blocks have been cleared and clearing of those eight blocks is underway. The difference in the landscape is now marked. The ruined homes and more than 500 dangerous trees have been removed and more trees are to be felled. I am pleased to report that council has received 24 development applications to date, many of which have been approved. I was delighted to speak to Michael Cini, an owner-builder, at his Yellow Rock building site. He has been seen to be the very first person to be physically rebuilding. Minister Gallacher and I visited Mr Cini and we saw firsthand the wonderful progress that is being made.

The State Government continues to support the recovery and rebuilding process as it transitions to council. A joint Commonwealth-State package of category C funding was announced by the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Mr Gallacher, and the Federal Attorney-General, Minister Keenan. This is only the second time that category C funding has been offered to New South Wales. The greater part of the \$1.8 million package involves a flexible grants scheme to support business and economic recovery and the emotional and psychological recovery of the communities. Funding will be supplied to Blue Mountains City Council for 2.5 administrative staff positions to give it a greater capacity to respond to future disasters.

As has been noted throughout this time the Blue Mountains responded in the same way as Tasmania to the clean-up but I say now that the Blue Mountains cleaned up quicker than Tasmania. To the best of my knowledge Blue Mountains City Council does not have a disaster recovery plan and the extra expertise will give it a greater capacity in the future. I am very disappointed that representatives of the Australian Labor Party in the Blue Mountains have chosen to play politics with the calamity of the people in these communities. Those members of the Labor Party should hang their heads in shame for their antics. Community members have been amazing and have rallied around each other to help. Recently I became aware that members of the Springwood Baptist Church and Winmalee Presbyterian Church have assisted residents in positive and practical ways, such as providing meals, helping with the clean-up and helping in destroyed gardens.

Together with Councillor Brendan Christie and a group of Young Liberals, I personally helped a wonderful community member, Margaret Boyle from Yellow Rock, who lost most of her garden. Margaret opened her garden each year for the Blue Mountains Lantern Club, which is a fundraising club for the Royal Institute for Deaf and Blind Children, and we were so pleased to be able to help her. I particularly thank Ministers Michael Gallacher and Andrew Constance for the way they have supported me and supported the effort. All is going well and will go well.

CAMDEN ELECTORATE HIGHER SCHOOL CERTIFICATE ACHIEVEMENTS

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON (Camden) [1.09 p.m.]: I speak today about Higher School Certificate high achievers from two schools in my electorate. I recently attended the high achievers assemblies at Magdalene Catholic High School and St Gregory's College. Magdalene Catholic High School opened in 1999. With Camden's rapid development the demand for a local Catholic high school had been growing. Until then, many students had to attend schools outside their local area. Once this wonderful school opened the student numbers grew very quickly and the school has one of the best reputations in the area. Under the stewardship of Principal John Lo Cascio, the school offers an extensive range of curriculum subjects and extracurricular activities. The students have a school that provides for their development and future.

St Gregory's College is very well known. Our own Minister for Education, the Hon. Adrian Piccoli, is a former student. St Gregory's began on 3 February 1926 and was an initiative developed by Thomas Donovan and his family, who were generous benefactors to the Catholic Church. In the early 1920s he contacted the Marist Brothers about starting a school aimed at helping boys learn farming skills to enable them to have careers on the land. With its esteemed history and noted for its academic and sporting prowess, St Gregory's has come to be a very sought after school for boys to attend.

In 2001 Mr Marshal McMahon was appointed as the first lay principal of St Gregory's and he followed in the footsteps of his predecessors by improving the building and facilities for the boys and staff at the college.

In 2009 Mr Damien Millar was appointed as headmaster by the Marist Brothers' Provincial Council and Mr Millar is still head of the school. One of the newest suburbs in my electorate, Gregory Hills, is built on land which was formerly St Gregory's College farm. The Gregory Hills community has honoured the history of St Gregory's by naming the parks and streets after the many people who have been involved with St Gregory's since its beginning. The suburb has grown into a prestigious development.

High achievers in our Higher School Certificate are to be commended. The title is accorded to those students who have reached the pinnacle in education. They have put extra into their studies, strived for excellence and achieved at the highest level. I recognise the outstanding students from these two exceptional schools who have received the award of high achiever. St Gregory's College 2013 dux was Dean Boucher. Other high achievers were Harry Roach, Adam Stregas, Aaron Wilson, Nathan Bartolo, Kane Alexander, Griffen Malloes, Christian Kagiassis, Timothy Green, Lachlan Munro, Jake Ashforth, Jacob Moon and Luke Gamble-Smith.

Magdalene Catholic High School 2013 dux was Jessica Grech. Other high achievers were Nikolina Bazdaric, Louis Bendtsen, Joshua Bourke, Sarah Coss, Chantelle Di Federico, Alan Di-Filippo, Cameron Duncan, Daniel Elliott, Aaron Fenech, Nicole Ferraro, Alex Fitzpatrick, Ana Gracanin, Thomas Maxfield, Madeleine McClure, Robert Menon, Matthew Miskell, Liam Mleczko, Julian Moothoo, Tamara Mora, Ethan Nicholson, Allison Oliver, Thomas Paparo, Eric Pappalardo, Sarah Prestwidge, Jacob Reardon, Michael Robinson, Natasha Rodgers and Alison Vassallo.

These students have had the wonderful guidance of the teaching staff at these schools, and I congratulate the students, the teaching staff and the principals, Mr John Lo Cascio and Mr Damien Millar, for their dedication and assistance. The parents of the students have also played a vital role in the students' achievements and I am sure they are very proud of their sons and daughters. I wish all of the students all the best in their future endeavours. These results, which have come about only through hard work, give these young adults a choice as to their future, whether that is university, TAFE, a gap year, an apprenticeship or moving straight into the workforce.

I look forward to working with these young men and women in the future, as they will undoubtedly be leaders in whatever profession they choose. I am extremely proud of them, as are their parents, their school communities and the wider communities. I ask the 2014 year 12 class to look to these students. They worked hard and understood that achieving a good Higher School Certificate would enable them to make choices afterwards. I commend all of these high achievers.

CASTLE HILL SCHOOL LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET (Castle Hill) [1.14 p.m.]: I draw members' attention to a leadership program that I instigated in my electorate of Castle Hill late last year called the Castle Hill School Leadership Program. The program consists of two parts. The first is a series of monthly mentoring dinners for year 12 students in my electorate over the course of their Higher School Certificate, which provides 14 students—two from each school—with an opportunity to speak with and learn from many of the challenges and obstacles that leaders have faced on the path to success. Secondly, the program culminates with the students travelling to Papua New Guinea during schoolies week, participating in a service project in New Guinea and trekking the Kokoda Track.

The program was launched in November last year by the patron of the program, the Governor-General designate General Peter Cosgrove. It was opened by the Premier of New South Wales, emceed by Ray Hadley and attended by more than 300 members of the local community, including members of Parliament such as my colleague, the member for Baulkham Hills, Mr David Elliott. The first mentoring dinner was held last Thursday and was hosted by the Commissioner of Police, Andrew Scipione. It provided a great opportunity for the 14 students to sit in a very comfortable and relaxed environment and learn about some of the challenges that the police commissioner has encountered over the course of his career. He spoke frankly about challenges that he encounters in balancing work and family life, and I know that the students took a lot from that.

Over the course of the Higher School Certificate, the students will be dining with leaders including: Gail Kelly, the Chief Executive Officer of Westpac; David Kirk, who is a businessman and who captained the All Blacks in their Rugby World Cup victory in 1987; the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, the Hon. Tom Bathurst; the Hon. John Howard; Miranda Devine, a journalist; and Melinda Tankard Reist and Pat Farmer. They will also have morning tea with Peter Fitzsimons, who is not just a renowned journalist but has written extensively on the Kokoda Track.

The program will culminate with the students trekking the Kokoda Track during schoolies week. The idea of this program came to me as a young 20-year-old walking the Kokoda Track. It really struck me at the Bomana War Cemetery outside Port Moresby, seeing the rows of gravestones of 18-year-old men who died fighting for the freedom that we have today. The age of 18 is important. It is the first time in our lives that we are free to make decisions, do what we want to do, try something new and be independent. Those young men faced similar choices and decided to risk their lives for our country. I do not believe there is a starker difference between that sacrifice and how we celebrate freedom through schoolies week.

Some of the statistics relating to schoolies week are that three in four schoolies report being drunk every single day; two in three schoolies consume more than 10 drinks a night; one in four schoolies reports being stoned every day and, like myself, 90 per cent of schoolies look back with a sense of negativity about that week. It is my view that schoolies week is a blight on our culture in Australia and something that we must work to change. It is not the students' fault; they are young people who simply partake of a product that we provide to them.

I will mention the students involved in the program. There is already a strong sense of camaraderie between them. They are really enjoying what the program has to offer and I am sure they will take much out of it. They are Chandla Serret and Callum Oldfield from Castle Hill High School, Marvin Fidel and Sid Sarkis from Redfield College, Seamus Lineham and Davis Erwin from Oakhill College, Sean Lim and Amanda Chiam from Cumberland High School, Hannah Muggeridge and Kira Rodionov from William Clarke College, Samantha Marshall and Joshua Conway from Gilroy College and Marina Bouchahine and Emily Daaboul from Tangara School for Girls. I look forward to spending time with these students over the year and I know they are excited about being a part of the program. As members of Parliament we should look at ways to ensure that our young people celebrate their freedom in the best way possible.

Mr ROB STOKES (Pittwater—Parliamentary Secretary) [1.19 p.m.]: I commend the member for Castle Hill for this terrific initiative. It is a wonderful use of his community leadership role in training the next generation of leaders and it provides an amazing opportunity for these young people to hear some very impressive leaders in our community. It also provides a great template for other members of this place to emulate and utilise in providing opportunities for young people in their electorates.

I note the member's comments about schoolies week and I commend the work of charities groups like Red Frogs Australia that do so much to look after young people who get themselves into trouble on the Gold Coast. I endorse the member's comments about the wonderful juxtaposition that this leadership opportunity provides in view of the seemingly senseless hedonism exhibited each year on the Gold Coast, with so much loss and potential tragedy. This is a wonderful initiative for which the member for Castle Hill should be commended.

MONA VALE HOSPITAL FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY

Mr ROB STOKES (Pittwater—Parliamentary Secretary) [1.20 p.m.]: I take this opportunity to inform the House of a very special event that occurred in Pittwater over the weekend. Saturday marked the fiftieth anniversary of Mona Vale Hospital, which opened on 22 February 1964 at a cost of £2 million. A variety of events were held to celebrate the enormous contribution Mona Vale Hospital has made to our community and the countless local families it has supported. What was most notable and encouraging over the weekend was the incredible sense of pride and passion in our community for the hospital and the appreciation that exists for all those who have contributed towards its enduring success.

The festivities commenced on Friday with a reunion dinner for former and current hospital staff and supporters at Pittwater RSL Club organised by Ian and Colleen Lee and well supported by Maryan Heffernan and those involved in the hospital's Keep In Touch group. The evening was a huge success, with more than 170 people attending; indeed, many former staff travelled great distances to share in the occasion. Saturday's activities were the centrepiece of the weekend and provided opportunities for everyone in our community to get involved. With the strong support of Mona Vale Surf Life Saving Club, particularly President David Sinclair, life member John Dibbs, the wonderful Lynn Smith, Skye Rose and other passionately committed people, a fundraising ocean swim was held, with over 100 competitors completing the race at the hospital, where a family fair was being held throughout the hospital's grounds. During the day there was live entertainment, children's activities, food stalls, hospital tours, memorabilia displays and market stalls that provided something for everyone.

The fair, and its huge success, was the result of months of planning and organisation by an outstanding committee of volunteers who worked tirelessly to ensure the day went smoothly and that this historic occasion

was appropriately celebrated. This committee was led by one of Mona Vale Hospital's most passionate advocates, Parry Thomas, and an incredible lady who I am convinced must never have the time to sleep, Gail Carew. Both deserve a well-earned break; they have drawn widespread praise and admiration from our community. Parry and Gail were closely supported by a dedicated group of equally passionate supporters including Eunice Raymond, who has never once shied away from supporting the hospital and has done so unfailingly for many years; the indomitable Eileen Gordon, who continues to put her absolute heart and soul into Mona Vale Hospital and its success; and Michael Mannington, who was integral in publicity for the event. I often refer to Michael as the "everywhere man" and true to this name he was everywhere on the day helping out, together with his colleague Mike O'Flynn, from daybreak to sunset.

I give special thanks also to Lorrie Morgan and Jo-Ann Steeves, whose organisation and support with logistics for the event was invaluable and greatly appreciated, and a big thank you to John Scutt and the Mona Vale Chamber of Commerce as well as Jeff Banks and Kim Jones from Pittwater Business Limited. The support and advice offered and the contributions that were gathered from our local business communities were an essential part of the day's success. I make special mention of the sponsors, including Grant O'Brien from Woolworths, who strongly supported the event at the last moment, Dick Smith, Dirk Chinchin from NAB Bank, Marcus Blackmore, AM, Avalon Computers Pals and so many others.

Importantly, I thank also the executive staff of Mona Vale Hospital, including the General Manager, Frank Bazik, and the Director of Nursing and Midwifery, Jacqui Edgley. I am particularly aware of the enormous effort Jacqui put in behind the scenes to ensure the whole event was possible whilst also running a busy hospital. To cap off the day, a sold-out dinner was held at Mona Vale Golf Club, overlooking the hospital, to help raise funds for Mona Vale Hospital Auxiliary. This very special evening was attended by an enormous diversity of community representatives, former and current elected representatives, including the Hon. Bronwyn Bishop, as well as hospital volunteers, local business identities and senior representatives from the Northern Sydney Local Health District—including the Chief Executive, Associate Professor Vicki Taylor, the Chair of the Local Health District Board, Professor Carol Pollock, as well as the wonderful mayor and councillors from Pittwater Council.

The guest speaker for the evening, Dr John Best, matched the passionate feeling within the room and spoke with great experience about the important role local hospitals play within local communities. Much loved local campaigner and television personality Shane Whittington did a brilliant job as emcee for the evening and it was fantastic to have the first baby born at Mona Vale Hospital, Chelsea Baker, serving with grace as the event's ambassador. On Sunday the festivities concluded with a special service in the hospital's chapel, which has long been a place of comfort for members of our community. I thank all those involved in this event, including Chaplain John Byles, Helen Cannon, Eileen Gordon and former Pittwater mayor and longstanding hospital advocate Harvey Rose, as well as St Johns Anglican choir, which performed for us in the afternoon. As the weekend's celebrations have displayed, Mona Vale Hospital is an integral part of the Pittwater community. It is firmly etched into our community's social fabric and is overwhelming supported by local families. History has proven that it is only because of this strong support that Mona Vale Hospital remains today and is currently undergoing major infrastructure works to modernise its facilities and its role in preparation for its next 50 years of service. I congratulate and thank everyone involved in this historic event.

HOBIE 16 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS

Mrs SHELLEY HANCOCK (South Coast—The Speaker) [1.25 p.m.]: I take this opportunity to describe a wonderful event that occurred in my electorate this month. The International Sailing Federation, the International Hobie Class Association and Yachting Australia sanctioned Hobie 16 World Championships were held in Jervis Bay between 31 January and 15 February 2014. This is the first time the championships have been held in New South Wales and only the second time they have been held in Australia since the event's inception in 1976. The world championships are held about every 18 months and previous host destinations have included Mexico, the Virgin Islands, New Caledonia, Canada, the United Arab Emirates and Spain. On the night everybody agreed that the championships held at Jervis Bay were the best ever.

I am very pleased that the New South Wales Government through its tourism and major events agency, Destination NSW, played a very significant role in attracting and luring the championships not only to the State but to the South Coast electorate at Jervis Bay. The recent Hobie 16 World Championships in Jervis Bay were the largest carnival yet. Throughout February the South Coast hosted 388 teams comprising 506 competitors from 27 countries and six continents around the world. The Hobie 16 World Championships provided an enormous opportunity to showcase the beauty of the South Coast to a significant international audience. Jervis

Bay proved to be, of course, a beautiful location to showcase the scenery of the New South Wales South Coast. Of course Jervis Bay and the Shoalhaven area are home to some of the most spectacular coastlines in New South Wales as well as having great restaurants, beautiful wineries and magnificent natural attractions.

The twentieth Hobie 16 World Championships in Jervis Bay were a fantastic event not just for the international and Australian competitors but for the residents themselves, who daily stood on the shoreline to watch the beautiful red, blue, green and yellow boats in our harbour. It attracted many local and international visitors and provided a perfect opportunity for Shoalhaven tourism operators to capitalise on the visitor numbers. As this is the pinnacle competition for this catamaran class in the world, the community of Huskisson in particular was thrilled to be hosting it on the South Coast. The economic benefits of hosting the event in Huskisson have been substantial and significant. The Hobie 16 catamarans for the competition were built locally in Jervis Bay with the Huskisson Hobie Cat factory team producing more than 60 identical purpose-built Hobie 16 catamarans and the event management team undertaking maintenance locally. With so many visitors to the championships, Destination NSW estimated that the visitor expenditure over the 16-day regatta would bring more than \$3.4 million to the region, and I am sure that it did. In fact, the event injected in excess of an estimated \$750,000 into the local community prior to the starting gun being fired on the first day. My impression from discussions with local businesses is that this event certainly was extremely successful for them.

I congratulate all the competitors, who displayed so much sportsmanship and dedication to their passion. I congratulate also the event partners, particularly Destination NSW, Shoalhaven Water, Shoalhaven Holidays, Huskisson Hotel and Shoalhaven Party Hire. I acknowledge the top 10 teams: first, Australia—Western Australia team; second, Australia—Melbourne team; third, New Caledonia; fourth, Guatemala; fifth, Sweden; sixth, Australia; seventh, France; eighth, Australia again—the wonderful local team from Vincentia and Sanctuary Point; ninth, New Caledonia; and tenth, Thailand. The two-week event experienced some challenging conditions, from strong winds, which led to races being placed on hold, to days without any breeze. The wonderful temperatures varied from quite hot to a generally pleasant 24 degrees—the South Coast climate is always mild and pleasant.

I was pleased also to attend the closing ceremony with about 500 others. It was a fantastic night. I was joined by hardworking Shoalhaven City councillors Clive Robertson and Mark Kitchener, and Director Corporate and Community Services, Craig Milburn. I thank sincerely the Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Hospitality and Racing, the Hon. George Souris, and his office, particularly Hugh Cavill, and Destination NSW for their efforts in securing this event for the South Coast electorate. I express further my appreciation to Shoalhaven City Council, particularly Mayor Joanna Gash, for accommodating such a significant event within the Shoalhaven area. It was a blast.

Mr ROB STOKES (Pittwater—Parliamentary Secretary) [1.30 p.m.]: I commend Madam Speaker, and member for South Coast for bringing the attention of the House to this terrific event. As an avid, albeit not very competent, Hobie Cat sailor of a 20-foot vessel, I commend all her remarks. I note the presence in the Chamber of the member for Port Stephens: He is well aware of the dangers I have caused to maritime traffic when sailing my Hobie Cat off Port Stephens. I commend the member for South Coast. Her electorate is a wonderful place to showcase and celebrate this important international event in regional New South Wales.

Private members' statements concluded.

STOCKTON BEACH TIN CITY

Personal Explanation

Mr CRAIG BAUMANN, by leave: I wish to make a personal explanation. I have often spoken in this House about the wonderful place that is Port Stephens and at least twice about Tin City on Stockton Beach. On 31 August 2010 and on 27 August 2013 I advised the House that *Mad Max* was filmed on Stockton Beach and that a young Mel Gibson had stayed in Tin City. I now understand that this statement is untrue and wish to correct the record. It appears that a tour operator's unfounded claim had achieved legitimacy and I inadvertently perpetuated it. I was unable to contact Mr Gibson, but an internet search of IMDb's database reveals that all 15 *Mad Max* film locations were in Victoria.

[Acting-Speaker (Mr Lee Evans) left the chair at 1.32 p.m. The House resumed at 2.15 p.m.]

ASSENT TO BILLS

Assent to the following bills was reported:

Mining Amendment (ICAC Operations Jasper and Acacia) Bill 2014
Crimes and Other Legislation Amendment (Assault and Intoxication) Bill 2014
Liquor Amendment Bill 2014

PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARIES

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I inform the House that on 24 February 2014 Daryl William Maguire was appointed Parliamentary Secretary to the Premier for Rural and Regional Affairs.

GOVERNMENT WHIP AND DEPUTY GOVERNMENT WHIP

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I advise the House that on 25 February 2014 Jai Travers Rowell was elected Government Whip and Andrew Stuart Cornwell was elected Deputy Government Whip.

REPRESENTATION OF MINISTERS IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I further advise honourable members that I will represent the Minister for the Central Coast in this Chamber.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Notices of Motions

Government Business Notices of Motions (for Bills) given.

QUESTION TIME

[Question time commenced at 2.20 p.m.]

LIBERAL PARTY MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT ALLEGATIONS

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: My question is directed to the Premier. Before the election the Premier promised that his Government would be "whiter than white" and "end the scandals". How can the people of New South Wales have any confidence in the Premier following the launch of corruption inquiries by the Independent Commission Against Corruption into three Liberal members of Parliament for illegal donations and giving favourable treatment to donors?

