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# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Tuesday 4 March 2014

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**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

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### ROAD SAFETY PROJECTS

**Mr DARYL MAGUIRE** (Wagga Wagga—Parliamentary Secretary) [12.12 p.m.]: As the member for Wagga Wagga, and Parliamentary Secretary to the Premier for Rural and Regional Affairs, I am delighted to join my colleagues to acknowledge the announcement of a new \$15 million New South Wales Government program to help fund road safety officer positions in local councils across the State, including the Wagga Wagga electorate. The Local Government Road Safety Program will provide council offices with longer-term funding for projects that address road safety issues specific to their local community. The New South Wales Government is committed to road safety and this program supports the work of councils such as Wagga Wagga, Lockhart and Tumut to address issues in the Wagga Wagga electorate. Some local government projects address issues including speeding on local roads, drink driving and driver fatigue. Indeed, the community is alarmed at the emergence also of people driving with drugs in their system, and no doubt that will be a focus in some programs. Other projects target correct use and installation of child restraints, pedestrian safety and road safety workshops for older road users.

The program will receive funding of \$5 million per year for three years and be run by the Transport for NSW Centre for Road Safety. The program will be made available to local councils employing road safety officers and delivering road safety projects, such as Wagga Wagga, Lockhart and Tumut. The new program also provides New South Wales councils that cannot afford a road safety officer with the option of applying for one-off road safety projects. The work of metropolitan, and regional and rural council road safety officers is invaluable in helping to save lives and change the attitudes of those who use our roads. I served as a member of the Joint Standing Committee on Road Safety, or Staysafe committee, for a number of years and through the various inquiries the committee conducted I became acutely aware of the value of road safety officers. This new Local Government Road Safety Program is additional to other New South Wales Government initiatives to improve road safety, including the establishment of a Traffic and Highway Patrol Command centre and record rollout to ensure every New South Wales school has a flashing lights warning system by the end of 2015.

The Local Government Road Safety Program is a partnership between the New South Wales Government and participating local councils throughout the State. Currently, the program funds 76 full-time or part-time road safety officer positions within 91 councils. Road safety officers deliver behavioural and educational road safety projects to address local issues and are employed under a fifty-fifty funding agreement. Progress reporting will be made through project milestone reports and annual evaluation reports, with continued funding being assessed and based on performance and delivery of projects. This new arrangement will provide certainty of funding for road safety officer positions and encourage the implementation of well-planned projects that can be implemented over three years. Some councils participating in the program include Ballina, Coffs Harbour, Kempsey and Tweed in the northern region; Maitland, Port Stephens, Gosford, Great Lakes, Greater Taree and Gloucester in the Hunter region; Eurobodalla, Kiama, Shellharbour, Shoalhaven, Wingecarribee, Wollondilly and Wollongong in the southern region; and Albury, Bland, Temora, Cootamundra, Coolamon, Junee, Wagga Wagga of course, Corowa, Greater Hume, Urana, Lockhart, Griffith, Gundagai, Tumut, Tumbarumba, Leeton, Murray, Deniliquin, Murrumbidgee, Narrandera and Yass in the south-west.

Of course, a swag of city councils also are participating. Participating councils in the western region include Bathurst, Blayney, Cabonne, Orange, Dubbo, Wellington, Forbes, Lachlan, Parkes, Lithgow, Moree Plains, Gwydir and Warrumbungle. Every member of Parliament will welcome this announcement; it gives certainty of funding across the State for cities and regional and rural New South Wales. This important funding addresses an issue close to our hearts—that is, road safety. I forecast that members will hear more about this Government's initiatives. I welcome this announcement.

### **CABRAMATTA ELECTORATE EVENTS**

**Mr NICK LALICH** (Cabramatta) [12.17 p.m.]: Over the past 2½ decades I have had the great fortune of representing the most culturally diverse community in Australia in the electorate of Cabramatta as mayor and State member of Parliament. Approximately 88 per cent of Cabramatta households speak two or more languages. I believe Cabramatta is one of this country's great multicultural success stories, with people from all backgrounds living in harmony, side by side: Irish, Serbian, Croatian, Macedonian, Italian, Lebanese, Laotian, Cambodian, African, Vietnamese and, of course, Chinese. Our community celebrates each other's cultural and religious festivals—for instance, in June the community will celebrate the Italian Republic Day. Just recently Cabramatta celebrated Chinese New Year, which is one of the biggest events in the community's calendar. As in previous years, I had the privilege of attending many community celebrations to bring in the Year of the Horse, which is considered a very lucky sign.

The horse symbolises travel, competition and victory. On this Chinese New Year's Day, I marked the occasion with thousands of others at the Ming Yue Lay Temple in Bonnyrigg. It was a truly spectacular celebration: festive, colourful and loud with half a dozen lions and dragons that twisted, jumped and danced to drums and cymbals, hundreds of firecrackers, and plenty of music and entertainment. The Ming Yue Lay Temple is run by the Australian Chinese Buddhist Society under the leadership of Chairman James Chan, President Vincent Kong, Jensen Tran, Tony Trinh, Sen Huynh and other management committee members. Everyone in this Chamber should visit the Bonnyrigg temple to celebrate Chinese New Year at least once in their life—they will not regret the experience. At any time of the day or night one will find a sea of Buddhist worshippers filing into the main shrine, which is decorated with brightly coloured flowers and plates of fresh fruit as offerings to the gods.

Thousands of worshippers, both young and old, carry incense to send their prayers for blessings for the year ahead. Downstairs one can sample the vast array of vegetarian food on offer, all cooked by hardworking and dedicated volunteers. Every year we enjoy the lion dancing and kung-fu performances by the Australian Teo Chew Association martial arts troupe, led by the president, Mr Hung Ly, and the chairman, Mr Frank Chou. The Ming Yue Lay Buddhist Temple is one of the many temples that celebrate the Chinese New Year. Another event I had the honour of attending was the Chin Lien Association annual Chinese New Year launch, where I was given the privilege of dotting the eyes of a brand-new lion. Dotting the eyes, ears and mouth brings the lion to life. I acknowledge the contribution of Michael Chan and Henh-Phoong Duong of the Chin Lien Association for their great work in adding to the rich fabric of our community. I make special mention of the good work of Mr Po Hong Kong of the Australian Chinese Descendants Mutual Association, which does a wonderful job of looking after elderly Chinese people in our community.

During the Chinese New Year period, which lasts for two weeks, the Cabramatta central business district is packed with revellers enjoying the sights, sounds, atmosphere and food. Lucky colours and banners of red and gold decorate shopfronts and each day people can hear the banging of drums and cymbals as businesses invite lion and dragon dancers to bring them luck, good fortune and prosperity for the coming year. Apart from the previously mentioned Teo Chew Association martial arts group, I acknowledge the tireless efforts and performances of the Sydney Indo-Chinese Youth Sports Association, led by Ms Lisa Tran and Mr Thay Lim. Chinese New Year would not be the same without the drums and clashing of cymbals that accompany the lion and dragon dances. Finally, I take this opportunity to wish everyone in the Chamber a happy, healthy and prosperous Year of the Horse.

### **PUNCHBOWL RAILWAY STATION EASY ACCESS UPGRADE**

**Mr ROBERT FUROLO** (Lakemba) [12.21 p.m.]: I make a private member's statement this afternoon to update the House on a campaign in my local area to have an easy access lift installed at Punchbowl station. On Saturday last week a rally was held by the communities of Lakemba and Punchbowl to send a strong message to the O'Farrell Government about the necessity for such a lift to be provided at Punchbowl station because the Punchbowl community deserves a fair go. I thank those people who came out despite the rain to show their support for this important and desperately needed community facility.

Despite the inclement weather, almost 80 people turned up for the community rally, including local residents, families, elderly and disabled people. Indeed, one 88-year-old lady named Merle Aiken braved the rain and traipsed up and down the stairs of the station so she could attend the rally in the park. This type of dedication should send a strong message to the New South Wales Government, and my private member's statement highlights the needs of my local community. The suburb of Punchbowl has 18,400 people and on CityRail's network is ranked eighty-ninth for patronage. In 2012 passenger movements at Punchbowl station were 963,000. The electorate of Lakemba is ranked number two for the zero to five-year-old age group and the Canterbury local government area has one of the highest numbers of disability support pensioners in Australia and, like many communities, has a large and growing aged population.