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: What a remarkable question from the Leader of the Opposition. The member sat in Cabinet while front page after front page of Fairfax newspapers cast allegations about Eddie Obeid and Ian Macdonald while he did nothing—he did not raise a finger. The Leader of the Opposition was part of a Government that did nothing in relation to those allegations.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Maroubra will come to order. I call the member for Maroubra to order for the first time.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: This Government is committed to raising standards and has done so. Importantly, to ensure that those standards are raised permanently this Government has increased the powers of the Independent Commission Against Corruption and given it a record budget. The Government does that so never again will an Independent Commission Against Corruption Commissioner appear before the Joint Parliamentary Committee on the Independent Commission Against Corruption and complain, as occurred when Labor was in government, that the Government is starving it of resources and affecting its capacity to investigate corruption against the State.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I hear noises from Pluto, the smallest planet.

The SPEAKER: Order! Opposition members will come to order. Those who do not do so will be placed on calls to order. Members who are directed to remove themselves from the Chamber will be excluded for the remainder of the day.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: It is important to compare and contrast their approach with our approach. I know no more about the inquiry that is due to start in two months than the press release that I read from the Independent Commission Against Corruption. When these matters were raised last year, I said that it appears to relate to donations received in the lead-up to the 2011 State election campaign. If that is true, that matter was referred to the Independent Commission Against Corruption by the New South Wales division of the Liberal Party. It is a stark contrast. No member in Cabinet and no member from Sussex Street was prepared to refer allegations about Eddie Obeid or Ian Macdonald to the Independent Commission Against Corruption even when they were on the front page of the papers.

The Liberal Party did what is right to uphold its standards to ensure the right thing was done. The Opposition says there is no proof. My favourite evidence from the Independent Commission Against Corruption is Eddie Obeid Junior saying, "It is not \$100 million, it is only \$70 million." What a joke. Never let it be forgotten that Eddie Obeid's last political act as a member of Parliament was to cast his vote for John Robertson to be the Leader of the Opposition.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I will not be diverted. Let us compare and contrast. The Liberal Party referred an irregularity to the Electoral Funding Authority and then to the Independent Commission Against Corruption. Labor did not lift a finger about those extraordinary allegations that have preoccupied the Independent Commission Against Corruption for the past three years. The other issue I draw attention to is that on the same day that the Independent Commission Against Corruption announced it was to have an inquiry, the three affected members withdrew from the Liberal Party.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: There was no action by the Leader of the Opposition on 7 August 2012 when Eric Roozendaal was announced as the subject of an inquiry by the Independent Commission Against Corruption. There was no action a month later, and there was still no action a month later.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: The Leader of the Opposition took until the eve of the inquiry—four months after its announcement—to have Eric Roozendaal suspended from the Labor Party. He is consistent. He did nothing in Government in the face of public allegations of impropriety and corruption by his ministerial and parliamentary colleague. The three current members who are the subject of an inquiry did the right thing on day one, acting with alacrity, because they are prepared to put the Parliament first. I remind Pluto and her friends over there that at the end of the Independent Commission Against Corruption inquiry into Eric Roozendaal he was found not to have a case to answer.

ALCOHOL- AND DRUG-RELATED VIOLENCE

Mr BRYAN DOYLE: My question is directed to the Premier. What is the New South Wales Government doing to crack down on drug and alcohol-fuelled violence?

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I thank the member for Campbelltown for his question. I thank him and other members of this House for their service as police officers in the past. They have had to deal with the serious drug and alcohol-fuelled violence that has regrettably caused such concern and resulted in so many deaths and serious injuries, which has elicited this response from the State Government. On 21 January the Government outlined a comprehensive plan to try to make our streets safer. Key planks of that plan that are already in place include assault causing death or the so-called "one-punch law". The

increase in the penalty for the illegal supply and possession of steroids to 25 years, I understand, has upset Mr Universe. He must be on another planet if he does not think that the illegal use of steroids is a problem across the community. Yesterday saw the start of lock-outs, last drinks and the ban of take-away liquor sales after 10.00 p.m.

To improve transport in and around the entertainment precinct on Friday and Saturday nights, free buses now run every 10 minutes from Kings Cross to the central business district to connect with NightRide services. Television networks and many radio stations now air Danny Green's coward-punch advertisement as part of our plan to bring about cultural change and improve personal responsibility. I thank Danny Green and the television and radio stations for their willingness to run those ads. It is a multifaceted package. As I have said before, there is no simple or single solution to stamp out drug and alcohol-fuelled violence. Dealing effectively with this issue requires concerted effort by Government and all its agencies, including alcohol and related industries and the community.

The Government is again stepping up to the plate and this week will introduce the second stage of mandatory minimum sentences for serious drug and alcohol-fuelled street violence. This package of mandatory minimum sentences sends the clearest possible message that those who engage in drug or alcohol-fuelled violent assaults in public will face the full force of the law. The list of offences to attract mandatory minimum sentences are reckless grievous bodily harm in company, reckless grievous bodily harm, reckless wounding in company, and the two most serious assault police offences, reckless grievous bodily harm or wounding offences. The mandatory minimum sentence to be imposed for people convicted of these offences will range between three and five years, depending on the offence. In recognition of the seriousness of these public offences, the maximum penalties will be increased when the offence is committed by intoxicated offenders. The public places to which the drug and alcohol intoxication offences will apply are to be broadly defined as those that are in or in the vicinity of any premises or land open to the public, licensed venues and restricted premises such as brothels and bkie headquarters.

Further, following a request from the New South Wales Police Force, "intoxication" will be more clearly defined in the legislation and will apply to the offences announced today as well as the new assault causing death offence. As I have said repeatedly, I am determined to get these laws right so that we change the culture and stamp out the outrageous and unacceptable drug- and alcohol-fuelled violence that is causing so much damage and death. Today's package builds on the targeted approach to tackling drug- and alcohol-fuelled violence that the Coalition has taken since coming to government. That approach includes the three-strikes regime, increasing police numbers and powers and, of course, improving public transport. The Government's earlier initiatives have resulted in a reduction in violence on licensed premises but more improvement is needed, and that is what these additional measures are designed to achieve.

I do not take the introduction of mandatory minimum sentences lightly. As the Attorney General warned last year, if members of the public continue to believe that sentences are out of step with community expectations, the judiciary should not be surprised when Parliament acts on their behalf. The Government has acted and I hope it will continue to have the support of all members in sending the strongest possible message that we will not tolerate people going out and having a dozen drinks, popping pills, or worse, picking a fight, throwing a violent punch and thinking that is okay. It is not okay. The community expects a response and this Government is delivering it.

LIBERAL PARTY MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT ALLEGATIONS

Mr MICHAEL DALEY: I direct my question to the Premier. I refer to the Premier's first answer today and to his pre-election statement that "The public have had a gutful of politicians who promise to set high standards and who refuse to do so."

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will come to order. The member for Maroubra will be heard in silence.

Mr MICHAEL DALEY: How can the community trust the Premier to uphold standards when he failed to suspend Liberal powerbroker the member for Terrigal and his colleagues the members for Wyong and The Entrance after their offices were raided by the Independent Commission Against Corruption last year and reports of the raids appeared in the press?

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will come to order. The Premier will be heard in silence.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I am tempted to ask the member to clarify whether he is referring to the first question asked by an Opposition member or the first question asked by a Government member. I know of his interest in alcohol-fuelled violence.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will come to order.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: He is a brother. I assume he is referring to the first question asked by a member of the Opposition. I could provide a number of easy responses.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Maroubra asked the question and he will listen to the answer.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: Noreen is better than he is. Speaking of the member for Wollongong, I think I walked past the former member for Kiama in the street yesterday.

Mr Ryan Park: Point of order—

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

Mr Ryan Park: My point of order relates to Standing Order 129. This has nothing to do with the question.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I encourage members not to interject. I am simply making the point that I ran into a former colleague of the member for Wollongong yesterday when I was crossing Phillip Street. I think it was him, but he had his underpants in the right place for a change.

Dr Andrew McDonald: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Order! Does the point of order relate to Standing Order 129?

Dr Andrew McDonald: Yes, it does.

The SPEAKER: Order! I am sure the Premier will return to the leave of the question. The member for Shellharbour will come to order. The member for Bankstown will come to order. The member for Maroubra will come to order.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I believe my answer is relevant because it goes to the question of ministerial standards. The man who was cavorting in the member for Wollongong's office in his underwear was the then Minister for Police. He and Ian Macdonald were sacked by the member for Toongabbie as an example of ministerial standard upholding in an action never previously taken by a Labor Premier of this State. What did his colleagues do? They took out the knife. What was the first act of his replacement? It was to reappoint Ian Macdonald as a member of Cabinet. We know that, unlike upholding ministerial standards, crime pays on the Opposition benches.

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order: The Premier has been speaking for two and a half minutes and has gone nowhere—

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Maroubra will state his point of order.

Mr Michael Daley: I refer to Standing Order 129. If the Premier does not know why he did not send those members to the crossbenches six months ago he should say so.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members who take points of order must not make speeches; they must state the point of order. There is no point of order.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: The problem with the member for Maroubra is that he speaks loudly but knows nothing. As I said in response to questions asked at the time in this place and outside this place, the Independent Commission Against Corruption undertakes raids from time to time. It does not tell me what the raids are about, nor does it say anything about them publicly.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Maroubra asked the question and he will listen to the answer. I call the member for Maroubra to order for the second time.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: No-one is denying that raids took place. However, no-one knew what they were about until, I believe, a press release was issued last week by the Independent Commission Against Corruption while I was overseas. If the member for Maroubra paid more attention to the proceedings of this House he would also know that the Independent Commission Against Corruption Act prevents members who are the subject of any investigation, including raids like those referred to last year, talking to anyone about what is going on. What the Government did was clearly in accordance with the way in which the commission operates.

The three members withdrawing from the Liberal Party on the day on which the inquiry was announced was absolutely the correct thing to do, and it stands in stark contrast to what members opposite did in similar circumstances. Members opposite—led by the man anointed by Eddie Obeid and who say that they have learnt a lesson from the last election—waited four months to suspend Eric Roozendaal's membership of the Labor Party after an inquiry was launched, although I hasten to add that it was eventually found he had no case to answer.

DROUGHT ASSISTANCE

Mr JOHN WILLIAMS: I address my question to the Deputy Premier and Leader of The Nationals. How is the Government supporting regional communities and farmers during the drought?

Mr ANDREW STONER: I am sure most members of this place and, indeed, members of the public are only too well aware of the drought that has crept across much of regional New South Wales, and particularly the north and west of the State, and its impact on regional communities and our farmers in those regions. The Premier, the Minister for Primary Industries, other members of the Government and I have toured drought-affected regions since the drought began to take hold in regional New South Wales. We have seen firsthand the impacts of the drought, including paddocks without a blade of grass, dust instead of pasture, stressed animals, stressed farmers and stressed communities. We heard on our travels that livestock need more water than usual during drought and its unavailability and the cost of carting it adds to that stress. Keeping feed up to stock, particularly breeding stock, when stock prices are nothing short of woeful is driving farmers to the brink of despair.

That is why in November last year the Government responded with an initial \$7.6 million drought assistance package aimed at the shires of Bourke, Brewarrina and Walgett. That package provided assistance in particular for the transport of stock, water and fodder, and waived State Government fees and charges—and that waiver was backdated. It also included on-the-ground support from rural support workers providing financial advice and mental health assistance. The Government extended that package earlier this year to another 20 local government areas, including the far west unincorporated area. Feedback has been fantastic. This is the sort of assistance farmers need; they want a hand up, not a handout, and that is precisely what this Government is providing.

I am thrilled to be able to announce another form of drought relief for regional New South Wales. The Water Security for Regions program will help communities to droughtproof their areas by providing improved water security not only during this drought but also in the future. The package will provide \$40 million this financial year funded through the Restart NSW program, which provides infrastructure for the State's economic needs. The water security for regions program will fund projects designed to enhance water storage such as dam augmentation, or even new dams, pipeline and bore works—

[Interruption]

I referred to bores and in came the member for Cessnock. The program will also provide for the installation of water efficiency technology. On the advice of the NSW Office of Water funding of \$20 million has been approved for projects in Bourke, Wilcannia, Cobar, Nyngan, Lake Wallace and Forbes, to assist those communities to prepare better for drought. A further \$20 million will be provided in the balance of this financial year and, in conjunction with the NSW Office of Water, the Government will be announcing a targeted process to direct that funding to communities in need of water security assistance. I encourage local councils, regional organisations of councils and other organisations to apply for that funding, which will be determined on merit by an independent panel. As that famous poet once said, this is a land of droughts and flooding rains. Flooding

rains will fall again but regional New South Wales will be better prepared, through enhanced water storage and better water security measures, thanks to the Water Security for Regions program of the Liberal-Nationals Government.

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

INDEPENDENT COMMISSION AGAINST CORRUPTION RAIDS

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: I direct my question to the Premier. Did the Premier take any action after he was informed of Independent Commission Against Corruption raids on the offices of his three Central Coast members of Parliament or did he simply turn a blind eye to corruption?

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I love the fact that when something happens on this side of politics the Leader of the Opposition goes straight to a verdict but when something happens on his side of politics—namely, Eddie Obeid and Ian Macdonald—he does not lift a finger. The Independent Commission Against Corruption has announced an inquiry, just as it announced an inquiry into Eric Roozendaal. Not every inquiry of the Independent Commission Against Corruption leads to findings of the type described. I am not going to prejudge the inquiry—

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: —but the only information I received about the activities of the Independent Commission Against Corruption last year came through the media. When I inquired, through my department, about the cause of those activities I got the same response I would have received legally from any person who was involved—namely, the Independent Commission Against Corruption does not brief on its activities. There are laws around what the Independent Commission Against Corruption can and cannot say. I am happy to attest that I think the former Commissioner of the Independent Commission Against Corruption has done a sterling job—and I have no doubt that his successor, whom he helped choose, will do an equally good job. But I have no doubt that David Ipp did not brief the former Labor Government about his activities any more than he briefed me.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: The appropriate action has occurred. The Independent Commission Against Corruption has increased powers and an increased budget. Indeed, even the Director of Public Prosecutions has been given an increased budget to ensure that Eddie Obeid and Ian Macdonald can—

Mr John Robertson: Repeating your answers will not solve your problem.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: The problem is that the Leader of the Opposition is not interested in the public good; he is simply interested in the politics.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: The difference is that I am concerned about the \$100 million lost to the State through the actions of Eddie Obeid and Ian Macdonald. That is why the Government is introducing legislation to try to recoup that money. Was the member opposite concerned about that? No.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: Did the Leader of the Opposition refer the matter to the Independent Commission Against Corruption when it was on the front pages of the *Sydney Morning Herald* and the *Australian Financial Review*? No. Did he raise it in Cabinet? No. Did he do anything about it? No. That stands in stark contrast because I say again—

Mr Richard Amery: You are answering your own questions.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: It is a Kevin Rudd impersonation. If this matter relates to donations received before the last election, that matter was referred by the New South Wales division of the Liberal Party. I say again that is a significantly higher standard than was exhibited by the New South Wales branch of the Labor Party during the 16 years when those opposite were in office.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: We have record funding, increased powers and good commissioners, and my Government is prepared to back them in relation to the inquiries around the handing out of certain mining leases by former Labor Ministers. I will match that record any day against the sorry record of the former Government.

ALCOHOL- AND DRUG-RELATED VIOLENCE

Mr RAY WILLIAMS: I address my question to the Attorney General, and Minister for Justice. How is the Government ensuring that the community's expectations for the sentencing of violent alcohol- and drug-related offenders are being met?

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

Mr GREG SMITH: I thank the member for Hawkesbury for his question and commend him for his continuing interest in this great problem that continues to disease our community. In 2012 we witnessed the tragic one-punch death of Tom Kelly—the whole community mourned, and continues to mourn, that senseless killing. Tom's attacker was convicted of manslaughter. Widespread opinion was that the sentence was manifestly inadequate and the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions has appealed the sentence. In November 2013 a Brazilian tourist, Lucio Rodrigues, was punched once in the face and fell to the pavement in the city. Two days later he died at St Vincent's Hospital. In December 2013, 20-year-old Michael McEwen was punched at Bondi. He was left in a coma but, thankfully, survived. He had part of his skull removed—I gather it has been replaced—and he is now rehabilitating. On 31 December, New Year's Eve, Daniel Christie was knocked down and subsequently died. This situation could not be ignored. Despite the rhetoric and attacks and political pointscoring by those opposite, the O'Farrell Government acted decisively and last month an unprecedented series of measures was introduced to tackle the problem of drunken assaults on our streets.

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

Mr GREG SMITH: Although the Opposition supported that legislation, the shadow Attorney General and others continued to attack it. These measures were designed to send a clear and strong message to intoxicated thugs that such public violence will not be tolerated.

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

Mr GREG SMITH: The measures included mandatory minimum sentences for intoxicated unlawful assaults under the new so-called one-punch laws. Thankfully, so far no-one has had to be charged under those laws but they came into operation very soon after being passed by this Parliament.

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

Mr GREG SMITH: I hope no-one ever will be charged under that law. We do not want any more innocent young people becoming victims of coward punches and dying on our streets. In addition to the one-punch laws, we have introduced a range of other measures, including 1.30 a.m. lockouts and 3.00 a.m. last drinks. They came into effect a couple of nights ago, and the Premier has gone into some detail about them. As part of the second tranche, the Premier announced today that mandatory minimum sentences will be introduced for serious assaults involving grievous bodily harm or wounding. These are ways of protecting our community. Surely the main responsibility of any government is to protect the community. Those who have criticised these laws, including members of the legal profession—

Dr Andrew McDonald: Yes, all of them.

Mr GREG SMITH: I am afraid that is not true.

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

Dr Andrew McDonald: Nearly all of them.

Mr GREG SMITH: I do not know that you can say that either.

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

Mr GREG SMITH: Those people have failed to admit that it is not just mandatory sentencing we are talking about; it is a whole program of endeavour to try to change the culture. We have heard not one word from those opposite to encourage the community to get their kids to stop going out drunk and bashing other people. One would think from the behaviour of those opposite that they enjoy what is happening.

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

Mr GREG SMITH: They did so little about it in the 16 years they had their noses in the trough, when they virtually bankrupted this State. Those opposite failed, and they continue to fail.

The SPEAKER: Order! Opposition members who continue to interject will be placed on calls to order. Those members who are directed to leave the Chamber will be removed for the remainder of the day. I call the member for Macquarie Fields to order for the second time.

Mr GREG SMITH: The offences we are targeting are the most serious offences; they are the offences the community is most concerned about—fatal punches while intoxicated as well as assault causing serious and/or lasting injury, not assaults causing scratches or bruises. Anyone thinking they can get away with less serious assaults involving minor harm is mistaken. We are also increasing the maximum penalties for these offences if they are committed by an intoxicated person in public, but we are not introducing a mandatory minimum sentence. [*Extension of time granted.*]

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

Mr GREG SMITH: Sexual assault offences committed whilst intoxicated will be revisited when we are considering the recommendations of the parliamentary inquiry into the sentencing of child sex offenders. This is about deploying our resources where they are used best. We need to tackle serious violence and we need to stop young people being killed or maimed by drunken idiots on our streets. These measures are part of our package of reforms to make the streets safer. They send a very clear message that anyone who engages in serious drug- or alcohol-fuelled assaults in public will face the full force of the law and a minimum three years in prison. It is a message to individuals, their families and friends that getting intoxicated is no excuse and that intoxicated violence can have only one outcome. It is an essential message so that others can continue to enjoy a night out without becoming victims of random thuggery.

STATE GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE

Ms LINDA BURNEY: My question is directed to the Premier. Does the Premier admit that his Government is in crisis?

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Canterbury will be heard in silence. The Leader of the House will come to order. The Premier must be able to hear the question in order to answer it. Government members will come to order.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: Does the Premier admit that his Government is in crisis, with his members facing the Independent Commission Against Corruption on corruption allegations while he and the Deputy Premier spend their time resolving preselection disputes between senior Ministers instead of focusing on the issues that matter to families in New South Wales?

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I did not think baseball season commenced for another month. The Deputy Premier asks "Who wrote that question?" I happened to notice a bit of byplay—

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Canterbury will come to order. The Premier will be heard in silence.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I happened to notice a bit of byplay between the Leader of the Opposition and the shadow Leader of the House after my last answer when the Leader of the Opposition looked around and said sternly, "No, we are not asking that". Clearly he was rolled again. We are not a government that is focused on other than the needs of New South Wales. That is why today we announced the second tranche of reforms to introduce minimum mandatory sentences to ensure that we try to put an end to a terrible culture, as described by the Attorney General, that has grown up across our society—not just in the Sydney central business district precinct but in too many places across this city and this State—of serious drug- and alcohol-fuelled violence in public places that is destroying the rights of people to go out and have a good time. So we have announced reforms in that area. Today I will be introducing legislation to clean up one of Labor's messes—a mess that, depending on which Obeid one listens to, cost taxpayers either \$70 million or \$100 million because those opposite had no system in place to stop mining leases being handed out corruptly to their cronies.

Ms Linda Burney: Point of order—

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: If you ask a question you are going to get an answer.

Ms Linda Burney: My question had nothing to do with what the Premier is talking about.

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

Ms Linda Burney: It is under Standing Order 129. My question was about resolving preselections.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Canterbury will resume her seat. The question was about whether the Government is in crisis. The Premier is being relevant to the question asked.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I say again the short answer is no, but I have three minutes and six seconds left—and with a bit of luck I will get an extension of time. We are a government that is focused on the needs of New South Wales, whether it is managing finances—and I commend again the world's greatest Treasurer, who sits in the New South Wales Parliament; a Treasurer who continues to deliver the trifecta—

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: —of reining in expense growth and only spending what we commit to, putting extra dollars into the front line to employ additional nurses, teachers and police across the State, and, importantly, freeing up money to ensure that we have a record infrastructure budget in New South Wales. We have a Minister for Transport who has made more progress in three years with the North West Rail Link than those opposite made for the whole period they were in office, and a Minister for Transport who is introducing an Opal card across Sydney's public transport system after less than three years in office—something those opposite said they would do by the 2000 Sydney Olympics. We have a Minister for Education who is reforming our education system—not only building new schools but, importantly, addressing the issue of teacher quality, which is the key to ensuring that our public education system in particular is as vital and as important to young people today as it was when Henry Parkes introduced that legislation back in 1880.

I can go through every portfolio and highlight the focus that my Ministers have had on delivering improvements for the people of this State. The Minister for Planning and Infrastructure reminded the party room today—if I can leak this from the party room—that in 2009, under Labor, housing approvals in this State were around 15,000 and last year they were 35,000. What is the import of that? Supply is finally matching demand. Everybody knows—except those opposite, including the shadow Treasurer—that when supply matches or exceeds demand, prices come down. Speaking of prices, what great news from the Treasurer and the Minister for Resources and Energy: Over the coming 12 months power bills will rise below the rate of inflation. I cannot remember the last time that power price increases were less than inflation. Even better news: The dividend take from government on those utilities is going to fall under this Government.

Once again, we are delivering on our promise to reduce pressure on cost-of-living increases. This is a government that is focused very much on the public of New South Wales—the people who turned their backs comprehensively on those opposite because those opposite were only interested in themselves, their dealings

and their politics. We will keep focusing on the public interest. We will ensure that our independent integrity agencies are well resourced to take care of those other issues while we get on and improve this State for the people of New South Wales.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE VICTIMS SUPPORT

Mr ANDREW CORNWELL: My question is addressed to the Minister for Family and Community Services, and Minister for Women. How is the Government supporting victims of domestic violence?

Ms PRU GOWARD: I thank the member for Charlestown for his question. I know that he is a very strong supporter of White Ribbon Day and that last year he celebrated the birth of his first daughter, Grace. This is about daughters. On average, one woman is killed by her partner or former partner every week in Australia. In the 12 weeks to September last year in this State alone there were more than 27,000 incidents of domestic violence. Domestic violence is the greatest cause of death and disability for women under the age of 40. These women are mothers, sisters, aunts, nieces, cousins and girlfriends, and every one who dies is someone's daughter. For every member in this place who has a daughter, that is sobering thought. We must ensure that our daughters do not suffer the way so many have to date.

We have worked tirelessly for every woman who has died as a result of domestic violence and for every woman who lives in fear of it. My working career and personal life have been dedicated to the cause of women. Last week I announced reforms to fight back against domestic violence, but let us take a moment to look at how the old system fell short. Nothing made it clearer than the Auditor-General's report in 2011, in which he said that organisations are not providing a response that works or lasts for many victims and perpetrators. He also said that a coordinated response is required.

It is clear that those opposite put domestic violence reform in the too-hard basket. Maybe it was because to address the Auditor-General's concerns would have required cooperation between many Ministers and agencies. Can anyone imagine the old Labor Cabinet working together to develop a whole-of-government response to domestic violence? Let us look at its record. Between 2007 and 2011 it had three different police Ministers—David Campbell, Matt Brown and Tony Kelly. In the same time it had three different Ministers for Health—Reba Meagher, John Della Bosca and Carmel Tebbutt. It also had three education Ministers—Carmel Tebbutt, John Della Bosca and Verity Firth.

Ms Linda Burney: Point of order: This is hardly a topic to politicise.

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

Ms Linda Burney: My point of order is under Standing Order 129. The Minister should come back to the point. I believe she has the numbers.

The SPEAKER: Order! I warn the member for Canterbury that this is not an opportunity for argument. The Minister has the call.

Ms PRU GOWARD: With all that seat-shuffling it is clear why it was left until a change of Government to develop a comprehensive, all-of-government approach to domestic violence. That is what we have done and what I announced last week. For the first time, victims of domestic violence will not have to tell their stories over and over again to every agency or organisation they come into contact with. Our "It Stops Here" reforms mean victims will now get a coordinated response.

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

Ms PRU GOWARD: Cases will be personally managed and a dedicated team of people will wrap the necessary services around each victim. Shortly we will launch two sites, one in Waverley and one in Orange, with up to 22 additional sites to come. This reform builds on other initiatives we have already introduced since coming to Government that are focused on perpetrators and children who witness domestic violence. We must break the cycle of violence. We must drive down the violence and build a system that provides each victim with a whole-of-government response. Just like the problem of alcohol-fuelled violence, we are working tirelessly and together. We are the reformist Government that will get the job done—one that this State so desperately needed. Whether the violence is on our streets or in our homes, the community expects a strong, coordinated response from us.

In addition to our reforms I will look at the barriers to prosecution of perpetrators and the available sentencing options. Today I announce the establishment of a task force that I will chair to look over laws around domestic violence in the next few months to ensure they accurately reflect the community's expectations and encourage reporting. My parliamentary colleagues who will join me on the task force are Bryan Doyle, the member for Campbelltown and a former police officer, and Natasha Maclaren-Jones, a former nurse. We will be joined by experts Tracy Howe from Domestic Violence NSW and Karen Willis from the NSW Rape Crisis Centre. [*Extension of time granted.*]

The task force will complement the joint select committee inquiry into sentencing of child sexual assault offenders and also the recent strengthening of alcohol-fuelled violence laws. In the end, this is about one thing: protecting victims. For example, we must better support victims such as Nanette. Her ex-partner beat her so violently that she did not regain consciousness for four days after he assaulted her. He left her for dead and she has a brain injury as a result. The charges against the perpetrator were malicious injury with intent, and attempted murder. Both of those charges carry a maximum penalty of 25 years imprisonment, but that man was given a six-year sentence with an additional parole period of three years. Nanette is also someone's daughter. She could have been the daughter of any of us. Women in New South Wales have a right to be safe in their homes with their families. They have the right to live without fear of abuse, especially from those they love and trust. For the sake of every mother, sister and daughter we must continue the fight against domestic violence.

SYDNEY SECOND AIRPORT SITE

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: My question is directed to the Premier. In response to a question from the member for Canterbury he said he was getting on with delivering for the people of New South Wales. Will the Premier join Labor in offering bipartisan support for a Western Sydney airport at Badgerys Creek with a curfew, which is a project that will create thousands of jobs and transform Western Sydney?

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: The last time I looked it was a Federal Government decision that the current Prime Minister committed to make during his first year in office. I again welcome the fact that he is delivering on that commitment. I also welcome reports that the Federal Government is considering doing something equally important if it is to proceed with a Federal airport—that is, put money into infrastructure to support that airport. The question I have for the Leader of the Opposition is: How would he fund that infrastructure?

Having come to office with a credit card that was maxed out by those opposite and a budget out of which they repeatedly spent more money than they raised, we have sought to live within our means. As I said a moment ago in praise of the Treasurer, we have done well in the light of the former Labor Government that, had it lived within its means for 16 years, would have had \$20 billion available to it. That would have more than paid for the roads, railways and fuel linkages to a second airport at Badgerys Creek. Did members opposite live within their means and put aside that \$20 billion? No, they did not. Did they support a second airport at Badgerys Creek? No, they did not. Or did they invest in ordinary infrastructure to suit the needs of the people of Sydney? Again, the answer is no.

I am more than happy to continue to engage with the Prime Minister about the second airport. I note that the Leader of the Opposition has put a caveat on his commitment to the second Sydney airport that the Federal member for Grayndler does not support. Is that why the member for Marrickville is stepping down at the next election? The member for Grayndler is going around the boardrooms of Sydney saying that a second airport in the western suburbs must be a 24-hour airport. I assume the Leader of the Opposition does not support that. He will not say that he does not support a 24-hour airport.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will cease interjecting.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: This is not a trick question. I just want the Leader of the Opposition on the record as not supporting a 24-hour airport.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: That is in contrast to his Federal colleagues who do support a 24-hour airport. But the issue that concerns me is—

Mr John Robertson: You have had more positions on the airport than anyone I know.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I have had one position on the airport and I am about to unveil it. Whether or not an airport is built has always been a matter for the Federal Government.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: The matter that exercises my mind is this: If the airport is built without the infrastructure required to make it work this Government will have to finance that infrastructure. So I have questions for the member for Blacktown. Does he want the Blacktown Hospital redevelopment to stop? Does he want the Campbelltown Hospital redevelopment to stop? Does he want the WestConnex project not to proceed?

The SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition will cease arguing across the Chamber.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: Does he want the upgrade of the Princes and Pacific highways to come to a dead end? The corollary of him not indicating how he would finance the infrastructure to support a second Sydney airport means it would have to be filled within the Sydney airport.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition will cease shouting at the Premier. He will cease interjecting. The member for Cessnock will cease interjecting.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: As I said a month ago, I welcome the fact that the current Federal Government will put an end to 40 years of indecision about a second Sydney airport and I look forward to that announcement. I particularly look forward to it because media reports suggest that the Federal Government is prepared to put money on the table to invest in the infrastructure—road, rail, fuel pipeline and the like—that will make it work. If it delivers on that there will be no happier person in this State than me.

RURAL AND REGIONAL MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mr ADAM MARSHALL: My question is addressed to the Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Healthy Lifestyles, and Minister for Western New South Wales. How is Government funding of mental health supporting drought-affected communities like mine?

Mr KEVIN HUMPHRIES: I thank the member for Northern Tablelands not only for his advocacy as a new member but also as someone who has learned in depth the plight of rural people in his electorate, particularly in the past six to 12 months. I acknowledge the great work of all my parliamentary colleagues in supporting drought-affected areas, in particular, the Minister for Primary Industries, who is well supported by the Deputy Premier, who continues to outline drought-support packages today; the Premier for his leadership; and my Cabinet colleagues. There are about 50,000 farming families in New South Wales. In an average year they will turn over between \$8 billion and \$10 billion worth of product. Agriculture has been a pillar of this community, not only economically but also as the social fabric of this great State, and indeed this great country.

Looking around this great city—country people take a longer-term view of most things—most of the wealth and prosperity in post-European settlement of this colony was off the back of agriculture. Historically, over time governments have done a good job in reciprocating when communities get into strife and need help. In terms of those 50,000 farming families, the Government first acknowledged that when people get into difficulty it will support them and not walk away from them. In 2012 it stopped raining in one part of the State and it has not rained since—it rained partly a couple of weeks ago. I often say to people in the city, particularly those in business, that drought is insidious because it runs for so long. The past 18 months, particularly in Bourke, Brewarrina, Walgett and Coonamble, have been the longest, driest, hottest period in post-European history in New South Wales. What does that do and how does it affect people not only economically but also mentally?

For the past two years in much of my area—the Northern Tablelands and Murray-Darling electorates would be feeling the pinch as well—farming families in those areas have had no income. Recently I spoke to a group of city people at a businessmen's function and I put it this way: It is the same as a person opening a business in the city, sitting inside the business and waiting for the first person to walk in. No-one walks through the door in the first week, no-one walks through the door to do business in the first month and no-one walks through the door to do business for six months. That starts to create problems for people. No doubt people in the city or in a regional centre who are trying to get on with their lives and provide for their families will start to get anxious.

For rural people who have that lack of facility, and the only thing they have tended to build is debt, it creates anxiety and stress. That is why the Government has not only responded physically and economically to support people through subsidies for transport to move fodder, stock and water, to which the Deputy Premier alluded. It is also why the Government is undertaking a robust and in-depth assessment of the mental and physical health needs of those people. As with any business that does not have people walking through its door for a long period, drought clouds a person's judgement and it is difficult to make good decisions about destocking and what they will do to prepare with questions such as whether they bite into more equity to feed stock down to decisions about whether they send their kids to school. Many of our farming families wanted to see a sign of hope from the Government, and we have given that.

The Government has entered into a partnership with the Rural Adversity Mental Health team, together with health professionals, which is assessing the physical and emotional needs of people in northern and western New South Wales. Physical health checks are being undertaken. The Rural Adversity Mental Health team is using many health professionals from the North Coast to undertake wellbeing assessments across western and northern New South Wales. The Government feels strongly about that issue and will continue to work hard on it. If we learned something from the drought in 2002 to 2007 it was that over an extended period suicide becomes a major issue, particularly in rural areas. [*Extension of time granted.*]

It is no accident that during drought, historically the suicide rate in rural areas is more than double or sometimes 2½ times what it would be in normal circumstances. We have responded to that. The response has been good. Our communities are doing a good job: They are resilient. They have learned from historical droughts that we need to look after each other. They have been prepared. No doubt the systems have been stretched. But on behalf of the Government I congratulate the people who are working through the drought and doing a good job. People are looking out for each other, and the health professionals and on-ground support will continue to grow if the drought does not break and if it extends beyond 50 per cent of the boundary that currently exists in the State.

There will be more to say about looking after people's wellbeing. That is particularly true for the Office of Local Government as we continue to work our way through the Small Towns Toolkit. We are helping people to have a more meaningful conversation so that everybody knows what signs to look for when people start to become overanxious and unwell but, most importantly, people know the referral pathways to better professional help.

Question time concluded at 3.16 p.m.

TEMPORARY SPEAKER OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

The SPEAKER: Pursuant to the provisions of Standing Order 20, I nominate Noreen Hay as a Temporary Speaker in place of Sonia Kathleen Hornery.

VARIATIONS OF RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ESTIMATES AND APPROPRIATIONS 2013-14

Mr Mike Baird tabled, pursuant to section 26 of the Public Finance and Audit Act 1983, variations of the receipts and payments estimates and appropriations for 2013-14 arising from the provision by the Commonwealth of specific purpose payments that do not provide whole amounts included in the State's receipts and payments estimates for the Department of Family and Community Services, dated 13 February 2014.

Mr Mike Baird tabled, pursuant to section 26 of the Public Finance and Audit Act 1983, variations of the receipts and payments estimates and appropriations for 2013-14 arising from the provision by the Commonwealth of specific purpose payments in excess of the amounts included in the State's receipts and payments estimates for the Department of Trade and Investment, Regional Infrastructure and Services, dated 25 February 2014.

OFFICE OF TRANSPORT SAFETY INVESTIGATIONS

Report

The Clerk announced, pursuant to section 46D of the Passenger Transport Act 1990, receipt of the report entitled, "Rail Safety Investigation Report, Derailment of Pacific National Coal Service NB942, Boggabri, 28 November 2012", received out of session and authorised to be printed on 20 February 2014.

LEGISLATION REVIEW COMMITTEE**Report**

Mr Stephen Bromhead, as Chair, tabled the report entitled, "Legislation Review Digest No. 50/55", dated 25 February 2014, together with minutes of the committee meeting regarding Legislation Review Digest No. 49/55.

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

PETITIONS

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

Mount Druitt Hospital Cardiac Unit

Petition opposing the closure of the Mount Druitt Hospital cardiac unit and calling on the Government to reverse its decision and to retain the unit, received from **Mr Richard Amery**.

Public School Fees

Petition requesting the abolition of public school fees for children of 457 visa holders, received from **Mr Adam Marshall**.

English as a Second Language Program

Petition requesting the maintenance of and funding for the English as a Second Language Program in New South Wales, received from **Mr Victor Dominello**.

Sydney Electorate Public High School

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

GyMEA College of TAFE

Petition opposing cuts to courses and increased fees for students at GyMEA College of TAFE, received from **Mr Barry Collier**.

Sutherland Shire Fire Stations

Petition opposing closures of fire stations in the Sutherland Shire, received from **Mr Barry Collier**.

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**.

Rooty Hill Railway Station Access

Petition requesting the installation of elevator access at Rooty Hill railway station, received from **Mr Richard Amery**.

Sutherland Shire to Kogarah Railway Station

Petition requesting the restoration of direct rail services from the Sutherland Shire to Kogarah railway station, received from **Mr Barry Collier**.

Como and Jannali Railway Stations

Petition requesting the restoration of train services from Como and Jannali railway stations, received from **Mr Barry Collier**.

Pet Shops

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

Pig-dog Hunting Ban

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

Same-sex Marriage

Petition supporting same-sex marriage, received from **Mr Alex Greenwich**.

Inner-city Social Housing

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

Container Deposit Levy

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

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

Falun Gong

Petition requesting the People's Republic of China stop persecution of Falun Gong and discourage organ transplant surgical training and organ transplant exchanges between New South Wales and the People's Republic of China, received from **Mrs Barbara Perry**.

Oxley Local Area Command

Petition requesting a drug unit and drug dog unit be allocated to the Oxley Local Area Command in Tamworth, received from **Mr Kevin Anderson**.

Lachlan Shire Amalgamation

Petition opposing the amalgamation of the Lachlan Shire with neighbouring shires, received from **Mr Adrian Piccoli**.

Thornton Hall

Petition requesting restoration of Thornton Hall, Penrith, and that it be made available as a community facility, received from **Mr Stuart Ayres**.

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

The Hon. Jillian Skinner—Palliative Care Services—lodged 29 October 2013 (Ms Robyn Parker).

The Hon. Jillian Skinner—Maitland Paramedic Services—lodged 12 November 2013 (Mr Clayton Barr).

The Hon. Jillian Skinner—Muswellbrook District Hospital—lodged 14 November 2013 (Mr George Souris).

The Hon. Jillian Skinner—Westpac Rescue Helicopter Service—lodged 21 November 2013 (Mr Kevin Anderson).

The Hon. Adrian Piccoli—Funding for TAFE Education—lodged 21 November 2013 (Ms Carmel Tebbutt).

The Hon. Michael Gallacher—New South Wales Fire Stations—lodged 23 October 2013 (Mr Clayton Barr).

The Hon. Brad Hazzard—Castle Hill RSL Mobile Telecommunications Tower—lodged 12 November 2013 (Mr Dominic Perrottet).

The Hon. Gladys Berejiklian—Newcastle and Hunter Region Rail Infrastructure—lodged 14 November 2013 (Ms Sonia Hornery).

The Hon. Gladys Berejiklian—Bus Route 425—lodged 20 November 2013 (Mr Ron Hoenig).

The Hon. Gladys Berejiklian—South East Light Rail—lodged 21 November 2013 (Mr Alex Greenwich).

The Hon. George Souris—Albury Regional Art Gallery—lodged 12 November 2013 (Mr Greg Aplin).

The Hon. Katrina Hodgkinson—Byrrill Creek Dam—lodged 19 November 2013 (Mr Thomas George).

The Hon. Andrew Constance—Workers Compensation—lodged 23 October 2013 (Ms Linda Burney).

The Hon. Pru Goward—Public Housing Rents—lodged 23 October 2013 (Mr Robert Furolo).

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) [3.21 p.m.]: I move:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended to permit on Thursday 6 March 2014 at 4.15 p.m., or at the conclusion of Government business if earlier, consideration of the petition on the funding and construction of a new hospital at Muswellbrook presented by the member for Upper Hunter, followed by the petition on reinstatement of the winching capacity for the Rescue Helicopter Service at Tamworth presented by the member for Tamworth.

In the usual course, discussion of a petition signed by 10,000 or more persons regarding a new hospital at Muswellbrook would take place this Thursday. However, for logistical reasons and to ensure that members will be available to participate in the debate, I propose through the suspension of standing orders to adjourn that debate until the following week when a discussion on a petition signed by 10,000 or more persons regarding the Tamworth helicopter service is due to be held. I propose that the House will deal with two petitions signed by 10,000 or more persons Thursday week instead of one discussion taking place this Thursday.

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

Motion agreed to.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Business Lapsed

General Business Notice of Motion (for Bills) No. 1, General Business Order of the Day (for Bills) No. 1, General Business Order of the Day (General Order) No. 1, and General Business Notices of Motions (General Notices) Nos 2601 to 2706 lapsed pursuant to Standing Order 105 (3).

CONSIDERATION OF MOTIONS TO BE ACCORDED PRIORITY

Alcohol- and Drug-related Violence

Mr BRYAN DOYLE (Campbelltown) [3.23 p.m.]: Madam Speaker, members and visitors to Parliament, today I seek your support.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will come to order. There will no interjections during the three-minute speeches establishing priority.

Mr BRYAN DOYLE: Opposition members may not care, Madam Speaker, but we do. This is a matter of grave significance to the people of New South Wales that will be reported in *Hansard*. The colour and flavour of this issue will be portrayed by journalists, explored by criminologists and recorded in history. The eyes of the world will be on this State to see the manner in which we address violence fuelled by intoxication. The issue is of such importance that for the first time in 30 years it caused Parliament to be recalled in January. This issue goes straight to the core of what it is to be Australian and to corruption of the value of mateship. It also goes straight to the issue of ensuring that our young people are able to go out and enjoy themselves without becoming victims of violence fuelled by intoxication.