These statistics should send a clear message to the Minister for Transport and the Government that Punchbowl not only needs an easy access lift but also deserves its fair share of the funding. I understand the many demands for easy access for commuters and I am pleased for any community that is successful in achieving that outcome. Indeed, I notice that Oatley in the adjoining electorate has a population of 10,000, is ranked 125th on the patronage list and has 439,000 commuters compared to Punchbowl's 963,000 commuters. However, in the budget \$25 million was allocated to Oatley. While I commend the member for Oatley for that achievement I note that zero dollars have been allocated in the budget for Punchbowl station. Punchbowl has more people, including disabled people and zero to five-year-olds whose parents need prams to get them up and down the stairs. If ever a station in Sydney is worthy of a lift it is Punchbowl station.

I am pleased that so many people braved the inclement weather to show their support and to send a clear message to the New South Wales Government. The Punchbowl community needs an easy access lift and deserves a fair go. There should be access to safe transport for the elderly, the disabled and the huge number of parents with prams who struggle every day to get up and down those 59 stairs at the station. The time has come to provide an easy access lift. Community members have spoken by showing their support. I hope the Government will hear their voices, acknowledge that Punchbowl is worthy of a lift and make provision for it.

#### **MANILLA SHOWGIRL BALL**

**Mr KEVIN ANDERSON** (Tamworth) [12.25 p.m.]: On Saturday evening 1 March 2014 I had the pleasure of attending the 2014 Showgirl Ball held by the Manilla Show Society at Manilla Town Hall. My wife, Anna, joined me on this auspicious occasion, as 2014 marks the Eightieth Annual Manilla Show. The Showgirl Ball showcased our showgirl entrants and was a formal celebration of the milestone of the local show in Manilla and its history. Four lovely young ladies showcased the depth of talent in regional New South Wales by representing their communities. They were Miss Erin Broad, Miss Kathleen Ferguson, Miss Cazna Jessup and Miss Heidi Lockrey. Miss Kathleen Ferguson took out the 2014 showgirl honours and spoke passionately about her region, as did Erin, Cazna and Heidi.

Shows in our regions play an important part in our communities. We look forward to an excellent show on Friday 14 March 2014 by Manilla Show Society, headed up by Mr Jim Maxwell, and his dedicated band of volunteers. The Manilla Showgirl Ball was ably hosted by Master of Ceremonies Mr Mike Rowland, who did a magnificent job of interviewing the girls. He gave them the opportunity to express themselves and they reinforced why we have great faith in young people in country New South Wales. Bree Taber did a wonderful job organising the event. I know that the Manilla Show Society would like to thank the sponsors because without them the event could not occur. I thank Burrells Bazaar, IGA Manilla, JAMB Design, Mr Ben and Mrs Kylie Taber, Mr David and Mrs Rose Gee, Purtle Plevy Agencies, P. W. and I. J. Taber, Suzanne Gallagher, Lions Club, Manilla, Royal Hotel, Manilla and Shearing Shed Salon.

Kylie, who owns the Shearing Shed Salon, does a magnificent job of supporting the society. Local caterers provided a magnificent meal for the event and a local band headed by Steve "The Bear" Charles did a fantastic job and had everyone dancing. The year 2014 marks the Eightieth Annual Manilla Show. The first show was held in 1932. The show has run consecutively since then, taking only two years off during World War II. The Manilla Show Society will celebrate this milestone on Friday 14 March, which is Heritage Day. We invite everyone in the New South Wales Parliament, friends far and wide, to come and see the wonderful things that we have to offer in that magnificent gem, Manilla.

As well as the official opening of the 2014 Manilla Show, many exciting things are planned, including a hayride, an animal nursery, games from yesteryear, bush ballad singers, bush poetry, shearing demonstrations, and much more. I invite everyone to join in the celebrations. Volunteers are priceless in Manilla and without the volunteers who work tirelessly at shows across our region we would not have these important events.

I congratulate the Manilla Show Society, which is under the directorship of Mr Jim Maxwell. Manilla is a great town with many great people who work together to achieve wonderful things. Members of the historical society and many others put their hands up and say, "I am happy to take this job on", and we value their efforts. I encourage everyone to spend time in magnificent Manilla when they visit the Tamworth electorate. I am looking forward to attending the 2014 Manilla Show on Friday 14 March and hope to see everyone there.

### TRIBUTE TO GORDON AND ELAINE CROCKETT

**Mr GLENN BROOKES** (East Hills) [12.30 p.m.]: I bring to the attention of the House Mr Gordon and Mrs Elaine Crockett, who are two community heroes devoted to the East Hills electorate. Even though Gordon and Elaine are elderly, they have more energy than most young people. They are regular visitors to the East Hills electorate office and are friends of mine and all my staff. Mrs Crockett, who is a cancer survivor, and her husband, Gordon, are avid supporters of cancer research, which is evident by the countless hours they spend on street corners and at shopping centres collecting donations for the Cancer Council. Their passion for and commitment to cancer research is second only to their passion for the mighty Bulldogs.

At this time of the year Gordon and Elaine are enthusiastically gearing up for the Bankstown Relay for Life. They spend months prior to the event spreading the news and gathering supporters. Mr and Mrs Crockett are not keen to attract praise or accolades; they are quiet in what they accomplish and loud for what they believe in. Gordon and Elaine epitomise the people every electorate needs and would be grateful to have. They are silent achievers who uplift the spirits of everyone around them and encourage people to give back to the community in which they live. I thank Gordon and Elaine for their tireless work in the East Hills electorate and for their friendship. They are true custodians of the East Hills electorate.

### VICTIM IMPACT STATEMENTS

**Mr GREG PIPER** (Lake Macquarie) [12.32 p.m.]: I raise the issue of victim impact statements, which was brought to my attention by a constituent. In August 2011, Mrs Kim Flack lost her 29-year-old daughter, Bianca Turnbull, in a car accident. Bianca's car was hit from behind by an overtaking vehicle, sending it off the road and into a telegraph pole. The offending driver, Mr Mathew Mounsey, was found to have been intoxicated at the time. He was convicted of driving in a dangerous manner causing death and a second charge of failing to stop and render assistance. He is currently serving a minimum sentence of two years and six months imprisonment. It is not my intention to retry the case in this place or comment on the conviction, but it is necessary that I give some background in order to provide context.

My concern is the process that allows vetting or editing of victim impact statements submitted by families of people who have died as a result of homicide. Mrs Flack came to me after the trial had concluded. She was angered that her victim impact statement, which was her only opportunity to voice in court the immeasurable sense of loss and grief that Bianca's death had inflicted on her family, was subject to what she believed was unnecessary and unsympathetic editing at the behest of the offender's legal team. I am informed by Robyn Cotterell-Jones from the Hunter-based victims advocacy and support group, VOCAL, that a common complaint from families of victims is that they often find themselves subject to unreasonable restrictions about what they can and cannot say in a victim impact statement, despite the prevailing legal position in New South Wales that family victim impact statements do not have any bearing on sentences handed down in homicide cases. Often grieving relatives of homicide victims feel disenfranchised from the legal process. A victim impact statement is their opportunity to place on record a personal reflection of the life of the deceased person, the impact of their death and the way in which their absence will affect their family, friends and the community.

Mrs Flack gave due consideration to the written guidelines for the drafting of victim impact statements and submitted her statement three months before the sentencing hearing. The Director of Public Prosecutions and her court support person had read her statement and believed it to be within the guidelines. Therefore, she was incensed when she found out 15 minutes prior to sentencing that the defence had vetted parts of her victim impact statement and that she would be given no opportunity to revise its wording. The sections that were edited out were personal statements about the magnitude of her loss. Although the impact of those statements was completely benign to the outcome of the case, its sentiment was important to her and her family. One omitted section stated:

We cannot forgive that the accused never stopped to get help, no one should ever die alone. No parent should have to bury their child; it is not the natural progression of life.

Another omitted section reflected the impact on Mrs Flack as a grandmother and in part stated:

It is very hard to deal with the emotional questions from Bianca's little son as he tries to comprehend why his mother can't be there for him when he hurts himself, his birthdays, Christmas; all the milestones of his life will never be shared by his mother.

When I read those passages I was perplexed as to what justified their removal other than the fact that they may have made the offender feel uncomfortable. In contrast, the offender's mother was apparently able to take the stand to make an unsworn, unchallenged statement to the court about her son and the impact the incident had had on him.

When homicide cases go to trial, families of victims often have to relive publicly the trauma of losing their loved one and have little opportunity to contribute to the legal process. As a result, they end up feeling marginalised by the justice system. Even though victim impact statements do not influence sentencing, they offer a small but significant avenue of recourse to an aggrieved family. The experience should be compassionate and healing, not one that leaves them feeling that their rights have been disregarded.