It concerns me that intoxicated offenders commit violence while in the presence of their mates. Their mates have been encouraging, supporting and enabling them to destroy the life of another person as well as ruining their own life. We must return to a culture that values looking after each other and respecting one another. The legislation that has been passed will make our community a safer place. When the issue is boiled down, this Parliament exists for the peace, welfare and good government of the people of New South Wales. The Government's measures are designed to uphold that standard and address alcohol- and drug-fuelled violence. It is our role as members of Parliament to protect our youth. I ask Government members, Opposition members and members of the crossbenches to support my motion being accorded priority and this Government's strong action to address violence fuelled by intoxication.

State Government Performance

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON (Blacktown—Leader of the Opposition) [3.26 p.m.]: The motion of which I have given notice deserves priority because the Premier, Barry O'Farrell, stands condemned for three years of absolute hypocrisy. This is a Premier who stood before the people of New South Wales and who, in the lead-up to the 2011 election, promised to end scandal and that his Government "would be whiter than white". Three years later, the record is in and the results are seated at the back of this Chamber. Three Ministers have gone and three Central Coast members of Parliament are required to appear before the Independent Commission Against Corruption. A Liberal Party fundraiser who was well known to the Premier, Nick Di Girolamo, is being investigated for allegedly making corrupt payments to carry sway and favour with the Government of New South Wales.

For a number of reasons, last week's news that the Independent Commission Against Corruption will launch a major investigation into the Liberal Party's web of dealings on the Central Coast came as a tragedy for the people of New South Wales. First, they believed the Premier before the election when he promised a new era of accountability, which was the central plank in the platform of the Premier's contract with the people of New South Wales. The other sad part is that what we have seen continues to undermine people's confidence in government in this State. The Premier now stands condemned for turning a blind eye to corruption within his own political party. The Independent Commission Against Corruption raided the offices of the member for Wyong and the member for The Entrance in September last year and then raided the office of the member for Terrigal in December. Premier Barry O'Farrell stayed absolutely spineless whereas he could have kicked them out of the Liberal Party there and then. Last year the allegations were aired in the media, but the Premier chose to do nothing.

Allegations concerning the former Minister for Resources and Energy and Eightbyfive have been in the public domain for many months but the Premier has continued to do nothing. As the Premier has had plenty to say about the former Government one would have thought that he would have learnt a few lessons. This motion deserves priority because only those on this side of the House are interested in restoring public faith in the administration of government in New South Wales. While those on that side of the Chamber squirm before the Independent Commission Against Corruption only Labor has proposed substantive changes to deal with these problems. [*Time expired.*]

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

The House divided.

Ayes, 67

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

Noes, 23

Mr Barr	Mr Hoenig	Mr Rees
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	Mrs Perry	Mr Amery
Ms Hay	Mr Piper	Mr Lalich

Question resolved in the affirmative.

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

ALCOHOL- AND DRUG-RELATED VIOLENCE**Motion Accorded Priority**

Mr BRYAN DOYLE (Campbelltown) [3.41 p.m.]: I move:

That this House supports the Government's strong action to address alcohol- and drug-fuelled violence.

Anyone who has worked in law enforcement or in medicine knows the impact of intoxicated violence on our streets. That is why this Government is committed to addressing intoxicated attacks on our streets and to reducing the level of violence used in those attacks. We intend to send the strongest possible message that intoxicated violence causing serious injury on our streets will not be tolerated. We intend to give power to the police and the judiciary to protect our community. There is no single or simple cure-all for these problems which relate to our culture and the issue of mateship, but we are confident that the package of reforms introduced by this Government will make a significant difference in tackling alcohol- and drug-related crime and antisocial behaviour in the Sydney central business district and across New South Wales.

Measures already introduced include: an eight-year mandatory minimum sentence for those convicted under the new one-punch laws where the offender is intoxicated by drugs and/or alcohol; the introduction of

1.30 a.m. lockouts and 3.00 a.m. last drinks across an expanded central business district [CBD] precinct, including Kings Cross to Darling Harbour, The Rocks to Haymarket, and Darlinghurst, which commenced on 24 February; a new statewide 10.00 p.m. closing time for all bottle shops and liquor stores; increasing to 25 years the maximum sentence for the illegal supply and possession of steroids; and increasing on-the-spot fines to \$1,100 for continued intoxicated and disorderly behaviour, disobeying a police move-on direction. Importantly, measures also include community awareness and a media campaign to address the culture of binge drinking and associated drug- and alcohol-related violence. A big part of this package is addressing that culture where it is considered all right to go out and get oneself tanked, usually with one's mates, and then go and inflict violence on some poor person who is out enjoying himself or herself. The package will rely on the value of mateship, the fact that we look after our mates and respect those around us, and return to the golden rule: Do unto others as we would have them do unto us. I also note that free buses will run every 10 minutes from Kings Cross to the central business district to connect with existing NightRide services on Friday and Saturday nights.

These measures will be augmented with further intoxicated violence issues to be addressed. New legislation will be introduced to this House creating aggravated violence offences if committed by an adult when intoxicated in public by alcohol and/or a narcotic drug. It also requires the court to impose minimum sentences of imprisonment for offences relating to serious injuries, including reckless infliction of grievous bodily harm in company, reckless infliction of grievous bodily harm and reckless infliction of wounding, as well as the same style of offences in relation to police officers, in particular, assaulting a police officer causing grievous bodily harm or wounding during public disorder. Many of my policing colleagues and I have experienced that style of disorder and level of violence. It is important that we support and protect the police officers who are out there protecting us. The new provisions also will clearly identify what intoxication is. A person will be regarded as intoxicated if his or her speech, balance, coordination or behaviour is noticeably affected as the result of the consumption or taking of alcohol or of a narcotic drug or any other intoxicating substance. The provisions also outline the powers of police to take blood and urine samples. This motion is important to the House and I ask all members to support this Government's measures— [*Time expired.*]

Dr ANDREW McDONALD (Macquarie Fields) [3.46 p.m.]: Barely 15 months ago, on 13 December 2012, I was one of perhaps fewer than half a dozen of the 93 members of Parliament in this House who attended a session in the theatre on the effects of alcohol and violence. At that stage, a coalition of police and health workers had raised the issue of alcohol-related violence. Professor Owler said that the consequences of alcohol remained in the shadow of our society. Since then, alcohol-related violence has come to the forefront of the consciousness of this Parliament because of the tragic deaths of Thomas Kelly and Daniel Christie, and the frightening assaults on Fady Taiba, Simon Cramp and Michael McEwen. For men like Lucio Rodrigues, another who was murdered, the attention of Parliament to this issue came too late to save life or prevent permanent damage.

There is only one way to deal with alcohol-related violence and that is to prevent it. In the half a second following the punch, the fate of everybody involved is sealed forever. The only way to prevent alcohol-related violence is to take a public health approach. We cannot rely on calls to mateship as a public health measure to reduce alcohol-related violence; we have to attack price and availability, because they are the levers that control alcohol, its abuse and the violence that is consequent from it. In mid-November 2013 the Labor Party first introduced an evidence-based policy to deal with the problem. Two months later, following the tragic death of Daniel Christie, this Government was called to action. More than six weeks later we have not seen the final bill relating to sentences. This Government has had a very late conversion when it comes to alcohol-related violence and it should have adopted measures, including lockouts, before this. But it is not just about lockouts. The Labor Party also had a policy of improving transport, to establish a new liquor regulator, to have compliance checks and to introduce risk-based licensing.

All those measures are vital. This Government has introduced some of them, but it has also introduced mandatory sentences, which most experts do not believe are the deterrent that is needed to prevent alcohol-related violence. When we are dealing with alcohol-related violence it is all about prevention. In 2012 there were 25,000 assaults and 300 deaths from alcohol. The total cost to the State is between \$9 billion and \$10 billion—about half the cost of the total health budget. Seventy per cent of police time is used to deal with alcohol-related violence. At 2 o'clock on a Sunday morning, 30 per cent of people at the emergency department are there because of alcohol-related violence. There are 60,000 admissions to the health system each year because of alcohol-related violence, of which 14,500 are assaults. There were 133 assaults on paramedics in 2012 and 2,100 assaults on police. These are figures that call for bipartisan action.

There will be some opposition to the measures from the alcohol lobby, specifically with respect to lockouts. However, the Government has a duty to protect the health and safety of the public. There is clear

evidence as to the benefits of these measures and of bipartisanship support for lockouts as one of a range of measures to reduce alcohol-related violence. As I said at the press conference following the assault of Daniel Christie, unless lockouts are addressed, we will be doing a press conference outside St Vincent's every year forever. The Government's policy, with the support of the Opposition, has been a start but there is still a lot more to come.

Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Hawkesbury—Parliamentary Secretary) [3.51 p.m.]: It is a great pleasure to support the motion, which adds to and complements the Government's tough response to alcohol- and drug-fuelled violence on the streets of Sydney and around various venues over the past few months. It is no secret that the Government inherited a problem of alcohol-related violence in and around venues. It has responded to that problem and will continue until some form of normality is back on the streets, whether it is in my own backyard, or inside or outside venues on the streets of Sydney. We will maintain a response to addressing drug- and alcohol-fuelled violence on our streets.

Nobody would be surprised by the fact that I support mandatory minimum sentencing as I have previously made that point clear both publicly and in *Hansard*. I believe we need to send the strongest of messages to people who think that they can drink to excess, travel into our cities, walk the streets, throw the most cowardly of punches—a bare-knuckle punch—at an unsuspecting young person and take the life of that person, as happened in the case of Thomas Kelly and Daniel Christie. The Government's measures and the follow-up legislation to be introduced in the House in the next few days will further elaborate on our tough response, addressing such things as reckless grievous bodily harm in company, reckless wounding in company and assault of a police officer, just to name three other areas where the Government will take the tough decisions and impose mandatory minimum sentencing on anybody who seeks to inflict such harm on people.

It should be acknowledged that there is no silver bullet to solve this problem. We are all responsible; it cuts across politics. We have allowed a culture of excessive drinking to invade our communities. We have created a generation of young people who believe it is normal to drink to excess and then to go out onto the streets of Sydney. The majority of people who visit the various venues in Sydney do so responsibly but the small minority who do not need to be punished for their reckless and violent actions. We will do that through the imposition of legislation in this House.

Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron) [3.54 p.m.]: The Government has the temerity to bring this motion before the House. The Government's approach to this very serious, difficult cultural issue has been nothing but a shambles. Under its watch the situation has become much worse. The Opposition has sought to release policies to try to address some of the very difficult cultural issues but the measures released last year were ignored or dismissed. All we heard were comments by the Premier that one unfortunate individual happened to be killed in the early hours of the evening and that the lockouts would not work. A media campaign over the Christmas period was designed to try to bring it to the attention of the Government but what was the Government's response? The Premier came back from holidays with a raft of measures, including mandatory sentencing, as if he was somehow enlightened. But was it an informed response? When Parliament was recalled the bills were not even written; the Government could not even get the bills right. The Government has criticised the judiciary; it has blamed judges and everybody else. It has not taken any responsibility.

In November last year the Attorney General in an opinion piece indicated that mandatory sentencing was not the solution. The Government is placing the State's Attorney General in an almost intolerable position. Judges have been told to man up. The Attorney General told this House today that the Government sounded a warning back in November 2013 that if judges do not reflect community expectations the Government will act, using as an excuse the tragic killing of Thomas Kelly. That case is presently before the Court of Criminal Appeal; the appeal is pending on whether there was manifest inadequacy on the sentence imposed. The Government of the day should allow the justice system to resolve the question of manifest inadequacy. Only a couple of weeks ago the Chief Justice of the Federal Court by implication condemned the Government for its attacks upon judges as has by implication the Chief Justice of New South Wales, who is the Lieutenant-Governor. A raft of previous other measures has proven not to work. The Opposition indicated clearly that this significant issue must be addressed and a major solution found and offered. The Government should not blame everybody else for its own inaction. Indeed, its inaction has forced Government members into adopting a response about which most of them were never consulted and with which they do not agree.

Mr BRYAN DOYLE (Campbelltown) [3.57 p.m.], in reply: I thank the members representing the electorates of Macquarie Fields, Hawkesbury and Heffron for their contributions to debate on this important motion that the House supports the Government's strong action to address alcohol- and drug-fuelled violence.

I acknowledge also the presence in the Chamber of my good friend the Parliamentary Secretary for Police and Emergency Services, who is 100 per cent for the Tweed and who supports the motion. This package of measures is about sending the strongest possible message that change is coming; that society wants to feel safe. People want to be able to go out and enjoy themselves in safety.

As I stated at the outset, the eyes of the world are upon us and what we are doing in the New South Wales Parliament is being watched with interest not only around Australia but also around the world. It is being recorded for posterity in *Hansard*, which journalists will read and no doubt investigative stories will appear on *Four Corners* and in other media. Academic studies will be undertaken and history will record our success in making our communities safer. We will change the present culture that getting intoxicated, going out and inflicting serious harm and death on other people somehow is acceptable. We are sending the strongest possible message that that sort of behaviour stops here. These mandatory minimum sentences will set the benchmark that those who harm their fellow citizens whilst under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol and inflict senseless violence will face serious consequences. We in this Parliament will ensure the peace, welfare and good order of the people of New South Wales. This historic issue resulted in the recalling of Parliament. It has the support of my colleagues in policing and I commend it to the House.

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

Motion agreed to.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! It being 4.00 p.m., the House will now consider Government business.

REAL PROPERTY AMENDMENT (ELECTRONIC CONVEYANCING) BILL 2013

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 14 November 2013.

Mr MICHAEL DALEY (Maroubra) [4.00 p.m.]: I lead for the Opposition in the debate on the Real Property Amendment (Electronic Conveyancing) Bill 2013 and state that we provide the same bipartisan support for this bill regarding these important reforms as that provided for its predecessor, the Electronic Conveyancing (Adoption of National Law) Bill 2012. The only comment I make at the outset is that these important reforms seem to be proceeding at a snail's pace. From memory, the Electronic Conveyancing (Adoption of National Law) Bill 2012 was introduced into this House in November 2012 and now in February 2014 we are debating for the first time the first practical legislative step in implementing that bill. These important reforms have been discussed at length; the hard work was done by Labor when we were in government. The O'Farrell Government should just get on with it. National electronic conveyancing is a business solution for preparing and lodging documents with the various State land registries holding jurisdiction over the recording of electronic transfers and settlement of real property transactions.

As I said in this place in November 2012, the decision to introduce a national system for electronic conveyancing was mandated by the Council of Australian Governments in 2008 as part of the National Partnership Agreement to Deliver a Seamless National Economy. The savings associated with national electronic conveyancing have been estimated at nearly \$600 million over the next 20 years or more, according to the Australian Registrars' National Electronic Conveyancing Council. Under those national agreements, New South Wales agreed to host the Electronic Conveyancing National Law to promote efficiency throughout Australia in property conveyancing and to provide a common legal framework for all stakeholders in the preparation, lodgement and processing of conveyancing of real property transactions under the Torrens title system in electronic form, in much the same way as tax returns, customs entries and the like are now lodged electronically.

The Real Property Amendment (Electronic Conveyancing) Bill 2013 represents the next and first step in implementing the national law. It seeks to make necessary amendments to facilitate the implementation of electronic conveyancing in New South Wales. This State has been at the forefront of developing national electronic conveyancing. In 2010 New South Wales collaborated with Victoria and Queensland to form National E-Conveyancing Development Limited to build the online platform to deliver a national electronic conveyancing solution to the Australian property industry. That led to the development of Property Exchange Australia [PEXA]. Property Exchange Australia will provide time and cost efficiencies to conveyancing and

associated industries by reducing time spent preparing instruments for lodgement, removing the need to attend settlement in person, and employing technology to greatly reduce the incidence of errors and failures in land transactions.

Property Exchange Australia provides the ability to perform online lodgements and property settlements in a simple single transaction, including new mortgages, mortgage discharges, transfers of ownership, settlements, caveats and notices. Currently, Property Exchange Australia operates in Victoria and New South Wales processing mortgage transactions only for the Commonwealth Bank, the National Australia Bank and the ANZ Bank, with Westpac Bank set to join shortly. Additional States and financial institutions are said to be scheduled to be added to the system in upcoming months. In the second half of 2014, Property Exchange Australia will begin processing transfers of land and caveats as well as mortgages. In time, land titles offices and registries, other banks and financial institutions, including credit unions, solicitors and conveyancers, State revenue offices and peak industry bodies, such as the Australian Institute of Conveyancers and the Law Council of Australia, will use Property Exchange Australia.

This bill amends the Real Property Act 1900 in three ways. First, the bill provides for the optional issue of paper certificates of title by allowing the Registrar-General to determine whether to issue a paper certificate in particular cases. Currently, the Registrar-General issues a paper certificate of title for all privately owned land in New South Wales. Second, the bill allows the Registrar-General in circumstances where a certificate of title is not issued or has been cancelled to accept an electronic consent to the registration of transactions where currently a paper certificate of title is required before the registration can proceed. The option to not have a certificate of title issued will be limited initially to banks that have access to Property Exchange Australia and can lodge an electronic consent instead of physically lodging a paper certificate of title. In time it is envisaged that most transactions will occur through Property Exchange Australia.

Third, the bill provides for rules that specify that, unless otherwise stated, documents lodged electronically through Property Exchange Australia are to be processed in the same way and according to the same legal considerations as conventional paper transactions, and that the Real Property Act and powers of the Registrar-General apply equally to paper and electronic conveyancing documents. This makes it clear that paper and electronic transactions will be on equal footing and have priority according to their lodgement date and registration without consideration for the means by which they were lodged. The bill makes minor and unrelated amendments also to the Real Property Act with respect to the giving of notices following the lodgement of caveats.

Finally, as a former legal practitioner who saw, witnessed and took part in the archaic practice of having to pick up bundles of documents and walk down to a settlement house to swap cheques and hard copies of contracts, I can say that this is an exciting move. Although it will be welcomed by solicitors, I dare say it will be welcomed more by paralegals and legal clerks who no longer will have to undertake the literally hard slog to settlement houses to effect those transactions. This legislation brings New South Wales conveyancing into the twenty-first century. The Opposition supports this bill.

Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed—Parliamentary Secretary) [4.07 p.m.]: I contribute to the debate on a fairly common-sense bill introduced by the Minister for Finance and Services, the Hon. Andrew Constance. The object of the Real Property Amendment (Electronic Conveyancing) Bill 2013 is to facilitate the implementation of Electronic Conveyancing National Law in New South Wales, which is part of a national scheme to create a single national electronic system for settling real estate property transactions and for the electronic lodgement and processing of land transactions. To achieve that object, this bill amends the Property Act 1900. Before analysing the bill in detail, the fine electorate of Lismore, similar to the fine electorate of Tweed, welcomes this legislative change.

As you know, Mr Deputy-Speaker, our electorates deal with cross-border issues, with people conducting real estate transactions across the State border: Queenslanders purchase properties in New South Wales and vice versa. One of the major issues has been the red tape, bureaucracy and extra cost associated with transactions across State borders. Many people say about a border with neighbouring towns, "It is just across the road", but I often liken it to the Great Wall of China. It is easier to do business in the European Union than across our State borders. I will support any bill that simplifies the process.

The purpose of the bill before the House is to amend provisions of the Real Property Act 1900 and certain certificates of title to bring provisions in line with the Electronic Conveyancing National Law. The bill will enact two fundamental changes to the Real Property Act 1900: First, it gives the Registrar-General the discretion

to determine not to issue a certificate of title following the registration of a real property transaction or to cancel a certificate of title upon request by the owner. Second, it gives the Registrar-General the power to accept electronic consent to the registration of a real property transaction in lieu of production of the certificate title in circumstances where a certificate has not been issued.

In the short term only mortgagees who are subscribers to the electronic lodgement network will have the option of requesting the Registrar-General not to issue a certificate of title and lodging an electronic consent. However, in the long term, once proper alternative safeguards are implemented, the aim is to phase out all certificates of title for all land. That is the key to this small piece of proposed legislation, which fits into the greater fabric of electronic transfers. Mr Deputy-Speaker and I were brought up in an era of passbooks. Banking could be done Monday to Friday during the hours 9.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m. If you did not get to the bank on Friday you had a lean weekend. Society is now dependent on electronic banking and transfers and there is a level of frustration and an extra cost to business for that convenience.

On occasion government regulation drags slightly behind technological progress. This bill is a small cog in the machine to implement the Government's strong commitment to reduce red tape, encourage investment and declare New South Wales open for business. The more government can do to streamline processes and reduce cost the better. As previous speakers to the debate have stated, paralegals no longer will have to toddle off down the road with literally trolley loads of documents. As with many bills presented to the House by this Government, this is a common-sense bill and I commend the Minister and his department for the hard work they have done in support of the national framework in this regard. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson) [4.13 p.m.]: I support the Real Property Amendment (Electronic Conveyancing) Bill 2013. Australia is leading the world in the introduction of e-conveyancing for the electronic lodgement and processing of land transactions. The rest of the world will watch with interest when e-conveyancing is finally implemented in Australia this year. The introduction of the Electronic Conveyancing National Law (NSW) and the subsequent amendments in the Real Property Amendment (Electronic Conveyancing) Bill 2013 make the implementation of e-conveyancing possible. The bill will enable the Registrar of Titles in different jurisdictions to establish procedures for the electronic signing and lodgement of title documentation and allow solicitors and other practitioners to digitally sign documents on their clients' behalf. No longer will there be total reliance on a system of paper conveyancing and certificates of title. Other details of the bill have been outlined by previous speakers.

Mr Geoff Provost: Eloquent speakers.