In 2011, the Department of the Attorney General and Justice conducted a stakeholder consultation regarding family victim impact statements and whether they should be taken into account in sentencing. I understand this issue may again be on the table in light of the debate arising from the Thomas Kelly case and other high-profile homicides. As part of that process or through other avenues, I ask that the Attorney General and his department take note of the issues I have raised and give consideration to how the process of dealing with victim impact statements in homicide cases might be improved to deal more sensitively and fairly with the families of victims. I offer my belated condolences to the family of Bianca Turnbull and thank Kim Flack for bringing this matter to the attention of the House.

### **MURRAY-DARLING COAL SEAM GAS MINING**

**Mr JOHN WILLIAMS** (Murray-Darling) [12.37 p.m.]: Coal seam gas concerns the Murray-Darling electorate and many other electorates in New South Wales. I thought there were no suitable sites for coal seam gas exploration within the Murray-Darling electorate. However, at a public meeting on Friday, and prior to that, I became aware that the area from Hillston to Booligal along the Lachlan River is a targeted area for coal seam gas exploration. I have not been involved in this debate and did not have an opportunity to have full knowledge of the matter, but I am aware of the strategic land use policy and aquifer interference policy that was set up by the Government primarily to protect more sensitive areas. In February last year, the Premier put out a media release entitled "Tough new rules for coal seam gas activity". It highlighted that Premier Barry O'Farrell and Deputy Premier Andrew Stoner had looked at the issue. It stated:

That NSW Government has listened and acted. Local Liberals and National MPs have also made strong representations and brought community concerns to Ministers.

It triggered the key factor for the chief scientist and engineer to conduct an independent review of all coal seam gas activities in New South Wales, including the potential impact on water catchments. This is a very important study. Unfortunately, there was a lot of criticism about the lack of action taken by the New South Wales Government. The Coalition Government has inherited this issue from the Labor Government. The Government has been on the front foot dealing with issues concerning coal seam gas and its impact on communities.

This move to conduct an independent study is a clear indication that the New South Wales Government takes New South Wales community concern seriously. Comprehensive terms of reference on how to manage the study were provided to the committee. It is managed wholly and solely on the basis of the environment, the protocols to be set, the ability to audit the function and to gather information from other States and internationally as to how coal seam gas is managed from exploration to extraction, and managing the resource into the future.

The five months of information gathering has included stakeholder meetings, interviews, community consultation, site visits, technical paper preparation, independent advice from several experts, water geology, coal seam gas operational processes, health and environmental impacts, and community views and public submissions. The review committee has received more than 230 responses, carried out site visits, talked to communities, spoken to the industry and visited active wells and exploration sites. At the conclusion of this scientific investigation there will be clear-cut guidelines for the coal seam gas industry. I have a great deal of faith in this Government's earnest endeavours to look after the environment and community interests. I assure the people of Hillston and those people living along the Lachlan River that I will not support any exploration or mining activity that threatens their welfare, livelihood or health or the long-term health of the Lachlan River.

## TUMBARUMBA LIBRARY ARCHIVE EXTENSION

**Mr GREG APLIN** (Albury) [12.42 p.m.]:

People will not look forward to posterity, who never look backward to their ancestors.

With these words philosopher Edmund Burke reminded us that in seeking information about our ancestors we are also preparing ourselves to look to the future. Burke also famously said:

Those who don't know history are destined to repeat it.

Our future as a society is our past projected onto a new screen. Perhaps that is why we sometimes feel compelled to chase up our ancestry and peek behind the curtain of the passing years. I am pleased to report to the House that the town of Tumbarumba has been looking into its past to help define its future. On 2 October last year a new archive was opened at the Tumbarumba Library. This is no ordinary library project. Over recent years it had been noted that people from all over the country were turning up at the door to research their family history. Tumbarumba is a rich resource for ancestry seekers, so pilgrims go there to pursue their search. Local historians, the Tumbarumba Shire Council and staff saw a need to be met and an opportunity to boost tourism. They had tremendous historical resources, but much was stored in less than ideal conditions and searching was not computerised.

Ron Frew, of the Tumbarumba Historical Society, says there are a number of reasons that combine to make these archives special. For a start, Tumbarumba was for a long time an isolated rural community and travel was difficult. This meant that local news and history was retained, not lost, over the years. Families remain, sometimes up to five and six generations, and have kept their documents intact. Tumbarumba has also been at the centre of waves of development ranging from sheep farming, gold prospecting and timber plantations to wine production now. Each wave has brought different people and businesses into the region. It is a remarkable mix for what was once such a remote community, so the people kept their documents and treasured them.

In the Tumbarumba archive you will find, for example, a significant collection of World War One material, including original photos, postcards and letters. One family of three sons who went to war held onto its wartime correspondence. Almost every letter is there from the sisters at home to the boys overseas. If your search takes you to Tumbarumba you will also have access to a vast collection of material which may help you find your ancestors. Not only have the newspapers been kept, but there are records from businesses, the masonic club, the rodeo club, the football club, and more. If you have a family connection to Tumbarumba you might find your relative named in such documents, which might then point to a photograph. One recent visitor from the North Coast of New South Wales searched for a family connection to World War One and found old letters that were then used as part of an application to gain a place at the Gallipoli Centenary next year.

The new Tumbarumba archive is in fact a complete wing added to the existing library, which itself has a history, having been the chapel at the Laurel Hill jail before its transportation to the current site. The development of the archive has been a six-year project, bringing together Tumbarumba Shire Council, Tumbarumba Historical Society, Ron and Cath Frew, Hyne and Son, and Friends of the Library, supported with modest amounts of money from the New South Wales State Library and from the Federal Government's Regional Development Australia Fund. They all deserve our thanks and appreciation.

The archive is an air-conditioned, humidity-controlled building with fireproof storage. The reading room overlooks the Bicentennial Gardens. Visitors can enjoy and utilise this facility, which includes wi-fi and access to the library's computers for all searching needs. Importantly, work continues to digitise the archive collection. At present this all comes free of charge to anyone wishing to search the archives. This is a fantastic opportunity extended by the generous Tumbarumba community and I encourage members and the public at large who suspect a Tumbarumba connection in their ancestry to get down to Tumbarumba and start searching. They will find it a welcoming place to enjoy a break from the city while indulging their interest in the detective work of tracking down their family history.

To those who live in or near Tumbarumba, I say: Get into the archives and see what turns up. Have you thought about becoming a member of your library? Maybe you have old documents which would find a good home there rather than disappearing in the tip. As a local, make your own connection and help drive the archive project even further. Tumbarumba, with its history of pioneer pastoralists, loggers, goldminers and

winemakers is a place worth delving into. Who knows, perhaps you will find your forebears were wild rodeo riders, or struck it rich on the goldfields and left you an inheritance. As American author and playwright Don Marquis once said:

We pay for the mistakes of our ancestors, and it seems only fair that they should leave us the money to pay with.

Let the past become the key to your future at Tumbarumba Archive.

### **SYDNEY SECOND AIRPORT SITE**

**Mr JOHN SIDOTI** (Drummoyne) [12.47 p.m.]: I speak today in support of the establishment of a second airport at Badgerys Creek in Sydney's west. State and Federal Governments have grappled with this issue since the 1940s. For example, in 1962 this Parliament also debated the need for a second airport. It was decided, even then, that a second airport would be needed as there was insufficient room for Kingsford Smith airport to expand to meet projected needs. Unfortunately for the people of New South Wales, this Parliament also determined then that the need was not urgent and that planning and construction could be deferred for at least 10 years.

It is now 52 years later, and the seemingly never-ending debate continues as the need for a second airport becomes more and more acute. Aircraft movements in and out of Sydney's existing airport have grown significantly, with total passenger movements more than tripling between 1985-86 and 2011-12, from 9.5 million to 36 million. Additionally, the amount of commercial and industrial air freight has dramatically increased. The building of a second airport at Badgerys Creek makes economic, social and environmental sense. First, it will alleviate the concentration of aircraft noise and congestion over the inner suburbs of Sydney as well as much of the traffic a working airport generates. More importantly, it will provide a much-needed service to the businesses and people in outer Sydney and surrounding areas.

Local businesses could save time and money if goods were delivered closer to their factories. The travelling public who now have to travel into the centre of the city to catch a plane—often at a cost greater than some of the airfares they purchase—would also greatly benefit. The construction of a second airport will also provide much-needed employment opportunities for people who live in the areas surrounding it. Many of those people now travel many hours to workplaces that are not close to their homes, local childcare centres or schools. The construction of another airport will also have a flow-on effect for the provision of other goods and services such as retail and food outlets and accommodation facilities.

Finally, I do not believe it is good to be so reliant on a single piece of infrastructure. We should diversify, as any good risk manager will advise. For example, what happens if there is a major industrial accident at Sydney Airport which renders it unusable, even if only for a relatively short period of a couple of weeks? We need another world-class airport with excellent facilities to meet current demand and future growth, and we need a backup plan. This is a win-win outcome for people across Sydney, providing much-needed infrastructure, services and employment for the people of New South Wales. I support the recent calls, from both sides of this House and from members of the Federal Government, to finally resolve this issue—to get the project off the ground, if members will excuse the pun, and start building the second airport this State desperately needs.

In conclusion, I have here a letter from the mayor of the City of Canada Bay. The council resolved at its meeting on 18 February 2014 to write to advise of its "complete support for the proposed second airport at Badgerys Creek as its development will deliver a significant long-term benefit to our community". The letter goes on to say that the Hon. Joe Hockey and the Hon. Warren Truss have said that a second airport makes economic sense. The letter goes on to say, "The incremental increase in the number of arrivals and departures from Sydney (Kingsford Smith) Airport will put pressure on the current curfew restrictions and will have a cumulative impact on the amenities of our residents who live below the current flight path."

In addition, the letter states that "more flights mean more traffic to and from the airport, much of that from Western Sydney, which will pass through our city and create more congestion on our roads". The letter goes on to state, "The establishment of a second airport is a major project that will underpin employment opportunities for Western Sydney and it should go ahead." It must of course occur in conjunction with sufficient transport infrastructure, including road, rail and freight networks. This project is totally supported. It was unanimously supported by the Labor-Greens dominated council, and I am happy to stand side by side with any members of my local council in support of a second airport for Sydney at Badgerys Creek.

### GUYRA COMMUNITY EVENTS

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL** (Northern Tablelands) [12.52 p.m.]: I laud the magnificent Guyra community in my electorate of Northern Tablelands. Guyra is a fiercely proud, active and growing rural community. Just yesterday I had the pleasure of attending the annual Guyra Seniors Ball, attended by more than 270 senior citizens from communities across the Northern Tablelands—such as Bingara, Warialda, Armidale, Walcha, Glen Innes, Tenterfield, Inverell and of course Guyra. The event was a wonderful celebration of the contribution seniors make to our local communities. I pay tribute to the Guyra Shire Council Home and Community Care [HACC] program staff Anna Lockyer, Wendy Warner and Sally Burey. They did a power of work this year to again organise such an outstanding ball.

It was good to catch up at the ball with Guyra Mayor Hans Hietbrink, Deputy Mayor Audrey McArdle and Councillor Dot Vickery. Together with General Manager Peter Stewart and Manager Bob Furze, they work very hard to grow their local community and always have their wonderful community at heart. The evening was punctuated by regular old-time favourite dances and music, including the waltz, the hokey pokey and the Pride of Erin. Among the many people taking to the floor was Aub Gillespie from Tenterfield. At 93 years young, Aub still cuts a mean figure on the dance floor. He was easily the most enthusiastic and popular dancer of the ball. Aub is a very generous and sincere man and loves to take young people under his wing and teach them how to dance. He said to me yesterday, "I have been on the dance floor since I was eight years old." Aub is a great man, and many Guyra Central School students are now much better dancers as a result of Aub's tutelage yesterday.

Entertainers Hazel, Charles and Peter Denovan had everyone singing along and tapping their feet, including students from Guyra Central School and St Mary of the Angels Catholic Primary School. Bill Wicks did a great job as master of ceremonies. It was a fantastic event that typified what not only the local Guyra community but also our other rural communities are about—that is, people coming together to celebrate the contribution made by seniors in our communities. We had a lot of fun doing so. While I am talking about Guyra it would be remiss of me not to mention the recent annual Guyra Show, which was a magnificent showcase of all the produce from the Guyra community.

**Mr Jai Rowell:** It's a great show.

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL:** The member for Wollondilly says that it is a great show, and I hope that he visits the show next year because it will be an absolute cracker, as was the show this year. Chris Sole, the Guyra Show Society president and treasurer, Dorothy Lockyer, who does all the secretarial work; and Rita Williams, the Guyra Citizen of the Year and vice president of the show society, all worked incredibly hard to put on another superb show. Despite the current difficult conditions on the land, I am happy to report to the House that the fine wool section—which is regarded as the finest in New South Wales outside the Sydney Royal Easter Show—had a record number of entries, as did the cattle classes. Given the conditions on the land at the moment, this is an incredible achievement.

The show was opened by Graham White, patron of the show and stalwart of the Guyra community and the show circuit in general. Jessica Grills was announced as the 2014 Miss Showgirl. She did a fantastic job representing the show society and the Guyra community at the zone 4 Sydney Royal Showgirl Competition finals at Barraba. While I was at the show I had the pleasure of opening the extension of the community hall, which doubles as the pavilion for the show. It benefited from some Community Building Partnership funding. The extension added some much-needed storage facilities to the building. Earlier in the year I was very happy, along with Deputy Premier Andrew Stoner, to announce \$30,000 of public reserves management funding for the show society to improve the kitchen at the hall. This will not only improve that facility but also add to its ability to cater for fabulous events such as the Guyra Seniors Ball. The Guyra community is thriving; it is a growing community. The tomato farm is looking to undertake a \$62 million expansion and to employ an extra 200-300 people. Local businesses such as this underpin what is a very resilient and robust local economy. It is a great community. It is an honour to represent it as a State member and I take great pleasure in visiting Guyra whenever I can.

### BLUE MOUNTAINS THREE SISTERS

**Mrs ROZA SAGE** (Blue Mountains) [12.57 p.m.]: The Three Sisters are an instantly recognisable icon of the Blue Mountains. No image of the Blue Mountains is complete without the Three Sisters being in the picture. Some may ask: What are the Three Sisters? They are a striking rock formation of three peaks on the

edge of the beautiful Jamison Valley. This area has been a part of Aboriginal life for tens of thousands of years. It is a highly valued Aboriginal place for the Gundungurra, Wiradjuri, Tharawal and Dharug nations. In particular, it is a special place for the women of these nations and was used as a ceremonial place.

I was delighted that the Minister for the Environment and Minister for Heritage, the Hon. Robyn Parker, came to Echo Point at Katoomba to announce that the Three Sisters in the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area had become the ninety-eighth Aboriginal place to be declared in New South Wales. The traditional custodians of this area are the Gundungurra people. It was the Gundungurra Aboriginal Heritage Association that nominated the Three Sisters for declaration as an Aboriginal place. Aunty Sharon Hall and Aunty Merle Williams, who were instrumental in this submission, were present at the announcement to accept a certificate of recognition from Minister Parker. Also present at the declaration were members of the Gundungurra tribal council, including Aunty Sharon Brown, and various other dignitaries from the area and our wonderful Aboriginal community.

The declaration of an Aboriginal place recognises the special cultural, social and historic significance of the site to the Aboriginal community. The Three Sisters is and was a place of convergence for not only the Gundungurra, as I said before, but also the Dharug, Wiradjuri and Tharawal nations. Significantly, this landmark and the valley area have a continuous living connection to culture from antiquity to this day. Aboriginal people often have expressed to me how important the connection to place and culture is to their wellbeing.

The weather was extremely hot as we started our day at Echo Point. The Muylang Dancers performed a welcome dance, much to the bemusement of the many tourists visiting the area. Soon quite a crowd was watching the proceedings and cameras were snapping left, right and centre, which demonstrates the interest that international tourists and others have in Indigenous culture. The ceremony then moved to the nearby Waradah Aboriginal Centre, which was a finalist in the NSW Tourism Awards, where men and women from the Waradah Dancers performed and formal speeches were given. That was followed by a lovely time during which we mixed and had refreshments.

The Three Sisters lookout at Echo Point is one of the most recognisable places in Australia and internationally. More than 600,000 visits are made to the site each year. Of course, as with all Aboriginal places, there is a wonderful Dreamtime story associated with the area. As told by the Gundungurra Tribal Council, one of the legends of the Three Sisters is from the Gundungurra Dreaming. Three beautiful sisters named Meehni, Wimlah and Gunnedoo once lived with the Gundungurra people in the Jamison Valley. The maidens were in love with three brothers from the neighbouring nation of the Dharug people, but marriage was forbidden by tribal law. The brothers were warriors and decided to take the maidens by force.