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA: I acknowledge that interjection. These proposed legislative changes alone will not be enough for e-conveyancing to gain traction. E-conveyancing must be implemented and supported by conveyancing practitioners or it will not be used. Clients need to embrace the legislative and technological changes and have faith in the security and reliability of e-conveyancing to process their transactions. Some challenges remain: e-conveyancing needs to be easier and cheaper and as safe as or safer than a paper lodgement of a certificate of title, otherwise it risks not being promoted by practitioners to their clients. Ultimately, clients will decide whether they are comfortable with a digital version of a land title and confident of the internet processes involved with land transfer and payments, including digital signatures and remote area identification verification.

The bill before the House helps to open the door and to demonstrate to the private sector that the rules governing e-conveyancing improve upon the current paper-based system regarding cost, security and process. The Real Property Amendment (Electronic Conveyancing) Bill 2013 will facilitate the implementation of the Electronic Conveyancing National Law (NSW) by introducing some vital changes to the way titles may be changed. As members of Parliament we must ensure this system is safe. Conveyancing has always carried with it elements of risk, especially with regard to identification and consent. Internet processes and digital signatures will not appeal to everyone, certainly not immediately, and particularly not to older people who may remain suspicious of new technology. The Government must send a strong message that security measures are in place to prevent fraud occurring in relation to signing rights, identity fraud, elder abuse claims, payments placed in the wrong bank account and remote clients not being properly identified. Having said that, the introduction of e-conveyancing should deliver benefits to practitioners and their clients in the form of more streamlined banking processes, faster access to funds following settlement, less likelihood of important electronic documents being lost in transit, time saved in preparing documents and less uncertainty about the readiness for settlement.

As has been stated, New South Wales is the second State to introduce e-conveyancing, with Victoria commencing e-conveyancing from July last year. Of itself, the difference in cost for a client in Victoria is

unlikely to persuade or encourage clients to use e-conveyancing. Based on information available on the internet, there is a saving of roughly \$23 on any transaction that is electronically lodged as compared to paper lodgement. Perhaps New South Wales can provide a stronger financial incentive, in addition to the process improvements, to encourage the switch from paper to electronic lodgement. Another issue becoming apparent is the perceived increased risk carried by lawyers and conveyancers when using e-conveyancing and the potential for this to increase costs to clients. Solicitors and conveyancers are somewhat risk averse and will defend the interest of their clients.

Mr Barry Collier: That is an understatement.

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA: I note the comment of the member for Miranda, a former legal practitioner.

Mr Barry Collier: I am still a legal practitioner.

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA: And still a legal practitioner. My own experience leads me to believe once a legal practitioner always a legal practitioner. Any perceived additional risks of e-conveyancing need to be addressed to avoid the potential impact on professional indemnity insurance costs and terms. This bill is a step in the right direction. Although there are residual challenges, as there always will be in the law and conveyancing, this bill provides an alternative which is welcome and which has real benefits to the community. Electronic conveyancing is not being forced on the people of the New South Wales. They will need to recognise its simpler processes and financial and time-saving benefits. If they are convinced of its benefits, they will use it. Property purchasers in New South Wales will determine the extent to which e-conveyancing is embraced and over what time frame. However, we can encourage them by making it cheaper and more secure than the present paper certificate system. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Parliamentary Secretary) [4.20 p.m.]: I support the Real Property Amendment (Electronic Conveyancing) Bill 2013. The bill will amend the Real Property Act 1900 to facilitate the implementation of the Electronic Conveyancing National Law (NSW), which is part of a national scheme to create a single national electronic system for settling real property transactions and for the electronic lodgement and processing of land transactions. National electronic conveyancing is an important reform that will revolutionise conveyancing. It brings the opportunity for efficiency improvements and cost savings in conveyancing. This State has taken a leading role in developing electronic conveyancing. It commenced transacting electronically in October last year and received and registered electronic mortgages and discharges of mortgages from the four major banks. The computer platform for electronic conveyancing is known as Property Exchange Australia, or PEXA. It now operates successfully in New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland. Western Australia will soon come on board.

In September this year it is planned that electronic conveyancing will expand in New South Wales. It will include the capability to conduct transfers of land with the related financial settlement of the transaction also occurring electronically. The expansion also will be extended to caveats. Electronic conveyancing removes many manual processes that are involved in conveyancing, particularly preparing documents, conducting settlement meetings, exchanging funds and the subsequent lodgement of documents with the Registrar-General for registration. The bill makes minor amendments to the Real Property Act which will facilitate the planned expansion of electronic conveyancing to include transfers and caveats. The most important provisions in the bill will allow the Registrar-General to make the issuing of a certificate of title optional. At the moment, a paper certificate of title is physically exchanged and then produced to the Registrar-General as part of the evidence that the transaction is authorised. Where a transaction is processed electronically and the representatives of the parties do not meet face to face or physically attend the land title registry to lodge the documents, there is no efficient means to pass the paper certificate of title between the parties to the transaction and ultimately to register the document with the Registrar-General. Paper conveyancing will continue for some time to accommodate paper and electronic conveyancing, and this is provided for in this bill.

The bill empowers the Registrar-General to determine circumstances where a paper certificate of title will be issued. This will give some flexibility to the management of certificates of title as the transition to electronic conveyancing continues. The first users of the electronic conveyancing platform are mortgagees. It is proposed that mortgagees, who traditionally hold the paper certificate of title until the mortgage is repaid, will be able to elect not to have a paper certificate of title issued for the mortgaged land. As a protection against fraud and to maintain the rights of a mortgagee to consent to subsequent transactions with the land, a mortgagee will be able to consent electronically to both electronic and paper transactions concerning the mortgaged land.

That electronic consent will replace the production of the paper certificate of title to the Registrar-General as part of the evidence that any transaction is authorised. For the moment, a paper certificate of title will be issued to the owners when the mortgage is paid out.

The bill also makes some other minor amendments to make it clear that, unless otherwise provided, electronic documents lodged through the new system will be processed in the same way and according to the same legal considerations as conventional paper transactions and that the powers of the Registrar-General will apply equally to paper and electronic conveyancing documents. The bill is part of the transition from paper-based to electronic conveyancing processes. The transition offers significant productivity and efficiency gains in conveyancing. I am pleased to commend the bill to the House.

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Menai) [4.24 p.m.]: I support the Real Property Amendment (Electronic Conveyancing Bill) 2013. The bill introduces a number of amendments aimed at facilitating electronic conveyancing of property in New South Wales in line with the national scheme that is being implemented. As with any shift to from a paper-based system to an electronic system, there are challenges. Traditionally when working with official paperwork, such as property documents, the need for hard copy has been important to ensure that the documents are legally binding and contain signatures and other forms of consent. However, as we move towards a society that relies upon the flexibility and efficiency of electronic communication, we are seeing more often the conversion of a hard-copy system to an equally binding electronic version. As a former real estate agent, I know firsthand that the real estate sector relies heavily upon hard copies and physical documents in its day-to-day business. This bill is a step forward for this industry.

National E-Conveyancing Development Limited, which was established in 2010 in collaboration with the New South Wales, Victorian and Queensland governments, was tasked with building an online platform to deliver a national electronic conveyancing solution to the Australian property industry. National E-Conveyancing Development Limited has developed a platform called Property Exchange Australia, which is already operating successfully in Victoria and New South Wales processing mortgage transactions for the Commonwealth Bank, the National Australia Bank, and the ANZ Bank. These banks, which will soon be joined by Westpac and other major banks in Queensland, offer the opportunity to use electronic lodgement of mortgage transactions through the Property Exchange Australia platform.

In the coming months, additional States and institutions will be added to the system. As well as mortgages, at the end of 2014 Property Exchange Australia will add to the system the processing of transfers of lands and caveats. For the first time, financial institutions and property conveyancers will be able to remove the manual process and transact together online. Eventually these transactions will be paper free. Conveyancing has remained largely manual and paper based, despite levels of automation in industry systems and land registries across Australia. The physical exchange of paper documents at settlement is currently required to complete the transfer of property, as is the physical lodgement of signed and witnessed paper documents to effect changes in the title register.

Currently it is not possible for "straight through" processing between conveyancing industry participants and land registries where conveyancing documents are lodged electronically. Despite the benefits of minimising the manual handling of conveyancing documents, up until now it has been unable to be realised because of the inability to prepare and lodge documents electronically. A common regulatory framework is required to enable documents in an electronic form to be lodged under the Torrens land title legislation in each State and Territory. This change will promote economic efficiency in conveyancing throughout Australia and provide significant economic benefits to the industry, particularly to businesses operating nationally.

The bill also makes a number of amendments to the Real Property Act, resulting from the commencement of the electronic conveyancing, and will facilitate usage of the system. The most significant of these changes relates to certificates of title. This means that mortgagees may elect not to have a paper copy of a certificate of title issued over the land they own. The option not to have a certificate of title issued initially will be limited to banks that have access to the Property Exchange Australia platform and can lodge an electronic consent rather than physically lodging a paper certificate of title. This means that the Registrar-General will be able to accept electronic consent in circumstances where a certificate of title has not been issued or has been cancelled without the need to physically lodge a paper certificate. Additionally, paper and electronic versions will be treated equally, regardless of the means by which they were lodged.

The main difference when lodging a document electronically rather than manually is the absence of a written signature or declaration. Therefore, special requirements have been introduced to meet the challenges of

lodging documents electronically to allow an alternative to a physical signature. The Registrar-General will now have the power to specify an alternative to a statutory declaration for a caveator to verify a caveat on electronic documents. The O'Farrell Government is pleased to support and to facilitate the continued implementation of this important reform. These types of advances are critical to improving the future of customer service and interactions between customers and the Government. The world is changing quickly and so is the technology we use in our private lives and in the working world. With that in mind, the Government must ensure that legislation and the way we enforce it keep abreast of those changes. Without constant review and updating legislation may lose its relevancy and make the system more difficult and less efficient.

Most people these days have access to a smartphone or a tablet that they use for the majority of their communications and interactions with banks and other institutions. Phones and tablets are used to pay bills, to contact people, to send images, emails and texts and to update social media accounts and the like. We have even seen a shift as we increasingly turn to the internet to make both large and small purchases. Alternatives to hardcopy verification have been introduced out of necessity to avoid fraud and abuse. Alternative verification methods have been introduced to ensure that the cardholder is the person making the payment authorisation and that the card is not being abused. This bill introduces similar checks to ensure that electronically lodged real estate documents are no less binding than the paper version.

It is important that the Government be seen to be keeping up with these innovations and that it can interact with customers and financial institutions in a way which is easy for all and which is also economical and efficient. It is critical that New South Wales be at the forefront of and driving these changes, and these amendments to the Real Property Act 1900 are one way to ensure that that happens. Being involved in these changes also ensures that New South Wales is working with the other States and Territories to build a national system that will make it easier for people to buy houses.

It is perhaps fitting that electronic conveyancing has been launched in New South Wales in this the 150th year of the Torrens system. Electronic conveyancing will bring about the most significant changes to the practice of conveyancing since the inception of the Torrens system and it will bring the process into line with the latest technology. I thank the Minister for Finance and Services for his work on this bill and for helping to bring New South Wales into line with other States in the provision of electronic lodging of conveyancing documents. I hope it results in many smooth transactions. I am pleased to commend this bill to the House.

Mr BARRY COLLIER (Miranda) [4.32 p.m.]: I am pleased to support the Real Property Amendment (Electronic Conveyancing) Bill 2013. The object of the bill is to facilitate the implementation of the Electronic Conveyancing National Law (NSW), which is part of a national scheme designed to create a single national electronic system for settling real property transactions and for the electronic lodgement and processing of land transactions. The bill amends the Real Property Act 1900, which was implemented as a result of the introduction of the Torrens land title system in South Australia, as the member for Menai said, some 150 years ago.

This legislation is a logical progression in the development of conveyancing, which began well before the introduction of the Torrens system. Prior to that one had to prove title by referring to a chain of documents that could go back to the original land grant. The Torrens title system replaced that with a single certificate of title detailing the owner, the mortgagee, the mortgagor and the entire sequence of events relating to a parcel of land. This bill effectively brings the Torrens title system into the digital and electronic age. That is important because all governments must move with the times and take advantage of changing circumstances facing the communities they purport to represent.

This bill provides for the optional issue of paper certificates of title, allowing the Registrar-General to determine whether to issue or cancel a certificate in a particular case. It replaces the current scheme under which the Registrar-General issues a certificate of title for all privately owned Torrens title land. The bill also makes minor amendments to ensure that the Act is technologically neutral, including by making it clear that, unless otherwise provided, electronic documents lodged through the new system will be processed in the same way and according to the same legal considerations as conventional paper transactions and that the powers of the Registrar-General apply equally to paper and electronic conveyancing documents. It is extremely important that there be no distinction between the old and new methods as far as the law is concerned.

Proposed new section 33AA provides for the optional issue of paper certificates of title by empowering the Registrar-General to determine when a certificate of title will be issued and to cancel a certificate of title held by persons on request. Significantly, when a title is cancelled the Registrar-General is required to make an entry in the register that no certificate has been issued and indicating the name of the person who has the control

of the right to deal in the land, being the person who would be entitled to be issued with a certificate on request. That is important because it indicates who has control of the land if there is no certificate of title and it is vital for those seeking loans or guarantees over a particular piece of property.

Amendments relating to the operation and notice of caveats are very important because we must know whether a caveat has been lodged against a title, particularly as it relates to borrowing. It is also important for judgment creditors and debtors to know whether a caveat or restrictive covenant has been lodged against a parcel of land. The bill is forward looking and implements a national electronic title system, and it is important that New South Wales is party to that scheme for real property transactions. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth) [4.38 p.m.]: I support the Real Property Amendment (Electronic Conveyancing) Bill 2013. I congratulate the Minister for Finance and Services, the Hon. Andrew Constance. He has done an exceptional job in introducing this legislation, which accords with the Government's mantra of applying common sense and breaking down the barriers that hamper business. The Tamworth electorate has about 25 real estate agents, not to mention stock and station agents and the like, who know how difficult it is to do business when they need to be out and about doorknocking and chasing clients rather than tied down by paperwork or waiting for paperwork to arrive before they can complete a transaction. When we purchase property we want the transaction to be completed in a timely manner. Buying a property is probably the biggest decision we make, apart from getting married and having kids.

Mr Geoff Provest: What about divorce?

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON: The member for Tweed mentioned divorce. I am not sure whether he is speaking from experience. Buying a property is the single biggest decision we make, and having made it we want the process to be finalised in a timely fashion rather than delayed by snail mail. Emails are now accepted as legal documents in court, so there is no reason not to embrace electronic conveyancing for real estate transactions. The long-term aim is to establish a fully automated electronic conveyancing system. Today I have spoken with real estate agents in Tamworth who welcome this timely introduction of electronic conveyancing.

Mr Geoff Provest: Very timely.

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON: I note the interjection of the Parliamentary Secretary and his congratulations of everyone involved in bringing this issue forward. It is indeed timely. This bill will result in time savings in conveyancing matters in particular. The bill is welcomed by the real estate industry and, as members well know, an email can now be used as a legal document.

To make the provisions of the Real Property Act 1900 more consistent with a fully automated electronic conveyancing system, the bill allows for the optional issue of certificates of title. It does this by making two fundamental changes. Firstly, it gives the Registrar-General discretion to determine not to issue a certificate of title following the registration of a real property transaction and to cancel a certificate of title on request by the holder of the certificate of title. Secondly, it gives the Registrar-General power to accept an electronic consent to the registration of a real property transaction in lieu of production of the certificate of title in circumstances where a certificate of title has not been issued. The electronic consent serves the same purpose as a paper certificate of title—namely, as important evidence in establishing that the party purporting to deal with the land is entitled to do so.

In the short term, as highlighted by the Minister for Finance and Services, only mortgagees who are subscribers to an electronic lodgement network will have the option of requesting that the Registrar-General not issue a certificate of title and lodge an electronic consent. However, in the longer term the aim is to phase out certificates of title for all land, once proper alternative safeguards such as those applicable in electronic conveyancing are more widely implemented. Real estate agents not only in Tamworth but also across New South Wales welcome this timely amendment. It will allow businesses to do what they do best—namely, conduct their businesses.

We often hear about red tape, about business having another hurdle to jump and brick walls being put up to slow down business and to make life difficult, but the O'Farrell Government is a very good friend to small business. Indeed, the Minister for Small Business, the Hon. Katrina Hodgkinson, welcomes the bill because it facilitates the implementation of appropriate methods to allow business operators to do what they do best. As I said, the real estate market is getting tighter and this bill will assist the industry. I congratulate the Minister for

Finance and Services, the Hon. Andrew Constance, on introducing this bill. The O'Farrell Government is breaking down the barriers. We are getting on with the job of allowing businesses to do what they do best. This is a common-sense approach. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands) [4.43 p.m.]: It is with much pleasure that I speak in support of the Real Property Amendment (Electronic Conveyancing) Bill 2013. I do not intend to speak for long because other members have canvassed the objects of the bill in detail. This is a very small and simple piece of legislation, but its benefits will be far reaching for businesses across New South Wales. The object of the bill is to facilitate the implementation of the Electronic Conveyancing National Law (NSW)—welcome news for those in conveyancing, the legal profession and real estate agents across the State—as part of a national scheme to create a single national system for settling real property transactions and for the electronic lodgement and processing of land transactions throughout the country.

As I said, the bill will have far-reaching benefits across the State but particularly in those areas with increasing numbers of property transactions. In the Northern Tablelands electorate, for example, there has been an enormous amount of growth in the Armidale community, the North Hill residential estate and in the communities of Inverell, Glen Innes, Guyra, Tenterfield—which the Deputy-Speaker has an affinity with—Uralla and Walcha. We have seen business and industry create a huge spurt of property development, for example, from the expansion of the tomato farm at Guyra. New people have moved into towns and the consequent purchase of properties in both urban and rural settings has resulted in more work for local conveyancers and the legal profession. This bill, in helping to introduce a national electronic system for the settling of real property, will ease the burden on those professions. Indeed, that is consistent with the mantra of the O'Farrell Government and the contract that it struck with the people of New South Wales when it came to office—namely, the O'Farrell Government would do whatever it could to make it easier for business, and that it would get out of the way and allow businesses to employ people and grow, particularly in regional areas where there are far-reaching benefits for local economies.

The bill makes three principal amendments to the Real Property Act 1900. It provides for the optional use of paper certificates of title, allowing the Registrar-General to determine whether to issue or cancel a certificate in a particular case—replacing the current scheme under which the Registrar-General issues a certificate of title for all privately owned Torrens title land. It allows the Registrar-General, in circumstances where a certificate of title is not issued or has been cancelled, to accept an electronic consent to the registration of a matter where currently a certificate of title is required to be produced to the Registrar-General. In the short term, only mortgagees who are subscribers to an electronic lodgement network will have the option of requesting that the Registrar-General not issue a certificate of title and lodge an electronic consent. However, in the longer term the aim is to phase out certificates of title for all land, once proper alternative safeguards such as those applicable in electronic conveyancing are more widely implemented. The bill is not about requiring people to automatically switch across to electronic conveyancing; it gives that option. The bill also allows the Registrar-General to give equal weight to the paper documentation or the electronic form.

The bill also makes other minor amendments to the Real Property Act to make the operation of the Act technology-neutral, including by making it clear that, unless otherwise provided, electronic documents lodged through the new system will be processed in the same way and according to the same legal considerations as paper transactions and that the powers of the Registrar-General will apply equally to paper and electronic documents. The amendments contained in the bill will create a number of efficiencies, including the removal of the time and financial costs associated with the storage, production and issue of certificates of title. As other members have said, those in the legal profession will be happy not to run around physically issuing papers; they will do the work electronically. The bill is a perfect fit for what the O'Farrell Government is all about—namely, making it easier for business. This simple bill will have huge impacts. It is warmly welcomed by real estate agents, conveyancers, the legal profession, and the mums and dads who want to transact property. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT (Baulkham Hills) [4.49 p.m.]: I support the Real Property Amendment (Electronic Conveyancing) Bill 2013, recognising the benefits of transitioning from a paper-based system to an electronic system, as long as the appropriate safeguards are in place. The bill amends provisions of the Real Property Act 1900 which concern certificates of title and brings them in line with electronic conveyancing. This bill will begin the process of establishing an electronic system for setting, lodging and registering real property transactions in New South Wales, which will form part of a national electronic conveyancing scheme.

Currently, paper conveyancing is used. The Registrar-General issues paper certificates for all privately owned land. The certificate is held by the owners or, if the land is mortgaged, by the mortgagees, and must be

produced to the Registrar-General for real property transactions, such as transfers, to be registered. This is an outdated and time-consuming method of administering property transactions. After each real property transaction the Registrar-General issues a new certificate of title to the new owner as evidence that the transaction has occurred. The paper certificate serves many purposes, but it mainly safeguards against multiple sales of the same parcel of land and confirms that the person purporting to deal with the land is the true owner or mortgagee of the land.

The bill will enable a fully automated electronic conveyancing system to occur under the Real Property Act by allowing for the optional issue of certificates of title. The bill makes two changes. The Registrar-General will have the discretion to not issue a certificate following registration. Further, if the holder requests the cancellation of a certificate of title the Registrar-General is empowered to cancel the certificate. In circumstances where a certificate of title has not been issued, the Registrar-General is empowered to accept electronic consent to the registration of a real property transaction instead of the titleholder having to produce the certificate of title. The outcome of these changes is that electronic consent will serve the same purpose as a paper certificate of title; therefore, electronic consent will be important evidence that the party attempting to undertake a real property transaction is entitled to do so.