Tribal war forced the Kuradjuri, who was the clever man of the Gundungurra people, to turn the sisters into stone. He intended to restore them after the danger had passed and the war had ended. Unfortunately, the Kuradjuri was killed in the battle. To this day nobody has been able to break the spell and turn the three sisters back to their natural form. What a wonderful story. There are other Aboriginal legends about the formation of the Three Sisters, but that is my favourite. I encourage everyone to visit the Blue Mountains, to enjoy the breathtaking physical beauty of Echo Point and to learn about its fascinating history. The Waradah Aboriginal Centre is well worth a visit. It is home to many Aboriginal artefacts and is a great place to mix with local Aboriginal people and others.

### **PANTHERS ON THE PROWL FOUNDATION**

**Mrs TANYA DAVIES** (Mulgoa) [1.02 p.m.]: I draw the attention of the House to the continued good work of Panthers on the Prowl. The goal of Panthers on the Prowl is "the development of a social coalition of business, government, support agencies and sporting bodies in the local community with the common goal of enhancing opportunities for our young people and their families to develop self-esteem and self-worth and to become positive contributors to the community and society as a whole".

Panthers on the Prowl is the community arm of the Penrith Panthers national rugby league club. The Prowl, as it is affectionately known, has operated for 12 years and has six or seven programs running at all times. Aably led by chief executive officer and former Penrith Panthers first grade player Brad Waugh, the Prowl team includes Lawrence McDonnell, Venetia Lovett, Darren Horgan and Graham Collins. The Prowl facilitates on-site business experience, for example, at Abcoe Distributors where owner Dave O'Neill gives up much of his personal time to teach young men and women how to run a successful small business.

With the strong support of the board of the Penrith Panthers and especially the board chairman Mr Don Feltis, general manager of the Prowl, Brad Waugh, and his team developed an exciting program to take a small number of young men, Penrith Panthers players and community sponsors to walk the Kokoda Track. Led by formidable Kokoda expert the Hon. Charlie Lynn, MLC, the team trekked the 128 kilometre Kokoda Track in six days. Krystyna Pollard, a producer at Television Sydney, and her crew also travelled and trekked Kokoda to capture the personal journeys of these young men and the impact that the Australian Kokoda story has on the current generation.

In February this year the appropriately named *Kokoda: In the Footsteps of the Brave* documentary was broadcast by Television Sydney. The documentary was narrated by Penrith Panthers Executive General Manager Phil Gould. The seven year 11 boys from seven Western Sydney schools were Josh, Baeley, Tijman, Ashley, Dayvis, Travis and Jordon. The first memorial to our brave Australians on the track was especially moving for Dayvis and Jordon, whose great grandfathers fought on the battlefields in the hills of Kokoda. Penrith Panthers players Tim Grant and Jamie Soward and coach Ivan Cleary travelled with the young men and were positive and influential mentors. Making the experience all the more precious was the fact that the porters who travelled with the team were the great grandchildren of the famous Fuzzy Wuzzy Angels, who helped our wounded servicemen during the Kokoda campaign.

The Hon Charlie Lynn led the team. It was his seventieth trip in 22 years. He is driven to take people through the experience so that the story of Kokoda is never forgotten and to give young people confidence that they can conquer adversity. The Hon. Charlie Lynn declares that the young ones are now custodians of the spirit of Kokoda, which is about mateship, courage, endurance and sacrifice. The team thanks Justin Pascoe, Head of Business Development for the Panthers Group, who worked diligently to source sponsorship and to secure the deal with Television Sydney. The team is also grateful to the following additional supporters: Brad Draper from Newport Recruitment; ANZ Bank; the Penrith Panthers board; Craig Thompson and Russell Andrews from Hertz Penrith; Martin Cominotto from St Marys Martins Chemist; John Demestro and Co.; Asics; K Group; and Oak. The Hon. Charlie Lynn challenged the young men who took part in the trek with this message:

Our Aussie diggers fought at Kokoda so we would have an opportunity to fully reach our potential. When we do reach our potential we repay our debt.

That message has already had an impact: three out of the seven young men are now school captains. The young men feel they have achieved something very special. I had the good fortune of attending the premiere of the documentary at the Evan Theatre at Panthers World of Entertainment. I spoke to five of the young participants and their parents. The young men had been radically changed. During the experience something was forged in their characters that they will carry with them for the rest of their lives. They now know that they can overcome whatever crosses their paths in life if they just keep going. One young man said, "We hiked for 16 hours today. Back home I'm not even awake for 16 hours." Another said, "I thought we were struggling [doing Kokoda] but the soldiers were and we've got it easy." I thank Panthers on the Prowl, the sponsors and the men and women who helped give those young men this life-changing experience.

### INGLEBURN RAILWAY STATION UPGRADE

**Mr BRYAN DOYLE** (Campbelltown) [1.07 p.m.]: My Twitter comment of 22 February 2014 reads: "And so it begins ... our Ingleburn Station upgrade with 3 lifts is underway". It was great news as my friend and colleague the Minister for Transport, the Hon. Gladys Berejiklian, announced the formal beginning of the Ingleburn railway station upgrade. The upgrade is a long-awaited and much-needed improvement to a critical piece of infrastructure for the community of Campbelltown, and Ingleburn in particular. But it was not always so and perhaps not always meant to be.

My friend Councillor Bob Thompson, a long-time advocate of upgrading the station and installing lifts, circulated two petitions in support of the cause in 2000 and 2010. The official response was that there were no plans to install a lift at Ingleburn railway station. During the 2011 State election campaign I took up the fight for the delivery of the long-promised upgrade to this critical transport hub, which had been denied to the people of Ingleburn for two decades. Ingleburn railway station is a major transport hub that divides the central business district from the industrial area. It is of critical interest to my friends at the Ingleburn Chamber of Commerce and Industry as well as the Ingleburn Bowling Club on the western side of the station and Ingleburn Village Mowers and Power Tools, which is perhaps the best lawnmower shop in the Southern Hemisphere and is run by my good friend Geoff Grimes.

Ingleburn station had what perhaps were the steepest ramps anywhere. For the elderly, people in wheelchairs and mothers with prams they were difficult if not impossible to use. My good friend Eric Third, who lately has been known as Eric The Third, from the Macarthur Wheelchair Support Users Network, also has raised with me the difficulties that the Ingleburn station poses. I am very pleased that the Minister for Transport, the Hon. Gladys Berejiklian, is a frequent visitor. She inspected the station with Ken Barnard, Mrs Coral Barnard and Peter Enderby to see the difficulties firsthand.

Following community consultation, plans have been settled and initial site works have commenced for the upgrade, which will include three commuter lifts, covered walkways from the lifts to the station platforms, upgraded bicycle storage, improved station amenities, kiss-and-ride zones, and improved parking for people with disabilities. Those improvements are all part of the \$770 million Transport Access Program being delivered by the Minister for Transport to provide the most modern, safest and most accessible transport infrastructure possible. The upgrades also will protect the historical bunya pine that has overlooked the station since 1901. It has stood proudly as soldiers travelled from the Ingleburn Bardia Barracks and has witnessed Ingleburn thrive and prosper as a community. The Ingleburn station upgrade is fantastic news for the Ingleburn community. I know that people in my electorate are excited, as I am. I look forward to watching construction of this wonderful upgrade taking place in upcoming months. I commend the upgrade to the House.

### **REAL FUTURES FOUNDATION**

**Mr CRAIG BAUMANN** (Port Stephens—Parliamentary Secretary) [1.11 p.m.]: This afternoon I will speak about an incredible institution in my electorate with which I am proud to be associated. The Real Futures Foundation is a unique Port Stephens-only foundation that sponsors and encourages youth programs at the Tomaree High School and the St Philip's Christian College. I am the chairman of the Real Futures Foundation. The Real Futures programs have been developed in cooperation with teachers, mentors, business and community organisations and aim to help students to develop an independent desire to achieve success for themselves and their community. A key strategy is to initiate original and innovative programs for students that demonstrate the benefits of staying engaged in education, training or work. A commitment to those goals at the two schools, coupled with support and involvement from Port Stephens businesses and organisations, are the key ingredients in helping young people to make a positive transformation from their school years into the big wide adult world.

For employers, the Real Futures program aims to provide motivated and valued future employees. Caring for Australia's young people, based on the principles of mutual obligation and self-help, is a commitment that can be shared by all. Community benefits include developing a more supportive and responsible society, which in turn means a better living environment for all to enjoy. The Real Futures Foundation was formed just over 10 years ago with the guidance and support of the Beacon Foundation. John Bartlett, my predecessor as the Mayor of Port Stephens and later the member for Port Stephens, was the driving force behind the establishment of what was originally a Beacon Foundation program. I have been privileged to follow in John's footsteps. From those fledging days, the Real Futures Foundation has grown and evolved to support the youth programs of both schools. Over that time, the Tomaree High School became one of the first schools to be awarded the Beacon Platinum Alumni School of the Year, and this year St Philip's Christian College was awarded Platinum School status by the Beacon Foundation.

My electorate is a generous one: The Real Futures Foundation is sponsored by a number of businesses and community benefactors. The Soldiers Point Marina, through its owner and Real Futures treasurer Jeff D'Albora—a name not unknown in Sydney maritime circles—recently announced its continuation of sponsorship for the Real Futures program. With the support of \$60,000, which includes student scholarships, and another three-year commitment to the Real Futures program, our local students are assured of gaining an employment advantage and are assisted to make an easier transition from school to the workplace. Student scholarships to the value of \$10,000 will fund items such as books or tools for selected candidates. The \$50,000 funding supports many strategies currently in place, such as ready-for-work programs, industry workshops and work experience, to enable students to gain as much hands-on experience as possible before entering the workforce.

One of the key attributes that embraces the fundamental driving force and success of the Real Futures program is passion. We see this motivation manifested in every program gathering. We see it in the programs run by the foundation, we see it in the sponsors, volunteers and supporters, and we see it in the school executives, school coordinators and Real Futures ambassadors. It is when we see that passion in students who have had the opportunity to be part of a Real Futures program that we know how successful it has been. In the words of Rachel Morgan, who is a previous Real Futures ambassador at Tomaree:

I thought it would be a good thing to do to investigate ways of going from school to work. It gives ideas of where students want to go with their lives. It helped build my self confidence.

St Philip's Christian College has embraced Real Futures as an effective and worthwhile initiative that delivers. Selected students, usually from year 10, are encouraged to become ambassadors. The school's focus is twofold, but one is on students who, no matter what their family's economic or cultural background, are in danger of falling through the cracks. They may be disinterested, disengaged or just in need of some more intensive direction that would not normally be available in the traditional school situation. The Tomaree High School's ambassadors are recruited in year 10 and serve for a year. Their role is to help to cement links between the school and the community, to attend functions involving Real Futures and the community, and to help to run school programs, such as the breakfast club. As we know, many students start their day without breakfast and that could be linked to the socioeconomic status of their family or simply due to a lack of time because of constraints in busy teenagers' lives.

The teachers at the Tomaree High School and St Philip's Christian College recognised this reality and approached the Real Futures Foundation to help give their students fuel to start the day. At the Tomaree High School the breakfast club is run once a week with more than 100 students turning up for shared breakfasts consisting of toasts, cereals and juices and fruit. Student volunteers and Real Futures ambassadors run the breakfast with the help of staff and the costs are met by local businesses. I thank those schools for embracing this program, the committee for its continued good work and the many generous business sponsors and community benefactors who make the program possible. There is no ongoing government funding. I hope to update the House again sometime in the future on the continued and marvellous work of Real Futures.

### HEALTHY HEATHCOTE CHALLENGE

**Mr LEE EVANS** (Heathcote) [1.16 p.m.]: Last year on my birthday my wife gave me a very interesting birthday gift—a set of scales. Yes, one of those gifts that we question. Why, after 30 years of marriage, did my darling wife give me a set of scales? It caused me to look in the mirror. "Yes", I joke, "I'm twice the man she married." When I am around the house, I sit around the house. It was time to face up to what has been behind me for years—my weight. I thought, "Why don't I try to help others who are the same as me and start a Healthy Heathcote Challenge?" This year will be the year of focusing on my health and wellbeing and I hope others will join me. In October last year I started cutting down on everything that I enjoy eating and replaced it with fruit and vegetables. I started a vegetable patch at home, which produces heaps of fresh vegetables for my family to consume. I went to see the Minister for Mental Health and Minister for Healthy Lifestyles to discuss how his departments could help.

**Mr Kevin Anderson:** The Minister is in the Chamber.

**Mr LEE EVANS:** I am honoured that the Minister is in the Chamber. After several meetings with NSW Health, Get Healthy NSW and Medicare Local, we now have a full-blown community-based challenge. I have been speaking with constituents, many of whom are elderly, lonely and disengaged from the community. My hope is that by joining the Healthy Heathcote Challenge they will join with others in the same circumstances, bond, and make good friendships. Local councils, such as Sutherland Shire Council and Wollongong City Council, are supporting participants of the Healthy Heathcote Challenge by organising various activities throughout 2014. Local personal trainers and gymnasiums as well as health professionals have jumped at the opportunity to help people in Heathcote to become more aware of their health and to guide them towards a healthier lifestyle.

On the mental health side of the initiative, people in my electorate already have identified the benefits of becoming involved in the Healthy Heathcote Challenge. A lady who recently lost her husband was feeling remote and depressed. She has joined the Healthy Heathcote Challenge and we linked her to a group of senior strollers. She could not be happier as she is getting some gentle exercise and is meeting new friends. My original concept was to lose a couple of kilograms and eat healthier food, but it has become much, much more than that. Having a healthier constituency over the long term will reduce visits to hospitals and visits to doctors' surgeries. Through Medicare Local, NSW Health is very interested in the impact of a community with a healthier outlook. It is monitoring doctors in the area and gathering information on the short- and long-term health impacts in Heathcote.

My overall hope is that after 2014 we will be able to demonstrate that the challenge has had an impact on diabetes, hypertension and mental wellbeing. Technology that has come to light and which assists with statistics gathering is the Pebble, which is an advanced pedometer. It saves information during action of any type about the number of steps, swim strokes or any other activity being undertaken as well as blood pressure rates and the number of heartbeats. This device will upload the information to a computer so that users can gauge whether they are achieving their goals. Blood pressure and weight measurement monitoring stations have

been set up at convenient locations across Heathcote. The information gathered from these devices will be loaded directly onto the Medicare Locals' computer systems, enabling health professionals to gather statistics on whether a cohort is achieving its goals.

The first thought was to make this a weight challenge, but it is far more than that—it is an opportunity for people to take control of their lives. Although I will monitor how much weight is lost over the year, weight loss is not my focus. The focus is getting people involved in some kind of activity that they have not done for years. If during 2014 we can achieve a combined decline in blood pressure, loss of weight, fewer cases of diabetes and myriad other conditions, I will consider my job well done. The Minister for Healthy Lifestyles and Minister for Mental Health, the Hon. Kevin Humphries, would like this to be a model for electorates across New South Wales, and I hope that will be achieved. I thank him for his support and for the backup he has given me over the past 12 months.

**Mr KEVIN HUMPHRIES** (Barwon—Minister for Mental Health, Minister for Healthy Lifestyles, and Minister for Western New South Wales) [1.20 p.m.]: I acknowledge the healthy member for Heathcote and his endeavours to make lifestyle and behavioural change a community-based issue. It is not specifically a government issue or a clinician's issue; it is everybody's business to take responsibility for their own health. I congratulate him on doing that. As the member for Heathcote indicated, we will monitor the success of the program. More than 150 people signed up for it within the first week. We will put out this challenge to all electorates towards the end of the year. It is a good template for people to engage in non-threatening behavioural change. It does not matter how much we lose, every little bit helps.

### CASTLE HILL COMMUNITY EVENTS

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET** (Castle Hill) [1.21 p.m.]: I draw the attention of the House to a number of events that occurred in the Castle Hill community during the summer break and congratulate and commend some of the great work done by the various community groups in The Hills district in organising these events. The first event was the opening of The Hills Shire Council chambers in December last year, which was attended by my colleague the member for Baulkham Hills. The chambers were opened at their new premises in Bella Vista in the electorate of Baulkham Hills. It was a fitting move as it represented the great progress occurring in The Hills under the current Government. The council offices needed to be moved because of the construction of the North West Rail Link at Castle Hill Showground.

Progress made on the North West Rail Link is not limited to the Castle Hill Showground; The Hills district has become a hive of activity. The construction sites at the various stations have instilled confidence in government after many years of broken promises made by members opposite. I am sure I speak on behalf of my colleague the member for Baulkham Hills when saying what great progress there has been and how happy the communities are, which can be seen in people's faces when one walks down the streets. They know the Government is finally delivering on projects for our region.

The council chambers were formally opened by the Her Excellency Marie Bashir, the Governor, and the event was attended by a number of our colleagues, both Federal and State. Speaking of governors, I join with many to congratulate the new Governor-General designate, General Peter Cosgrove, on his appointment as head of state. As the Prime Minister said, General Cosgrove has given service to our country of the very highest order. I was dismayed that newspaper reports about the appropriateness of General Cosgrove's appointment did not mention his patronage of the Castle Hill leadership program. I appreciate the support General Cosgrove has given to that program, which he and the Premier launched in Castle Hill late last year.