Initially, only mortgagees who subscribe to an electronic lodgement network will have the option of utilising electronic consent instead of paper certificates of title. But the long-term aim is to phase out certificates of title for all land once Government and industry implement proper safeguards. I envisage that the bill will lead to the removal of significant costs to individuals, businesses and government, which I consider all members should be extremely passionate about. This will be evident when the time involved in registering a real property transaction is reduced by removing the requirement of a paper certificate of title. Further, the bill will remove the financial costs associated with the storage, production and issue of certificates of title. That is particularly important to the people of Baulkham Hills, where 80.7 per cent of occupied homes are either owned outright or mortgaged by the resident.

Therefore, I am pleased that the Real Property Amendment (Electronic Conveyancing) Bill 2013 will result in significant savings. It is sensible that New South Wales transitions to electronic systems where possible once safeguards are in place. This bill begins the process of a fully automated system of electronic conveyancing being put in place, leading to significant cost savings. I am pleased to commend the bill to the House.

Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS (Clarence) [4.53 p.m.]: I make a contribution to the Real Property Amendment (Electronic Conveyancing) Bill 2013. I commend the Minister for Finance and Services for bringing the bill to the House. The Torrens title system is one of the best land titling systems around the world. As a surveyor carrying out property surveys I was constantly dealing with the Torrens title system. I found it easy to understand and extremely efficient in describing the property and any encumbrances on that property and it had the confidence of landholders as well as the legal and conveyancing professions who were dealing with the property transactions.

The bill will make a number of amendments aimed at facilitating the implementation of electronic conveyancing in New South Wales. This will strengthen our conveyancing system, which is already the envy of the world. Our homes are generally the most important financial investment we make, so it is most important that we protect that investment and maintain the integrity of the current system as well as speed up property transactions to minimise costs and to enable business to operate without unnecessary red tape.

New South Wales has been at the forefront of the development of national electronic conveyancing and in 2010 we collaborated with Victoria and Queensland to form National E-Conveyancing Development Limited to build the online platform to deliver a national electronic conveyancing solution to the Australian property industry. That platform is called Property Exchange Australia [PEXA]. Property Exchange Australia is now operating successfully in Victoria and New South Wales, processing mortgage transactions for the Commonwealth Bank, National Australia Bank and ANZ Bank. This will soon extend to Westpac. Queensland will join New South Wales and Victoria in offering electronic lodgement of mortgage transactions through PEXA. Over time the system will extend to the other States and financial institutions will be added to the system in the coming months.

In the second half of this year PEXA will begin processing transfers of land and caveats as well as mortgages. Similar to what the Australian Stock Exchange did for the exchange of shares, PEXA will remove the manual processes and paperwork associated with the exchange of property by allowing land registries,

financial institutions and conveyancing practitioners to transact together online for the very first time. This will be the most significant change to conveyancing practice since the inception of the Torrens system. This bill makes a number of minor amendments to the Real Property Act that are consequential on the commencement of electronic conveyancing and will facilitate increased usage of the system. The most important change relates to certificates of title.

Certificates of title have played an integral role in conveyancing over the past 150 years with possession providing a level of assurance that a transaction is authorised, as well as being the key to obtaining registration of the documents giving effect to that transaction. A paper certificate of title that must be physically exchanged and then lodged at Land and Property Information is not suited to electronic conveyancing. Accordingly, new ways of protecting rights and providing assurance to the parties in electronic transactions have had to be developed. As electronic conveyancing becomes the prevalent means of conducting conveyancing transactions, it may be that certificates of title will no longer be issued. We do, however, anticipate that conveyancing transactions will be conducted both electronically and on paper for some time while the electronic system becomes more popular.

The most significant amendments contained in this bill provide for the optional issue of paper certificates of title by allowing the Registrar-General to determine whether to issue a paper certificate in certain circumstances. This replaces the current arrangement under which the Registrar-General issues a certificate of title for all privately owned land in New South Wales. This means that mortgagees who have access to the PEXA system may elect not to have a certificate of title issued for land over which they hold a mortgage. The bill also allows the Registrar-General, in circumstances where a certificate of title is not issued or has been cancelled, to accept an electronic consent to the registration of transactions where currently a paper certificate of title is required before the registration can proceed. The option not to have a certificate of title issued is limited initially to banks that have access to PEXA and which can lodge an electronic consent instead of physically lodging a paper certificate of title.

The bill makes a number of other minor amendments to the Real Property Act. Unless otherwise specified, electronic documents that are lodged through PEXA are to be processed in the same way and according to the same legal considerations as conventional paper transactions. It is important to note that the Real Property Act applies equally to paper and electronic conveyancing documents. Paper and electronic transactions will have equal footing and will be prioritised according to their lodgement date and registrability irrespective of the means by which they were lodged. The bill makes it clear that specific provisions enacted for electronic instruments and contained in participation rules made under the Electronic Conveyancing National Law (NSW) apply instead of current provisions in the Act that are suitable only to paper transactions.

The bill also makes a number of minor amendments to the caveat provisions of the Act, including an amendment to allow the Registrar-General to specify an alternative to a statutory declaration for a caveator to verify a caveat. Because it is not possible for a person lodging a caveat to swear a statutory declaration on an electronic caveat, the bill allows the Registrar-General to approve an alternative means for a person lodging a caveat to verify that caveat, as is required under the Act. National electronic conveyancing is the most significant reform to the conveyancing industry in 150 years and offers the prospect of significant efficiency and productivity gains in the practice of conveyancing. This is about improving customer service and how customers interface with government. It is part of the reform package that the Coalition Government is introducing to make New South Wales number one again. The Coalition Government is doing what those opposite could and should have done during the 16 years they were in office—getting on with business and creating jobs. I am pleased to commend the bill to the House.

Mr ROB STOKES (Pittwater—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.01 p.m.]: I support the Real Property Amendment (Electronic Conveyancing) Bill 2013. It is a simple and short bill but nevertheless has significant implications in the security of land titles for lenders, buyers and property owners. In this and other Australian jurisdictions we tend to take the indefeasibility of title for granted. Australia has some of the few jurisdictions in the world in which lenders typically do not require things such as title insurance. For example, in many American states people pay hefty amounts to ensure certificates of title because of complexities in the titling regime. Due to the foresight of early administrators and lawmakers in South Australia we have a clear system of land titling, which has been assured in this State for more than 100 years under the Real Property Act 1900.

This bill is important to bring our conveyancing and land titling system into the twenty-first century. As we have heard in previous contributions, the bill allows for the optional issue of paper certificates of title but also allows for electronic transfers, caveats and certificates of title. Obviously, a bill with such significant

ramifications will create a period of transition but it promises to deliver a system that is more efficient and cost effective for lenders, solicitors and owners while providing the assurances of title that are so important to every home and property owner in this State. As a solicitor who has engaged in many conveyances in the past, I am well aware of the complexities of the regime. While clients might think conveyancing is easy—it is just a matter of crossing t's and dotting i's—when something goes wrong it has the capacity to go badly wrong.

This bill is a significant and great reform. It points to a future in which we will have the ability to empower land titling, land registration and the planning system to fully utilise the State's cadastre of land information and liberate the way we deal with land. This bill points to some of the opportunities that abound in areas such as e-planning, which is part of the planning reforms currently being considered in this place. With the advent of big data we will have access to a huge amount of information. Cataloguing, categorising and using that information effectively will open up great new opportunities for transparency and enable us to help owners, lenders, policymakers, planners and government authorities to better plan for the future of our communities. This bill is a great step forward in land titling. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr ANDREW CORNWELL (Charlestown) [5.05 p.m.]: I support the Real Property Amendment (Electronic Conveyancing) Bill 2013. The bill facilitates the implementation of the Electronic Conveyancing National Law (NSW), which is legislation that establishes an electronic system for settling, lodging and registering real property transactions in New South Wales and forms part of the national electronic conveyancing scheme. The primary purpose of the bill is to amend provisions of the Real Property Act 1900 that concern certificates of title to bring those provisions into line with electronic conveyancing. Under the current system of paper conveyancing the Registrar-General issues a paper certificate of title for all privately owned land. That certificate is held by the owners or, if the land is mortgaged, by the mortgagees and must be produced back to the Registrar-General in order for certain real property transactions such as transfers to be registered.

The paper certificate of title serves a number of purposes but two of its key purposes are to confirm that the person purporting to deal with the land is the true owner or mortgagee of the land and to safeguard against multiple sales of the same parcel of land. Once a real property transaction is registered the Registrar-General issues a new certificate of title to the new owner or new mortgagee of the land as evidence that the transaction has been registered. Possession of the certificate of title is a key piece of evidence in establishing the bona fides of a person proposing to enter into a transaction with the land. The requirement for private landowners and mortgagees to lodge and for the Registrar-General to issue a paper certificate of title is not consistent with the long-term aim of establishing a fully automated electronic conveyancing system.

To make the provisions of the Real Property Act 1900 more consistent with a fully automated electronic conveyancing system the bill allows for the optional issue of paper certificates of title. The bill does this by making two fundamental changes. First, it gives the Registrar-General discretion to determine not to issue a certificate of title following the registration of a real property transaction and to cancel a certificate of title on request by the holder of the certificate of title. Secondly, it gives the Registrar-General power to accept an electronic consent to the registration of a real property transaction in lieu of production of the certificate of title in circumstances where a certificate of title has not been issued. The electronic consent serves the same purpose as a paper certificate of title; namely, as important evidence in establishing that the party purporting to deal with the land is entitled to do so.

In the short term only mortgagees who are subscribers to an electronic lodgement network will have the option of requesting that the Registrar-General not issue a certificate of title and lodge an electronic consent. However, in the long term the aim is to phase out certificates of title for all land once proper alternative safeguards such as those applicable in electronic conveyancing are implemented more widely. The amendments contained in the bill will create a number of efficiencies, including the removal of the time and financial costs associated with the storage, production and issue of certificates of title. The bill also makes minor changes to the Real Property Act 1900 to make the operation of the Act technology neutral. For example, it confirms that the Registrar-General has the same powers with respect to real property transactions lodged through both the paper and the electronic medium. I am pleased to support this bill and its facilitation of the national system of electronic conveyancing. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr CRAIG BAUMANN (Port Stephens—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.09 p.m.], on behalf of Mr Andrew Constance, in reply: I thank the members representing the electorates of Maroubra, Tweed, Davidson, Cronulla, Menai, Miranda, Tamworth, Northern Tablelands, Baulkham Hills, Clarence, Pittwater and Charlestown for their contributions to debate on the Real Property Amendment (Electronic Conveyancing) Bill 2013. The bill has one clear purpose: to facilitate the growth and expansion of the national electronic conveying

system in New South Wales. Enactment of the Real Property Amendment (Electronic Conveyancing) Bill 2013 is an important step in preparing New South Wales to be the first State to implement the electronic preparation and processing of transfers of land, including the processing of the financial settlement of the transaction, through the new national electronic conveyancing system.

The introduction of transfers to the system, Property Exchange Australia, is scheduled in New South Wales in September this year. It will allow greater efficiencies and cost savings in the conveyancing industry and will be the most significant reform to conveyancing since the introduction of the Torrens system more than 150 years ago. The Real Property Amendment (Electronic Conveyancing) Bill 2013 is a worthwhile measure that should be supported by all. I thank members for their consideration of the bill, and I commend it to the House.

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

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Third Reading

Motion by Mr Craig Baumann, on behalf of Mr Andrew Constance, agreed to:

That this bill be now read a third time.

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

CRIMES AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT (ASSAULT AND INTOXICATION) BILL 2014

LIQUOR AMENDMENT BILL 2014

Take-note Debate

Debate resumed from 30 January 2014.

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) [5.12 p.m.]: I support the amendments in the Crimes and Other Legislation Amendment (Assault and Intoxication) Bill 2014 and the Liquor Amendment Bill 2014, which are cognate bills, and I welcome the opportunity to contribute to this important debate about the measures the Liberal-Nationals State Government has put forward to address drug- and alcohol-fuelled violence. The mindless and senseless acts of violence have evoked a strong response from the community. As a Government we have listened to the community's concerns and have proposed these amendments, demonstrating strong leadership and action on this issue. These amendments build on the previous initiatives of the current Government, which have seen a decline in alcohol violence in licensed premises. The amendments we debated recently go further to tackle drug- and alcohol-fuelled violence. These amendments are tough and the implications are far reaching for those who inflict harm on innocent people. It is incumbent on the Government to make the tough decisions, to show leadership and to send a clear message that this culture of drug- and alcohol-fuelled violence will not be tolerated.

These bills allow the Government to respond to significant alcohol-related issues and concerns about high levels of alcohol- and drug-related violence and antisocial behaviour in a particular precinct of the Sydney central business district, as well as setting an example across our community. People who go to enjoy a night out with friends at a licensed venue should be able to enjoy themselves free from the fear of being assaulted in an unprovoked, violent and cowardly attack. The disturbing culture of these unprovoked one-punch attacks is in direct opposition to the values we hold as a society. This is why I support the mandatory minimum sentence of eight years imprisonment for one-punch assaults where an assault by intentionally hitting a person causes death. With all the education and awareness in the community about the effects of prohibited drugs and alcohol consumption, it is reassuring that this bill will prevent self-induced intoxication being taken into account as a mitigating factor in determining the appropriate sentence for any offence. Members of the community who seek to inflict harm on innocent people need to understand that they will be held accountable for their actions. These amendments unequivocally send a clear message that drug- and alcohol-fuelled violence will not be tolerated.

The Liberal-Nationals State Government continues to support the police who are on the front line in dealing with these unprovoked and violent attacks on our city's streets. These bills will provide increased police powers, which include requiring a person to undertake a breath test or breath analysis, or to provide a blood or urine sample to test for alcohol and drugs. These measures are necessary in giving the police the support they need to do their job—and they do an outstanding job. Also, the penalties for various types of antisocial behaviour have been increased significantly. The fine for offensive conduct will be increased from \$200 to \$500, the fine for offensive language will be increased from \$150 to \$500, and the fine for continuation of intoxicated and disorderly behaviour will be increased from \$200 to \$1,100. No longer will the police and the community have to simply tolerate offensive conduct and antisocial behaviour. Addressing antisocial behaviour is an important step towards preventing further, more violent acts on our streets.

Another important amendment is including steroids in the list of prohibited drugs under the Drug Misuse and Trafficking Act. We have read reports of steroid use by offenders in many of these cowardly one-punch attacks in recent months. Offences and penalties for the illegal possession and supply of such substances will now apply to them. This includes up to 25 years imprisonment for supply, which brings New South Wales in line with Victoria. This excellent measure sends a clear message that steroid use will not be tolerated. Coupled with this will be a new Sydney CBD Entertainment Precinct. This will extend from Kings Cross to Darlinghurst in the east, to the eastern side of Darling Harbour in the west, and from The Rocks in the north to Haymarket in the south. The bill imposes a 1.30 a.m. lockout and 3.00 a.m. restrictions that cease liquor service for hotels, clubs, nightclubs, and karaoke bars within this precinct. Whilst small bars, restaurants and tourist accommodation establishments will be exempt, it is important to note that where a bar area exists in a tourist accommodation establishment and is directly accessible by the public street, that establishment will not be exempt.

The introduction of periodic annual risk-based liquor licensing fees, including a periodic fee and risk-based loadings, as well as enhancing the Responsible Service of Alcohol scheme, will only do more to make sure that licensed venues are looking after their patrons. The prohibition on liquor sales across the State from takeaway liquor stores after 10.00 p.m. is a good measure—it is supported by many people in my electorate. No doubt it will go some way towards addressing the drinking culture that has contributed to the violence we see today in Sydney's central business district. I am pleased to inform the House that I have responded personally to the concerns of my constituents who have contacted me about this issue. I am pleased to say that there is overwhelming support in the Oatley electorate for this legislation and my constituents respect the timely and decisive action that has been taken by the Premier of New South Wales.

Recently I spoke to many residents who live in Mortdale and Penshurst who have taken the time to share with me their concerns regarding the despicable acts of violence that these thugs inflict on others. Only yesterday I met with a local constituent who felt the judicial response in sentencing Thomas Kelly's killer was offensive. Her son is 19 and she worries about him when he goes out with his friends. I am proud to be a member of a government that responds to the community's concerns. It has taken the New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Government to make the hard decisions and take leadership on this issue that ultimately put the interests of the community first. Through these bills the O'Farrell Government is presenting the community with a comprehensive package to address the drug- and alcohol-fuelled violence that has horrified our society.

This legislation is designed to mend a culture that is sick, a culture that creates fear for those who simply want to relax and enjoy themselves on a night out. I hope that these measures will be a huge step forward and make people realise that they can no longer hide behind a defence of self-inflicted intoxication. Furthermore, I hope these measures send a clear message that drug- and alcohol-fuelled violence and antisocial behaviour have no place in our system. It is incumbent on all members of the community to play their part in ensuring that these cowardly acts are not tolerated or accepted. This suite of measures will go a long way in solving an issue that has gone on for too long. I commend the bills to the House.

Mr TIM OWEN (Newcastle) [5.19 p.m.]: I support the Crimes and Other Legislation Amendment (Assault and Intoxication) Bill 2014 and the Liquor Amendment Bill 2014, which are cognate bills. The topic of alcohol-related violence has long been an issue, particularly in the City of Newcastle, which is an area I am elected to represent in this Parliament. For years Newcastle received a great deal of attention, but not necessarily for all the right reasons. With a chequered history of alcohol-related violence in the city precinct, something needed to be done to protect not only innocent victims of drunken crime but in many cases intoxicated persons from themselves. In March 2008 a government scheme was introduced to restrict alcohol availability for a number of licensed premises in the central business district of Newcastle that included 1.00 a.m. lockdowns and the 3.00 a.m. closure of certain licensed premises.

The scheme has been ongoing since 2008 and was updated on a number of occasions—2010, 2011, 2012 and 2013. In 2013 the Newcastle Entertainment Precinct legislation was introduced voluntarily by the hoteliers and involved the scanning of identification in six of the major premises in Newcastle. A Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research [BOCSAR] paper evaluating the scheme was published in 2009. It concluded that there had been a significant decrease in the proportion of assaults occurring after 3.00 a.m. in the intervention site but not in comparison sites. Collectively, the data provided strong evidence that the restricted availability of alcohol reduced the incidence of assaults in Newcastle, particularly in the central business district. In the years since the Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research paper was released, data continues to support the initial findings. Newcastle is now a far safer place to frequent after dark, especially in the entertainment precinct.

I am proud to be a part of a government that has listened to the community's call for action. I am proud to be part of a government that is introducing a tough and comprehensive package to tackle drug- and alcohol-fuelled violence. It is worthwhile reiterating those measures. First, an eight-year mandatory minimum sentence will apply to those convicted under new one-punch laws when the offender is intoxicated by drugs and/or alcohol and new mandatory minimum sentences will apply to violent assaults when the offender is intoxicated by drugs and/or alcohol. Secondly, 1.30 a.m. lockouts and 3.00 a.m. calls for last drinks have been introduced across an expanded central business district precinct and a precinct-wide freeze on liquor licences for new pubs and clubs has been introduced. Thirdly, a new statewide 10.00 p.m. closing time for all bottle shops and liquor stores has been introduced.

The fourth measure is that the maximum sentence for the illegal supply and possession of steroids has been increased to 25 years, which means the sentence has been increased from two years, and on-the-spot fines have been increased to \$1,100 for continued intoxication, disorderly behaviour and disobeying a police move-on order, which is more than a fivefold increase. The fifth measure is that the culture of binge drinking and associated drug- and alcohol-related violence has been addressed by the introduction of community awareness and media campaigns—the key aim for what this Government is delivering with this series of laws. The sixth measure is that on Friday and Saturday nights free buses will run every 10 minutes from Kings Cross to the central business district to connect with existing NightRide services. [*Quorum called for.*]

[*The bells having been rung and a quorum having formed, business resumed.*]

The seventh measure is removal of voluntary intoxication by drugs or alcohol as a mitigating factor when courts determine sentences. May I have a bit of quiet in the Chamber, if members do not mind?

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): Order! The member for Newcastle will be heard in silence. Members who wish to conduct conversations will do so outside the Chamber.

Mr TIM OWEN: The eighth measure is increasing maximum penalties by two years when drugs and alcohol are aggravating factors for violent crimes, including assault causing grievous bodily harm, assault causing reckless bodily harm, assault against police, affray and sexual assault. The ninth measure is enabling the police to impose an immediate central business district precinct ban of up to 48 hours for troublemakers. The tenth measure is introducing a periodic risk-based licensing scheme, with higher fees imposed on venues and outlets that have later trading hours, poor compliance histories or are in high-risk locations. These are wonderful legislative changes that are needed in the city of Sydney. Previously in this Parliament I congratulated the Newcastle Local Area Command's licensing unit on receiving a prestigious national award for its groundbreaking approach to reducing the incidence of alcohol-related violence in Newcastle. The licensing unit continues to do an absolutely fantastic job. Last Saturday I rode with police on the night shift and saw firsthand the great work that our operational officers do in that location.