Christmas in The Hills is a great local event. It is an evening of carols by candlelight that has become a major event for many families in the district. It was established the year before last and the second event last year attracted more than 8,000 locals. I particularly thank Gareth McRae, a stalwart of the Castle Hill and The Hills community, for putting together this concept and seeing it flourish under his leadership. He gathered a team of volunteers because he saw a need in the community. He has done a fantastic job developing a program that The Hills wider community has embraced. The team of volunteers meets every month, and my colleague the member for Baulkham Hills is a member of that team. Meetings have started already this year for the event marking Christmas 2014. Gareth McRae has worked hard to bring all the churches and community groups together on this committee, and he deserves a lot of credit for that.

This year, the masters of ceremony for Christmas in The Hills were Ron Wilson and Gareth McRae. The event was formally opened by Tim Mannah, of the Parramatta Eels, and Lauren Huxley. More than \$5,000

was raised for three local charities: Lifestart, a program offering early childhood intervention and school-age services for children living with disability or delay, their families and carers; Woodbury, a small, independent school for children with autism located in Baulkham Hills and catering for children aged four-and-a-half to 18 years; and Tallowood School, located in Kellyville, which is a Department of Education and Communities school for students with an intellectual disability from kindergarten to year 12. The work done by Gareth and the committee is supported by the three major churches in the Castle Hill region: Saint Bernadette's Catholic Church, St Paul's Anglican Church and Wesley Uniting Church. As I said, the event was a great success and I am sure it will continue to grow under the great leadership of Gareth McRae.

**Private members' statements concluded.**

*[Acting-Speaker (Ms Noreen Hay) left the chair at 1.26 p.m. The House resumed at 2.15 p.m.]*

**DISTINGUISHED VISITORS**

**The SPEAKER:** Today I welcome to the Speaker's gallery the Consul General of the People's Republic of China, Mr Li Huaxin, the Deputy Consul General, Ms Tang Ying, the Consul, Fun Aimin, and the Vice Consul, Mr Deng Cong, guests of the Deputy Premier, Minister for Trade and Investment, and Minister for Regional Infrastructure and Services.

**BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

**Notices of Motions**

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

**BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

**Routine of Business**

*[During notices of motions to be accorded priority.]*

**Mr Brad Hazzard:** Point of order: A practice seems to be building up of Opposition members making mini-speeches when they give their notices of motions. The purpose of giving notices of motions is to form the structure for a debate. I ask you, Madam Speaker, to—in the words of a former member—instruct members to cease their prolixity in notices of motions. There has to be some direction.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I note the comments of the Leader of the House. Although some notices of motions have become a little lengthy, I will not rule against them at this stage.

**QUESTION TIME**

*[Question time commenced at 2.21 p.m.]*

**WALLARAH 2 COAL PROJECT**

**Mr JOHN ROBERTSON:** My question is directed to the Premier. Before the last election the Premier emailed a Central Coast resident stating:

I especially appreciate the opportunity to re-iterate the Liberal Party's opposition to the (Wallahah 2) coal mining proposal and our determination, in office, to prevent it from going ahead.

Will the Premier keep his promise to the people of the Central Coast and refuse the Wallarah 2 coalmine lobbied for by his friend and Liberal fundraiser Nick Di Girolamo, who is now before the Independent Commission Against Corruption?

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

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL:** I stand by the answers I gave on this matter last week. What I refuse to do is twofold. First, I refuse to adopt the Eddie Obeid tactic being urged upon the Government by those opposite.

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

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL:** The days of Labor Ministers approving mines and benefitting themselves and their cronies are over. That is why last week we introduced legislation to claw back those assets. The second thing I refuse to do is take lectures from the Leader of the Opposition on integrity. That is a bit like the Commonwealth Bank asking for credit card advice from Craig Thompson.

**Dr Andrew McDonald:** Point of order: The question asked whether the Premier stood by the email. It did not prompt a personal attack on the Leader of the Opposition.

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

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL:** Absolutely relevant. The point is that we are not going to take integrity advice from a Leader of the Opposition who was put into the job by Eddie Obeid. We are not going to adopt the tactics—

**Mr Ron Hoenig:** Point of order—

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Members will come to order so that I can hear the point of order.

**Mr Ron Hoenig:** The Premier was asked a specific question about not only a promise but a pending development application.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I understand that.

**Mr Ron Hoenig:** I would ask the Premier to respond to that matter.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Heffron will resume his seat. As the member knows, the standing orders do not permit the Chair to intercede as to the specificity of a response to a question. The Premier is being relevant to the question.

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL:** The last time I got it wrong about the member for Randwick—

**Mr John Robertson:** Heffron.

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL:** Heffron. Thank you for that interjection. It makes my point. Last time I said the member for Heffron was not tainted by Eddie Obeid. I then checked, and of course he had taken footy tickets from Eddie Obeid.

**Mr Ron Hoenig:** Point of order—

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I hope that the member for Heffron is not taking the same point of order. I have ruled that the Premier is being relevant. What is the member's point of order?

**Mr Ron Hoenig:** Standing Order 73. If the Premier wishes—

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

**Mr Ron Hoenig:** If the Premier wishes to move a substantive motion in relation to me, I would be more than happy to debate it.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I note the member's point of order.

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL:** I do not want to upset the next Leader of the Labor Party in this House, but the one certainty about that football match is that Eddie Obeid would have had the winning ticket. He would have known that Souths were going to triumph, and he probably even would have known who was going to score the first try.

**Ms Linda Burney:** Point of order: My point of order is taken under Standing Order 129. This is a serious issue, and the Premier's making jokes about it does not help the tenor of this debate.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Premier is being relevant to the question.

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL:** The gallery needs to understand what is going on here.

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

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL:** Over the past year the gallery has seen the revelations of the Independent Commission Against Corruption.

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

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL:** The Independent Commission Against Corruption has described what Eddie Obeid and Ian Macdonald did as the worst corruption in this State since the Rum Corps.

**Mr John Robertson:** Point of order—

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

**Mr John Robertson:** It is relevance, pursuant to Standing Order 129. This is a question about Wallarah 2 coalmine and an email to a Central Coast resident.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Leader of the Opposition is taking the same point of order as that taken by the member for Canterbury. The Leader of the Opposition will resume his seat.

**Mr John Robertson:** As much as the Premier goes out of his way to avoid it, I ask him whether he will meet his promise in the email.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Leader of the Opposition will resume his seat. I caution the Leader of the Opposition to comply with directions from the Chair.

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL:** What the Labor Party wants us to do is repeat the sins and mistakes of the past Government. What the Labor Party wants us to do is adopt the same tactics that it did. We came to office offering better integrity and honesty in government, and we are delivering it. In part, we are delivering it by scrapping part 3A, which we pledged to scrap before the election campaign.

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

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL:** Equally, we are ensuring that never again will taxpayers get ripped off by this Government in the way the previous Government ripped them off—corruptly, deviously, and with the connivance of members sitting on benches in this Chamber—by ensuring that all major projects, including mining projects, are determined on their social, economic and environmental merits by an independent, arm's-length Planning Assessment Commission.

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

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL:** That has to be the lesson of the past 16 years of corrupt practices by those opposite. We are drawing a line: we are implementing the recommendations of the Independent Commission Against Corruption, and we are ensuring that the public knows that in future these matters will be decided on merits, not on the merits of Labor mates.

## JOBS GROWTH

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** My question is directed to the Premier. How is the Government encouraging jobs growth in New South Wales?

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

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL:** I thank the member for Bathurst for his question and commend his ongoing interest in the creation of jobs, not just in Bathurst but in the Central West because his electorate, like other electorates, has been affected by job losses in recent times because of economic conditions. So it is great

that the first question today on a serious issue comes from this side of the House. We all understand that this is a difficult time for many people and workers across the State as the national economy undergoes structural change, often driven by global economic trends. The sort of large-scale restructuring that is occurring does not come without pain, but I have to say I have supreme confidence in the capacity of New South Wales-based businesses to innovate and thrive in whatever circumstances they face.

We have some good examples of the way in which parts of this State have responded to those challenges in the past. There is no better example—for the benefit of the member for Newcastle and other members representing Newcastle electorates—than the way in which that city bounced back after the closure of the BHP steelworks. That is the type of fortitude that is evident. Despite weak global economic conditions, the New South Wales economy remains relatively resilient. We have the second-lowest unemployment rate in the nation. More than 90,000 jobs have been created in New South Wales since the Liberal-Nationals Coalition came to office in 2011.

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

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL:** We have helped turn around Labor's legacy. As the member for Camden will have an opportunity to highlight later, New South Wales had the lowest jobs growth rate for a decade under those opposite. Why is it important for us to ensure that there is confidence to create jobs in New South Wales? That is why we are determined to get on and continue to fight and do all we can to help those workers affected by recent restructures and also create new employment opportunities.

Today I announced an extension to our Jobs Action Plan. The Fresh Start Support payroll tax rebate will mean that businesses that employ workers who have recently lost their jobs through large-scale restructures will be eligible for a \$6,000 payroll tax rebate. The Fresh Start Support payroll tax rebate includes the existing \$5,000 rebate already available under the New South Wales Government's Jobs Action Plan. The existing Jobs Action Plan provides a payroll tax rebate to businesses that employ new workers in new eligible employment, paid in two parts, at 12 months and 24 months after the employee is hired. The Fresh Start Support Scheme announced today means that an employer can be listed as a designated employer, and former employees of that designated employer will activate the Fresh Start Scheme \$1,000 supplement when taken on by a new employer.

Initial guidelines for the scheme state that a "designated employer" is one that has made 100 or more employees redundant in the case of metropolitan employers or, in the case employers in the Bathurst electorate and other parts of rural and regional New South Wales, the number of employees is set at 50. The criteria can and will be applied flexibly where large-scale retrenchments have had an inordinate impact on a particular region, occupational field or industry. We are proud of our Jobs Action Plan and this new scheme provides extra incentive for businesses to hire workers who have recently lost their jobs. Those very helpful incentives aside, the best thing government can do for jobs is to provide a strong economy and create the conditions where businesses have confidence to invest.

Gone are the days under those opposite. When they ran over budget their response was to put up fees, charges and taxes and make New South Wales less competitive than other States in which to invest. Since coming to office we have been working hard to invest in the drivers that will grow the New South Wales economy. Our \$60 billion infrastructure program is creating jobs right across the State—the Pacific Highway and Princes Highway, which are under construction, Bridges for the Bush, the North West Rail Link and South West Rail Link, and WestConnex, which is about to start, and hospitals across the length and breadth not just of the city but of the State. Jillian the Builder is doing a fantastic job in ensuring that our health infrastructure is up to scratch. The Government has revived the housing sector so that new housing approvals are now double what they were under Labor in 2009. Twice as many homes are being built and that means more jobs and incomes for tradies and their families, particularly in Western Sydney. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

Jobs is the name of the game, and it is terrific that our tourism sector is powering ahead. I say in the presence of my good friend the Consul General of China that the biggest number of tourists to this State is from China. Chinese tourists also happen to be the highest spending tourists, so we welcome them by the 737s, the 747s, and whatever size plane they travel on. They are helping to create and sustain local jobs, whether it is our retailers, hotels, taxis, buses and all those wonderful things they do when they are here. That is one of the reasons why earlier this week we announced that the last Socceroos match before they head off to the FIFA World Cup in Brazil will be on 26 May at the ANZ Stadium. People who live in Sydney or anywhere in New South Wales will have a chance to say farewell and good luck as they head off to Brazil.

Those opposite do not have a pro-jobs policy except in relation to their own jobs on the front bench. They oppose the Government every step of the way. They opposed the recycling of assets to assist the Government to build infrastructure that they failed to build and that is helping us build infrastructure across the State. It was a recycling approach to assets that the Treasurer held up to the G20 Ministers as the benchmark for what other economies around the world ought to be doing. Of course, last year in a moment of honesty the Leader of the Opposition revealed his true jobs plan was simply to shut down the coal industry, not recognising the fact that I am prepared to go overseas to attract trade investment to this State, not recognising that other Premiers are doing that to attract jobs and, importantly, not recognising approximately one in five jobs in this State relies on trade and investment. Of course, Labor members support the carbon tax—that job-deadening tax introduced by their Federal counterparts.

## **WALLARAH 2 COAL PROJECT AND MR NICK DI GIROLAMO**

**Mr PAUL LYNCH:** My question is directed to the Deputy Premier. In June 2012 the Deputy Premier spent more than \$21,000 on a taxpayer-funded trip to Korea where he met with Korea Resources Corporation, the proponent of the Wallarah 2 coalmine. What other meetings has he or his office had regarding the Wallarah 2 coalmine, including meetings with lobbyist Nick Di Girolamo who is now before the Independent Commission Against Corruption?

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The House will come to order.

**Mr Ryan Park:** Bring him the notes.

**Ms Linda Burney:** Get him the notes.

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

**Mr ANDREW STONER:** Are Opposition members interested or not? First, I make no apologies for representing New South Wales as a destination for investment from our major trading partners around the world. Indeed, during a trade mission in June 2012 to both South Korea—

**Mr Ryan Park:** A junket.

**Mr ANDREW STONER:** He calls it a junket. The Premier has just told the House that one in five jobs in our economy is related to export and the member for Keira does not want to promote—

**Mr Paul Lynch:** What about Wallarah 2?

**Mr ANDREW STONER:** Opposition members do not want to promote New South Wales as a place for investment and a source for top-quality exports to our major trading partners. It is more of the job-killing policy of those opposite. In June 2012 when on a trade mission in Seoul I met with the president of Kores to continue to strengthen the relationship of New South Wales with South Korea, particularly as a place for investment. I advise the House that Mr Di Girolamo had no involvement in this meeting. In fact, to the best of my recollection, I have never met Mr Di Girolamo.

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

**Mr ANDREW STONER:** I advise the House that the only contact my office has had with Mr Di Girolamo is via a request for both the Premier and I to meet with the president of Kores in December 2012. However, the Premier and I were both unavailable on the requested date and the meeting did not proceed.

## **ELECTRICITY ASSETS SALE**

**Mr GREG APLIN:** My question is addressed to the Treasurer, and Minister for Industrial Relations. How is the Government protecting the interests of the taxpayers of New South Wales?

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** I thank the member for Albury for his incredible work for his community over a long time. The O'Farrell Government is determined to look after the interests of taxpayers across the State day in, day out. It is part of our DNA and we will continue to do that. In relation to the sale to AGL of the

Macquarie Generation assets we note today that the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission [ACCC] ruled on the bid and we happily say that we absolutely accept the decision. The bid was made conditional on ACCC clearance; it did not provide that clearance.

I have said very clearly from day one that we would proceed with AGL only if the ACCC provided clearance. So in its current form we will not be proceeding with the sale. I have also said consistently while we have been undertaking the asset recycling transactions that we would proceed with the sale or lease of State-owned assets only if we receive proceeds about retention value because that is a responsible thing to do. I will return to that shortly.

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

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** That is fair for the taxpayers of New South Wales. It is protecting their assets and making sure that if we decide to transfer them we do so only if we receive proceeds that are above retention value. The taxpayers of New South Wales should be assured that we are acting in their interests every day, every single time.

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

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** There is a little bit of a contrast with another group that was involved in asset transactions. I do not know who members might think it is but those opposite have experience and it is quite a contrast.

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

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** In the lead-up to the last two elections, the former Government said it was not going to proceed with any asset transactions in the electricity sector. In the lead-up to the 2007 election the then Premier, Morris Iemma—the Leader of the Opposition got rid of that Premier—said that they were not going to do anything in electricity, but they then spent four years trying to get rid of the assets. They came up with a model that only they could come up with, and it was called the gentrader model.

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

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** The former member for Fairfield, I think, was one of the architects, and the former Treasurer and finance Minister were involved as well. I do not know who the finance Minister was.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Treasurer does not need assistance from Government members.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** But when it got to the stage where the directors of the companies had a look at the deal, they said, "Hang on, this deal stinks". Not only did they raise concerns but eight of them, on the night before the deal was signed, resigned.

**Mr Jamie Parker:** And good on them for it.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** Absolutely. The member for Balmain says, "Good on them". I thank them for standing up for the interests of the New South Wales taxpayers at that point in time; that is exactly what they did.

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

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** What did that responsible Government do at that point? Did they say, "Hang on, we should have a look at this. This deal might not be in the interests of the taxpayers of New South Wales." No, no, no. They got rid of those directors and they found other directors, actually associated with the transaction.

**Ms Gladys Berejiklian:** Name them.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** I have named them plenty of times before—and they ticked the deal. On top of that, the former Government introduced a new word to the lexicon of New South Wales: prorogue.

**Mr Richard Amery:** Point of order—

**Mr Barry O'Farrell:** Richard objects to the new word.

**Mr Richard Amery:** Your emails are not worth the paper they're not written on.

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

**Mr Richard Amery:** The member for Albury asked the Treasurer what he was doing for the taxpayers of New South Wales. The Treasurer has given a broad-ranging answer about electricity prices.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The member for