As I briefly mentioned earlier, the Newcastle Local Area Command introduced the project following a disturbing increase in alcohol-related violence such as assaults, malicious damage and street fighting in the Newcastle area. After extensive consultation at the time with the community and other agencies, police sought agreement from the relevant authorities to impose a number of strict conditions, such as reduced trading hours, security enhancements and restrictions on the type and quantity of alcohol served at 14 licensed premises around Newcastle. As the father of three sons aged in their early twenties, who frequent licensed venues with friends both in Sydney and Newcastle, I take great comfort in the introduction of these laws because they will go a long way towards reducing alcohol-related crime and violence and making our community safer. I am not alone in

this view. In recent months I have been contacted by a number of constituents who feel passionate about the need to curb alcohol-related violence. I would like to share just one example—from Ian Scott, who is a resident of The Junction in Newcastle. In an email he wrote to me:

Dear Tim,

No longer can we as a society ... shake our heads and say "that is terrible" when good young people are being either killed or severely injured in this way. It is just sickening as a parent to see other families go through this.

Over the Christmas [and] New Year period in many conversations this topic cropped up and everybody feels the same way. It has to stop.

The way I see it, it is up to our elected representatives to take action to curb this violence. There is no doubt it has become a cultural/society behaviour and we all need to play a part in changing it, however the Government has to set the scene to drive a change in community behaviours.

Tim it's time for someone to stand up, show some courage and make it happen.

Mr Assistant-Speaker, I am proud to say that the Premier of this State, Barry O'Farrell, with the support of all his Government colleagues, has stood up. We stand before you today, proud that this legislation—and the positive impact it will have—will make our community safer for everyone to enjoy in the future.

Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.30 p.m.]: I speak to the Crimes and Other Legislation Amendment (Assault and Intoxication) Bill 2014. This Government and the community have had enough of alcohol-fuelled violence across this State. We must take action in relation to this matter. This issue is not confined to one town, electorate or State but it is a national issue that must be addressed to bring about a change in culture. I commend the Premier and Ministers who have worked collectively to show strong leadership to develop this legislation after doing a lot of homework to tackle this problem. They have met with senior police to develop a strategy to minimise the damage. Police, paramedics and doctors have called for a cultural change to end Australia's culture of binge drinking.

The culture of binge drinking to such a degree that people lose control and common sense is simply unacceptable and we must fix this problem. The community, the Government and leaders must come together to send a clear message that it is unacceptable for people to drink themselves silly in their backyard, on a beach, at a barbeque or at a party and that individuals, families and friends must try to change that culture. We want a culture in which people are able to dine out and partake of alcohol, but not be in fear of any repercussions from people who drink to excess. I know that some people may enjoy a drink of alcohol at home or at a restaurant and we want that to continue, but that should be done in a responsible way. We want a reduction in violence across this State right now. The culture of people drinking to the extent of being drunk and then king-hitting other people must change. I commend the Premier and Ministers for bringing forward this legislation that will address this matter. To say that it is somebody else's problem is irresponsible. I am pleased that this is a collective issue that has been looked at from the outset.

The Government will shut bars at 3.00 a.m., introduce 1.30 a.m. lockouts, ban bottle shop sales after 10.00 p.m. and impose tougher sentences for assault convictions under a suite of changes aimed at making the streets of Sydney safer at night. There have been concerns that high levels of alcohol consumption outside licensed premises, especially pre-loading or drinking excessively at home before hitting the streets, have been connected to violent assaults. The Government is giving police greater powers to drug and alcohol test people on the street. A 25-year maximum sentence will now be imposed on offenders under one-punch laws, with a mandatory minimum of eight years. Penalties have been increased for possession of illegal use of steroids and police powers have been increased to place bans on individuals in nominated areas.

Community members across this State have done tremendous work in liquor accords. Stakeholders regularly work together in these accords on behalf of the community to improve safety in entertainment areas. They attend meetings to talk about ways they can reduce alcohol-related antisocial behaviours, offences and violence to stop problems from occurring. Liquor accords have representatives of licensees from local hotels and clubs, local council, Roads and Maritime Services and police. They run education programs and councils look at lighting, street design, transport and late-night trading. I commend the liquor accord in the Bathurst electorate, which has, for many years, done a remarkable job to address quite a number of those issues. I know Government members praise the work of liquor accords in each of their communities.

This legislation will change behaviours because history has seen a change in attitudes to smoking and drink-driving. This is just another step in the right direction by this Government to ensure that our communities

are much safer for people to go out and have a good time without fear of being set upon by others who act senselessly. The Premier and his Ministers showed real leadership in introducing this bill and its cognate bill in January. This Parliament is acting responsibly on behalf of communities across this State to ensure a whole-of-government approach to protecting our communities and ensuring their future safety. I commend the bills to the House.

Mr ROB STOKES (Pittwater—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.37 p.m.]: I contribute to the take-note debate on the Liquor Amendment Bill 2014 and the Crimes and Other Legislation Amendment (Assault and Intoxication) Bill 2014 that are being dealt with cognately under Standing Order 193. The bills provide a legislative framework for part of the package of measures announced by the Premier to deal with the scourge of violent crime committed by persons under the influence of alcohol or other drugs, or oftentimes a blend of alcohol and other drugs. Tragically, the excessive consumption of alcohol has often been celebrated in this country as a part of our national identity. But it does not make any sense.

We like to project ourselves as a bronzed, confident and welcoming nation, yet at the same time some seem proud to proclaim that we are a nation of underachieving beer drinkers. We have laws proscribing service of alcohol to children, yet some accept that getting drunk is somehow an important rite of passage for children into adulthood. We love our sport and idolise our sporting heroes, yet some accept a culture where professional sport and excessive alcohol consumption go hand in hand—when the reality is it would be difficult to imagine two more diametrically opposed activities. We have a national social paradox—two conflicting cultures—one praising health, vitality, vigour and volunteerism and one praising alcohol as the social lubricant that binds us together as a nation of drunks.

We must reflect on who we are, and who we aspire to be. The awful injuries and tragic deaths over the summer months due to a mix of intoxication and violence have forced a debate in Australia—at barbecues, pubs, around kitchen tables, in the media and in Parliament—about what values matter in Australia, and about balancing the freedom to drink to excess with the right to be free from fear and violence in our streets. It is an important debate, and I am pleased this Parliament is taking action to deal with this terrible drinking culture that has shaped our history from the Rum Corps to the 6 o'clock swill, to the giant drinking barns of today.

Legislation alone cannot solve cultural challenges. While the provisions of these bills will send powerful messages to our community and to the various arms of government, we need leaders in every part of our community to demonstrate support for cultural change. Business leaders should insist on restraint in corporate entertainment, and intervene in proscribing the extracurricular activities of employees that threaten to embarrass their businesses. We must change the culture of coming to work on a Monday boasting about drunken larrikinism as if it is a matter of personal pride—setting an example for others to emulate. The beverage industry needs to shape up. It is a disgrace that some businesses think it is okay to deliberately target the advertising of alcohol at children, even to the extent of it being advertised on school buses.

Leaders in the media must be consistent. It has been ironic to read the excellent and powerful condemnation of our drinking culture in our newspapers, only to see full page ads on the facing pages promoting Alcopops. Sporting codes must wean themselves off alcohol advertising. It is simply ridiculous that taking my 10-year-old son to the cricket exposes him to alcohol advertising that he cannot escape. Parents also should model appropriate behaviour. We should all exhibit restraint. I was appalled while visiting a recent preschool Christmas pageant when the three- and four-year-olds presented their Christmas carols and costumes in front of an audience of parents who seemed to think it was appropriate to drink beer, wine and mixed drinks while sitting on the children's play equipment within the grounds of the kindergarten, seemingly oblivious to the simply awful signal it was sending to their children.

We must realise that we can celebrate, we can relate and we can enjoy special times without alcohol, and that we can and should reduce and limit the amount we drink, not only for the example it sends but also for our own health and wellbeing. Over-indulgence is a consequence of wealth and easy credit. We drink too much because it is too easy and because we can worry about the consequences tomorrow. Cultural change is needed so that we can weigh up the consequences of excessive drinking before we start drinking. As a lawyer I am not generally a fan of mandatory sentencing—indeed I think it puts us on a slippery slope towards autocratic government and it can offend the fundamental principle of the separation of powers. Nevertheless, there are occasions when mandatory sentencing is appropriate. The clear example that springs to mind is the drink-driving regime that has been powerfully effective in sending a clear message that drinking and driving will not be tolerated. Mandatory sentencing in that regime has worked very effectively.

I also accept Ronald Dworkin's thesis that law has an important educative effect, and in the crisis in which we find ourselves it is critical to break the culture that accepts that drinking, brawling and showing your supposed strength by violently assaulting an innocent bystander is somehow okay. Unfortunately, the penalties imposed by courts have reinforced the idea that these things are just ordinary risks of a night out, and that the criminality involved is not really that bad. The people expect this Parliament to send a clear message that this criminality really is that bad, and that is what the amendments to the Crimes Act do. Nonetheless, I note the truncated review period for this bill—which is appropriate given the way in which the principles of judicial independence and the separation of powers need to be respected.

As the local member for a coastal community that has its own history of drunken violence, I am pleased that the changes to the Liquor Act provide a new flexible process of identifying precincts where antisocial behaviour and alcohol-related violence can be specifically controlled. While I am hopeful that such a precinct will never be required in my community, I note that the fact that this possibility exists sends a clear message to venues that they are on notice. I also take this opportunity to note the related scourge of antisocial behaviour on our buses. I regularly catch the bus home from this Parliament on a Thursday evening and I often note young people on the buses who are behaving inappropriately, who are swearing or who are acting in a manner that would be very frightening to someone who is older or is vulnerable in some way. We must send a clear message that this sort of behaviour on our buses is not to be tolerated.

In that respect I commend Superintendent Dave Darcy of the Northern Beaches Local Area Command who has listened carefully to concerns raised by members of the community, such as Harvey Rose, the former Mayor of Pittwater. At a meeting in my electorate office he made it very clear that, as the leader of our local police force, he was determined to send a clear message that antisocial behaviour on our buses due to intoxication and this ever-present vibe of violence on our public transport is not to be tolerated. We have a cultural problem. We therefore need clear laws that promote sensible consumption of alcohol as one of the great enjoyments of life and strong laws to proscribe the irresponsible consumption of alcohol, which is the cause of so much evil in our society.

We know that this State does not have a great history. It is wonderful that this Government has listened to the community—the community has spoken and the Government has listened—to start that important cultural change. We know that alcohol corrodes human dignity and we know that we need to sponsor real cultural change in our society so that the message gets out that alcohol-fuelled antisocial behaviour and violence will not be tolerated. In that regard, I particularly commend the activism of a young girl in my electorate, Claire Peters, who recently wrote to me pointing out that Alcopops are being advertised on school buses; in fact she took some photos. She questioned how this was appropriate. I listened carefully to what Claire Peters had to say. I have subsequently written to the Minister for Transport. Alcohol consumption can be wonderful, it can be a great social lubricant, but we must send the very strong message that excessive alcohol consumption that results in violence, death or grievous bodily harm, cannot be tolerated and will not be tolerated. That is why I commend these cognate bills to the House.

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

CRIMINAL ASSETS RECOVERY AMENDMENT BILL 2014

MINING AND PETROLEUM LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2014

Bills introduced on motion by Mr Barry O'Farrell, read a first time and printed.

Second Reading

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL (Ku-ring-gai—Premier, and Minister for Western Sydney) [5.46 p.m.]:
I move:

That these bills be now read a second time.

On 30 January this year the Parliament passed the Mining Amendment (ICAC Operations Jasper and Acacia) Act 2014 to cancel the exploration licences in respect of Doyles Creek, Mount Penny and Glendon Brook. In the second reading speech on that occasion I noted that it did not address all of the matters raised in the final report of the Independent Commission Against Corruption on Operations Jasper and Acacia published on

18 December last year. Today the Government introduces these two further bills to complete the Government's legislative responses to the recommendations of the Independent Commission Against Corruption and other associated issues. This State was shocked by the revelations of corruption exposed last year by the Independent Commission Against Corruption. In January, we took action to restore public confidence in the allocation of the State's valuable mining resources; to ensure that the tainted processes that led to exploration licences being granted do not infect future processes, such as mining leases; and to ensure that no person may derive any further financial benefit from the tainted processes.

First, I will outline the amendments proposed by the Criminal Assets Recovery Amendment Bill 2014. This bill will amend the Criminal Assets Recovery Act 1990 to facilitate the recovery of proceeds of crime where those proceeds were derived by a person who was not the direct perpetrator of criminal activity. This responds to the increasingly common practice of criminals taking steps to ensure that the proceeds of their wrongdoing are placed in the name of a family trust or other associated entities. A new test will be introduced under which the New South Wales Crime Commission will be able to obtain an order against a person if it can establish that the perpetrator intended the person to benefit, or knew or ought to have known that the person would benefit.

The amendments also clarify that the proceeds can include an increase in the value of an interest in property resulting from the crime-related activity. For example, if a person owns shares in a company and the criminal activity results in an increase in the price of the shares in that company, the increase in value will be included in the definition of "proceeds". Existing safeguards under the legislation to protect innocent third parties will remain in place. For proceeds assessment orders there will still be a requirement that the third party "knew or ought reasonably to have known" that the proceeds came from illegal activities. For unexplained wealth orders there will still be discretion in the Supreme Court to refuse to make the order if by so doing it would be in the public interest.

In relation to all restraining and confiscation orders, property ceases to be "serious crime derived property" or "illegally acquired property" if it is acquired by a third party for sufficient consideration without knowing that it was serious crime derived property or illegally acquired property, and in circumstances that would not arouse a reasonable suspicion. The amendments to the Criminal Assets Recovery Act 1990 will extend to activities that were engaged in, and to proceeds that were derived or realised, before the commencement of the amendments, and to applications for orders under the Act made, but not yet determined, before the commencement of the amendments. The Government has consulted with the New South Wales Crime Commission, which supports the proposed amendments. The commission has advised that it is reviewing the material concerning the recent Independent Commission Against Corruption proceedings with a view to potentially bringing an action under the Criminal Assets Recovery Act 1990. I should also say that this legislation is also supported by the Independent Commission Against Corruption.

I will now outline the amendments proposed by the Mining and Petroleum Legislation Amendment Bill 2014. This bill will amend the provisions of the Mining Act 1992 and the Petroleum (Onshore) Act 1991 to replace the decision-maker's discretion to refuse to grant or cancel a mining or petroleum authority in "the public interest". A new test will be introduced allowing the decision-maker to cancel or refuse to grant or renew a mining right or petroleum authority if, in the decision-maker's opinion, the applicant is not a "fit and proper person". The test will also enable decisions to refuse to transfer a mining right or petroleum title, to cancel or suspend operations under a mining right or petroleum title and to impose conditions or restrict operations under a mining right or petroleum title.

The bill sets out a non-exhaustive list of factors that the decision-maker may take into account in determining whether a person is a fit and proper person. These include: the person has contravened relevant legislation; the person has held a mining right or petroleum title that has been cancelled, suspended or revoked; whether the person is of good repute, and the person's character, honesty and integrity; a history of bankruptcy or involvement in the management of insolvent companies; and the involvement of other persons who are not fit and proper persons in the management of the mining or petroleum activities. So that the new decision-making powers are not undermined by a decision made under the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979, the bill will modify the relationship between the mining laws and the planning laws.

The bill will also prohibit an application for planning approval for mining that permits coal extraction under the Planning Act unless an authority under the Mining Act is in force. This will close a potential loophole

that could be used to circumvent the need to obtain an exploration licence for coal. The bill also amends the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 to make it clear that the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure may take into account relevant public interest considerations even if these were not raised specifically in the report by the Department of Planning and Infrastructure's Director General when determining an application under transitional part 3A of the Planning Act. In addition, the bill will make other amendments to the grounds on which certain administrative decisions affecting mining rights and petroleum titles can be made so that administrative action may be taken based on the decision-maker's state of mind, for example, the decision-maker being satisfied that the grounds for the decision exist. When a decision-maker is taking action that will have a significant impact on a titleholder's rights, such as cancelling a title, the decision-maker will have to be satisfied to a high standard of the relevant grounds. Decisions made under the Mining Act that affect titles are reviewable by the Land and Environment Court.

Finally, the Mining Act will be amended so that the Department of Trade and Industry, Regional Infrastructure and Services [DTIRIS] can take certain actions relating to the "preserved conditions" under clause 13 of schedule 6A to the Mining Act, being conditions that continue to apply to the Mount Penny, Glendon Brook and Doyles Creek tenements under the licences cancelled in January. The Independent Commission Against Corruption revelations in Operations Jasper and Acacia have shocked all members of this House. The corrupt actions of the former Minister for Mineral Resources and others named in the Independent Commission Against Corruption's investigations not only have denied the taxpayers of this State of potentially millions if not tens and maybe hundreds of millions of dollars in revenue, but also they have damaged the reputation of the New South Wales Government and the State of New South Wales as a destination for investment, whether national or international.

My Government is determined to clean up the mess left to us by Labor and importantly to ensure that the corrupt activities of the former Government can never occur again. Equally, we are determined to make sure that those who engaged in illegal activity are held accountable for their actions and that those people and their cronies are not able to profit from their wrongdoing. However, as with the Government's decision to introduce the Mining Amendment (ICAC Operations Jasper and Acacia) Bill 2014, the amendments proposed in this bill do not rely on the findings or recommendations of the Independent Commission Against Corruption. These amendments are proposed to strengthen the existing criminal assets recovery regime in the face of increasingly sophisticated efforts by criminals to hide the proceeds of crime from the State, and to tighten the regulation of mining rights to reduce opportunities for corruption. Although these amendments are clearly relevant to the issues raised in the Independent Commission Against Corruption Operations Jasper and Acacia, they are not specific to them and will have general application.

Again I place on the record my appreciation for the extraordinary job that the Independent Commission Against Corruption has done in relation to Operation Jasper and Operation Acacia. I thank the commission for all its detailed work and recommendations. I thank also the New South Wales Crime Commission for working with the Government to fashion this bill and legislative package, a package designed to update and modernise and to ensure that in relation to not only past activities but also any future activities the taxpayers of this State can be guaranteed that the integrity authorities of New South Wales have the power to claw back those proceeds that rightfully belong to the public. I commend the bills to the House.

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

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

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

THE LAND SYDNEY ROYAL SHOWGIRL COMPETITION

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth) [5.59 p.m.]: I bring to the attention of the House an event that I attended with my good friend the member for Northern Tablelands, Adam Marshall, *The Land* Sydney Royal Showgirl Competition Zone 4 Final on 22 February 2014 in Barraba. On this wonderful night young ladies from far and wide across the New England and north-west competed for two positions to represent zone 4 in the State final to be held in Sydney. The ladies who represented their agricultural show societies and their communities were outstanding. They were Cecilia Oppenheimer from Walcha, Amy Young from Bingara, Anthea Guest from Narrabri, Ashlee Doak from Bundarra, Danielle Robson from Tamworth, Abbey Ferris from Barraba, Jodie

Saggers from Glen Innes, Courtney Sullivan from Moree, Sally Newton from Walgett, Alexandra Tooth from Quirindi, Lucy Campbell from Dorrigo, Megan Steele from Wee Waa, Jessica Grills from Guyra, Jessica York from Inverell, Elizabeth Jarvis from Tenterfield, Sarah Clift from Gunnedah and Melissa O'Keefe from Wyallda.

These young ladies did their communities proud. They spoke on a range of topics that they felt passionate about, including volunteering and mental health and what they could do to boost their communities, such as increasing the role of women in agriculture. They spoke about raising awareness on critical issues in agriculture. It was great to see that agriculture remained the focus. The two ladies who will go through to the zone 4 final at the Sydney Royal Easter Show were Walgett's Sally Newton, who did an outstanding job, and Gunnedah's Sarah Clift. We are very proud of these two ladies, in particular Sarah from Gunnedah in the Tamworth electorate.

Congratulations also must go to the organisers of the showgirl final in Barraba. It was an outstanding achievement for a small town such as Barraba to host an event such as this, which involved providing accommodation and catering for so many entrants and their entourage. I pay tribute to the organising committee through Tim and Patti Crowley from the Barraba PA and H Association. The dinner was very ably emceed by Julia Crowley and Pip Hodgson, who did a fantastic job. The zone 4 finalist chief judge was Tim Capp, accompanied by Sarah Groat and Rebecca Cope.

The keynote speaker was Isobel Knight, who is renowned for preparing families for succession planning in and around the New England and north-west areas, across New South Wales and other parts of Australia. Isobel basically spoke about a sense of connectedness to communities, grounded country values and being strong advocates for regions. The crowd hung on Isobel's words about making sure that families stayed connected, particularly in the tough times we are facing presently. Not only did we discuss the drought but also we talked about the benefits of agriculture, our strengths and what makes our regions so great. I thank the showgirls for putting up their hands to be advocates for their communities. Given the success of Saturday night, our regional communities are in very good hands because those girls are passionate and strong and certainly are doing their best to represent their communities. I wish Sarah and Sally all the best at the final judging at the Sydney Royal Easter Show. We thank them for representing their communities.

Mr TROY GRANT (Dubbo—Parliamentary Secretary) [6.04 p.m.]: I thank the member for Tamworth for bringing to the attention of the House the success and outstanding talent across the zone 4 final of the Miss Showgirl competition and the wonderful ambassadors for his zone and the New England, north-western and Tamworth regions. I am aware that the Royal Agricultural Society Sydney Royal Easter Showgirl, Miss Kennedy Tourle, also was present at the event. She has been a wonderful ambassador and I have spoken previously in a private member's statement of her contribution in that role and with the Rural Fire Service as a community education officer. I look forward to attending the zone 6 finals in Warren this coming Saturday. I am sure the sentiments expressed by the member for Tamworth will be in evidence from those finalists. Once again the Sydney competition will be fierce but, as the member for Tamworth said so eloquently, regional New South Wales is well positioned with some fine young ladies as future ambassadors.

LUKE'S PLACE

Mr RYAN PARK (Keira) [6.05 p.m.]: This evening I shall talk about a wonderful new playground currently under construction in Memorial Park, Corrimal, in the Illawarra region. Luke is the son of Sean and Rita Rapley and I have worked closely with this fantastic family, along with the local council and the organisation known as Touched by Olivia to get this playground off the ground. Luke's Place is named in honour of Luke Rapley and will be an all-inclusive playground. This particular playground is the first of its kind in the Illawarra region. Recently, I joined the Hon. John Ajaka, Minister for the Illawarra, at the important ground-breaking ceremony to commence construction of this project. Attending also that day were St George Illawarra rugby league greats Ben Creagh and Brett Morris, who also have been fantastic supporters of this inclusive play space, along with the Lord Mayor, Gordon Bradbery, and other council representatives.

This fantastic initiative was developed by Sean, Rita and the Touched by Olivia Foundation, who have worked tirelessly across Australia to create places for all children to enjoy. This unique model is based on the belief that all children, regardless of ability, should be able to play alongside one another. These playgrounds are not like those I grew up using and certainly not like those that many members in this place grew up with; they are accessible to everyone regardless of disability or motor skills. This kind of inclusive

play space closes the gap for many children. It means that parents of children with disabilities can relax, have a cup of coffee and take some time out knowing that their children are safe and enjoying the space. Equally important, this type of playground brings everyone together regardless of ability level in an inclusive area for everyone to enjoy.

One in five children has a disability and, sadly, over 37 per cent of such children have difficulties fitting in socially. Luke's Place, the first of its kind in this region, will go some way towards closing this gap, particularly in the Illawarra. I am very proud to have been involved in a project and able to help secure \$30,000 for this playground after having the pleasure of meeting Sean Rapley some years ago. Sean and Rita are remarkable local individuals. They are dedicated parents determined to have a space in which Luke could play in the same way as other children his age and know that he would be safe. They spent hundreds of hours fundraising and bringing awareness about this kind of playground across the community. Their hard work and commitment is what all of us in the Illawarra have grown to admire and love.

I know Luke will be extremely proud of the work his parents have done. As the local member and shadow Minister for the Illawarra I certainly am proud of this special project, as is the local council and, most importantly, the Illawarra community. We are all proud that our region will have this unique playground space. It will be a fantastic day in the coming months when we will be able to enjoy this playground and see children, families and others enjoy this fantastic playground space that always will be about making sure that regardless of ability, issues or disabilities, it will bring people together to enjoy the social company of friends, for which we in this place should continue to advocate regardless of political background.

BLUE MOUNTAINS BUSHFIRE (RE) BUILD EXPO

Mrs ROZA SAGE (Blue Mountains) [6.10 p.m.]: The Blue Mountains community is very diverse with many different groups contributing to the wonderfully rich tapestry of its local culture. I should like to showcase a few of the many activities that occurred in the area during the parliamentary Christmas break. We all know that the Blue Mountains recently experienced a large bushfire. Last Saturday, Blue Mountains Economic Enterprise, a council-initiated group, ran a bushfire building expo at Springwood Sports Club. Hundreds of people attended this amazing expo with many trades, including Smart Glass, showcasing everything associated with building in bushfire zones. The community appreciated the expo very much. When I attended at midday after approximately 460 people had arrived already I was told that when the expo opened earlier there was no room to move because everyone was thrilled to see everything on offer.

One of the other attractions we have in the Blue Mountains is tourism. The Blue Mountains Lithgow and Oberon Tourism organisation runs the Roaring 20s and All That Jazz Festival in February. What a month it has been and there are still some events to come! To kick off the festival the Charleston Challenge was held in the Leura mall, an event about which I have previously spoken. Last year and this year I participated and danced in costume. Over 300 people dressed in costume were dancing the charleston which placed the event in the Guinness World Records book once again. The Blue Mountains will hold that record for some time.

To complement the Charleston Challenge Blue Mountains Lithgow and Oberon Tourism organised a Leura long lunch in Leura mall. There was seating at tables for people to buy, wonderful gourmet lunches available for purchase or people were able to bring their own food. It was a spectacular sight. I congratulate Pam Seaborn and Jodie Van Der Velden on organising the event. Seventy-nine people attended the inaugural event that followed the Charleston Challenge. It was a perfect warm day whereas previous days had been cold and wet. I am sure that the weather encouraged many people to attend the Charleston Challenge. There were prizes for the best decorated table and the ruffles and feathers adorning tables made Leura mall a sight to behold. I congratulate Sandy Luxford on organising the Charleston Challenge.

As I am the patron of the rail museum at Valley Heights the celebration of the centenary of the Valley Heights locomotive depot is dear to my heart. It was a wonderful celebration. Valley Heights locomotive depot played an important role when steam trains travelled over the mountains because that is where the pilot locomotives pushed the trains over the mountain. The Governor, Premier and Minister for Transport were present at the celebration. We started the day by boarding the Heritage Express at Central Railway. It was exciting to hop onto the Heritage Express and to be treated to a wonderful high tea. The train travelled all the way to the museum at Valley Heights. The Governor was thrilled with the experience and kept repeating, "This is just like it was in my childhood." The weather was stunning, which added to the festivities, and we had a wonderful day. Many people attended to celebrate the centenary. The model railway group built a model of the depot as it was in its 1913 centenary year. It was wonderful.

Lastly I mention the ukulele festival which is always good fun. It is the biggest ukulele festival in the world and it is held at the Carrington Hotel, Katoomba. There were 6,000 participants from interstate and overseas and it was a wonderful way to finish the weekend.

DALFRAM DISPUTE SEVENTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY

Ms NOREEN HAY (Wollongong) [6.15 p.m.]: Today in this place I pay tribute to the South Coast Branch of the Waterside Workers who on the 15 November 1938 stood up to the Government of the day, headed by Joseph Lyons, by refusing to load pig iron on a ship named the *Dalfram* moored at the No. 4 jetty at Port Kembla and bound for Japan. I was honoured to be invited recently on the seventy-fifth anniversary of the dispute to the launch of a documentary film called *Pig Iron Bob* which was hosted by Arthur Rorris of the South Coast Labour Council and Gary Keane of the Maritime Workers Union. The film depicts the struggle faced by the workers, their families and the community of Port Kembla following their resolution not to load the ship for fear that the pig iron would be used by the Japanese to make munitions. Japan was at war with China and reports were making their way back of the brutalities carried out by the Japanese Imperial Army.

Ted Roach, South Coast Branch Secretary at the time, addressed the men at the labour pick up for the *Dalfram*. He told the men of the destination of the pig iron and the possible use the Japanese would make of it, such as bombs that were likely to be used against the Chinese and then possibly against Australia. The situation of having over 4,000 men out of work over the Christmas period placed enormous strains on the local community. Relief schemes were set up and donations were received from all over Australia. For 10 long weeks the wharfies went out on strike. They were strongly supported by the community, local businesses and by Chinese Australians in Sydney who sent down truckloads of fruit and vegetables. The decision not to load the *Dalfram* saw an important bond form between the Waterside Workers Federation [WWF], the Illawarra Labor Movement and the People's Republic of China—not to mention cementing their place in history.

It was during the *Dalfram* dispute that the title "Pig Iron Bob" was coined in reference to the then Attorney-General, Robert Menzies. After the Christmas period Attorney-General Menzies made an attempt to settle the dispute by calling a meeting with the Combined Union Committee at Wollongong for 11 January 1939. He was met by an angry demonstration of over 1,000 men, women and children lining the streets to show their support for the wharfies. Menzies had intimated at the Wollongong meeting that the Government would review its policy and withdraw licences that determined who could work on the wharf at Port Kembla. With the increasing hardships experienced by the workers at BHP as a result of the shutdown, on 21 January 1939 the wharfies decided to load the pig iron "under protest". The accord stipulated that the licences were to be withdrawn from the port and there would be discussions with Menzies about future shipments. This was seen as a victory and no more pig iron was loaded onto ships bound for Japan.

I was pleased to welcome China's Consul General, Li Huaxin, to the Port Kembla Leagues Club to commemorate the historic *Dalfram* dispute and to be part of the launch of a booklet that captures the story and a preview screening of the trailer of the pending documentary film. The true friendship and cooperation of the Chinese community and the Port Kembla community was clearly evident and inspiring. It was a pleasure to meet and listen to a 93-year-old gentleman, Arthur Wong, who was present at the time of the *Dalfram* pig iron dispute. He spoke about being a young man and trooping down from Sydney to bring fruit and vegetables to the hungry workers who had been on strike for a long time. In those days one was picked for work—or not—each day at the gates of the wharf and to be out on strike was a tough decision to take. It shows the commitment of those workers to do what they believed to be the right thing. It is a moment of history that I am proud to say took place in my electorate. I pay tribute to those involved in the struggles of the past and to those of the present. I pay tribute to the wives, children and families of those workers, who were predominantly men, for their strength of character and their commitment that resulted in a successful outcome that eventually benefited us all.

MAORI AND PACIFIC ISLANDER DIABETES FORUM

Mr BRYAN DOYLE (Campbelltown) [6.20 p.m.]: I speak tonight of the diabetes forum for the Maori and Pacific Island communities which I hosted on Wednesday 19 February at the Western Suburbs Leagues Club. As chairman of the Maori and Pacific Islander Ministerial Consultative Committee and deputy chair of the NSW Parliamentary Diabetes Support Group, I have a deep interest in diabetes and the health and welfare of our Pacific communities. Diabetes is a huge issue and a problem which faces Australians of Pacific heritage. The concept for the forum was to connect the Australian Diabetes Council with peoples from the Pacific. We had an impressive range of speakers, including Sturt Eastwood, the chief executive officer of the Australian Diabetes

Council. He spoke of the role of the council and told the heartrending story of a colleague he knew from his time in the Pacific who died from complications from infection of a wound he suffered due to diabetes. Dr Paniani Patu, a general practitioner of Samoan heritage, addressed the group and spoke of a survey conducted during World War II concerning the occurrence of diabetes amongst the islands and the fact that it was almost unknown at that time. It is now an epidemic both there and in Australia.

Genevieve Biviano, who is a credentialed diabetes educator, shared with the group what it is like to have diabetes and explained in a language that everyone could understand that diabetes really is the name given to a group of different conditions where there is simply too much glucose in the blood. Katie Ellison, an accredited practising dietician, went through the appropriate foods to eat, with a particular emphasis on foods that this community loves and enjoys such as taro, sweet potatoes, yams and banana. She went through recipes that could easily be prepared by the community, which resulted in a lively discussion amongst members of the group. Three members of my panel were there: Mal Fruean, Ta'ane Tupola and Aunty Jan Nicoll. Ta'ane Tupola brought along produce from a community garden in Campbelltown where traditional Polynesian fruits are grown.

Perhaps the highlight of the day was the topic of physical activity run by Mia Le, an accredited exercise physiologist. She took the group through a range of incidental exercises that can be performed in situations that the group had never thought of, such as having the clothes basket two steps away from the clothesline, using stairs, and not parking the car close to the shops. She also introduced the group to the therapy exercise band and illustrated exercises that can be done on chairs and tables. Their eyes popped when Mia Le asked everyone if they would like free gym membership. She told them that Campbelltown has many parks with free exercise equipment and proceeded to show them a picture of me demonstrating the use of the machines. Many of those present had diabetes and all of them knew someone in their family who had diabetes or knew someone who had lost a limb or died of complications from diabetes.

The purpose of the forum, which was to connect and exchange information between the Australian Diabetes Council and my local Polynesian and Maori communities, followed a previous diabetes forum that I held in Campbelltown which was a roaring success. We can reduce the impact of diabetes on our community by sharing knowledge, controlling what we eat and increasing our physical activity. We need only 30 minutes of exercise a day or three lots of 10 minutes. I commend the Australian Diabetes Council and the work of the ministerial committee to the House.

Private members' statements concluded.

DONATELIFE WEEK

Matter of Public Importance

Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa) [6.25 p.m.]: I am pleased to bring to the attention of the House as a matter of public importance the vital message of DonateLife Week. DonateLife Week was launched on Sunday 23 February by the Minister for Health and Minister for Medical Research. I had the privilege of attending the launch of DonateLife Week, which was held at Dunumbral Park in Cecil Hills. This location was chosen which is especially poignant for DonateLife Week as it was announced also that the adjoining lake was being renamed Doujon Lake in honour of Doujon Zammit, a Cecil Hills boy who became an organ donor when he tragically lost his life in Greece in 2008. His parents, Oliver and Rosemarie Zammit, and his brother, Zeike, were present. Rosemarie spoke bravely and with all the love, passion and protectiveness that only a mother could. No-one was left with a dry eye. Rosemarie told us that even though they had to let go of their beautiful child, a decision which no parent wishes to face, the decision to donate Doujon's organs was made easier because he had a conversation with his family almost a year prior to his death.

Doujon gave the gift of life to others, so it is right and proper that the launch of the 2014 DonateLife Week was held in Cecil Hills and its local lake renamed Doujon Lake. I congratulate and sincerely thank Liverpool City Mayor Ned Mannoun who worked with the Zammit family and Liverpool City Council officers to ensure that the renaming of the lake became a reality. Doujon Lake will forever be a symbol of the life that Doujon lived and the brave choice his parents made to continue his legacy. Rosemarie Zammit told me that they have met three of the four people who received Doujon's organs and they have seen the shift that has taken place in the lives of those three individuals as a result of their son's organ donation and their bravery. My speech in this House is another means to ensure that lives such as Doujon's are remembered and that courageous decisions to give the gift of life to strangers will forever be remembered.

In 2013 New South Wales had a 16 per cent increase in donors and a 20 per cent increase in organ transplants. As at 31 December 2013, 2,358,155 people from New South Wales were registered on the Australian Organ Donor Register, which is administered by Medicare. This represents an increase of 16,265 people since the New South Wales Government plan was released in August 2012. The Increasing Organ Donation in NSW: Government Plan 2012 also includes increasing community education and awareness campaigns to encourage people to have the discussion about organ donation with their families. It also includes employing specialists, doctors and nurses in hospitals to support families through the donation process. It is also about promoting living donor programs. We are very much aware of family members who are compatible with each other and who offer kidneys or tissue to their family members for transplant purposes.

More people are signing up to the national organ donation register. More families are having the conversation about organ donation, more organs are being donated and more organ transplants are taking place. DonateLife Week is a time to do three things: to celebrate the healthy lives of organ recipients, to commemorate and celebrate the people who have given the gift of life to others, and to have the conversation about one's personal choice of organ donation with one's family. I signed up to the national register when it was launched in the New South Wales Parliament last year. I have also had this discussion with my family. They know my personal desire to help others live when I no longer can. I encourage everyone to sign up to the national register and to have this discussion with their families. Out of tragedy can come wonderful stories of healthy children and young men and women who pursue their ambitions in life. Out of death can come life. I encourage everyone to have the conversation about organ donation with their families.

Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) [6.30 p.m.]: It is a pleasure and an honour to be involved in this discussion tonight. DonateLife works closely and in partnership with all States and Territories, clinicians and consumers and the community sector to improve organ and tissue donation and transplant outcomes in Australia. On 14 February I attended the launch of DonateLife Week in the New South Wales State Library. I spoke with doctors, transplant teams, recipients, donors, families of donors and families of recipients. Being able to hear those people talk touched me in a way that made me realise how important it is for all families to have that discussion.

From time to time most of us donate money or time to a great cause that we feel is worthwhile. However, the ultimate gift is a donation of life. During DonateLife Week we are encouraged to tell our friends and loved ones what we would like to happen to our organs if we pass away unexpectedly. We can donate our liver, pancreas, bones, skin, eye tissue, heart tissue, heart, lungs, kidneys and so on. Everyone has their reasons for deciding whether or not to become an organ donor. However, it is important that our loved ones and friends understand our decision. During DonateLife Week we should discover the facts about organ and tissue donation, decide whether we will become a donor and discuss our decision with our loved ones and ensure that they are in no doubt about our wishes in the event that we pass away unexpectedly. It is amazing that only 1 per cent of people who pass away in hospital can donate organs. That is a very small number.

How do we decide to become a donor and what conversations should we be having with our families? I encourage everybody to tell their friends and loved ones to look at the DonateLife website, which contains toolkits and advice about facilitating these discussions. As I said, everyone has their reasons for deciding whether or not to be an organ donor and families who know about those decisions are more likely to uphold them. Those who do not know the wishes of their deceased loved ones are much less likely to agree to a donation. We may think we are too old or too unhealthy to be a donor or that our religion does not support it. There are common myths and misconceptions about religious prohibition on organ donation. In fact, almost all religions see it as a charitable gesture, which is the basis of all religions. Although it is not easy, DonateLife Week is a good time to have that discussion with our friends and loved ones. As I said, it is time to investigate organ and tissue donation and to decide about becoming a donor, and I encourage all members to do so. Like the member for Mulgoa, I signed up as a donor last year because I feel very strongly about it.

Australia has a world-class reputation for successful transplants. In 2013, 391 organ donors gave 1,122 transplant recipients a new chance at life. That is an amazing number, but it could be better. The only way that will happen is through education and making our wishes known. The rate of organ donation in Australia is very low compared to the rate in other countries and that must change. About 1,500 Australians are waiting for organs. Almost everyone can help others through organ and tissue donation and I encourage all members to sign up and to discuss the issue with their loved ones. Discover, decide and discuss.

Mr GARRY EDWARDS (Swansea) [6.35 p.m.]: I support this matter of public importance dealing with DonateLife Week raised by my colleague the member for Mulgoa. DonateLife Week was launched last

Sunday 23 February. It is being coordinated by the Organ and Tissue Authority and is a national awareness program designed to promote the importance of organ donation. At any one time, 1,500 Australians are on the transplant waiting list, and that includes a number of very ill children who desperately need donated organs to survive. Choosing to become an organ donor could very well be one of the most important decisions anyone can make, and the positive impact on someone else's life is immeasurable.

This Government recognised how vital it was to increase organ donation rates and implemented the measures outlined in an initiative entitled "Increasing Organ Donation in NSW: Government Plan 2012". The initiative included closing the New South Wales Roads and Maritime Services organ donation register and the establishment of the Australian Organ Donor Register, administered by Medicare; increasing communication and education initiatives to encourage people to discuss organ donation with their families; and employing specialist doctors and nurses in hospitals to support families through the donation process. These initiatives and awareness events like DonateLife Week are having a clear and positive effect on organ donation rates.

Australia has achieved exceptional growth in donation rates in the past few years with 2013 figures showing a 58 per cent increase over those of 2009. In 2013 New South Wales experienced a 16 per cent increase in donor registrations and a 20 per cent increase in the number of organs transplanted. We are on target to see similar encouraging numbers for 2014. In January this year there were 11 organ donations in New South Wales, which is more than the monthly target of 10 donations. As of 31 December 2013 there were 2,358,155 New South Wales residents on the register. That represents many lives that could be saved because people have chosen to be a donor and have thereby chosen to give the gift of life to others. I encourage everyone to learn more about the organ donation program by becoming involved in DonateLife Week events or by contacting the Organ and Tissue Authority. I thank my friend the member for Mulgoa for raising this vitally important issue in the House today.

Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa) [6.38 p.m.], in reply: I thank the member for Shellharbour and the member for Swansea for their contributions to debate on this vital matter of public importance. It is important to re-emphasise that organ donation is both a sad and joyous topic. On the one hand we have families trying to manage and cope with the devastation of losing a loved one prematurely and unexpectedly, and on the other hand desperately ill people, and often young children, receiving the gift of life. I had the great joy last year of meeting five-year-old Kyla Devine, a young girl in my electorate, who had a liver transplant when she was only four months old. It is wonderful to read newspaper reports of her being full of energy, healthy and attending school. The fact that she is now enjoying life is a reminder of the good that can come from tragedy.

Kyla, who is now six years old, is extremely motivated to spread the word about organ donation. She is helping the Emu Plains Lions Club at the local Bunnings store to raise public awareness and to encourage people to become donors. Kyla's parents, Katelan and Sean, are assisting to raise her profile. She is a little champion. Kyla epitomises why the community should discuss registering as donors. We all need to ensure that our families are aware of our wishes about organ and tissue donation. Kyla's mother had this to say about Kyla's donor family:

Making the decision to donate their loved one's organs is an entirely selfless, heroic act given they are giving a gift to someone they do not even know nor will likely meet—and they are making the decision at an exceptionally difficult time—but without our donor family's decision Kyla would most likely not be here today.

Only 1 per cent of those who die in hospital are eligible to be organ donors. In DonateLife Week we should take the time to encourage our work colleagues and family members to have the discussion and put their names on the donor register. Let us all be part of sharing life.

Discussion concluded.

**The House adjourned, pursuant to standing and sessional orders, at 6.41 p.m. until
Wednesday 26 February 2014 at 10.00 a.m.**
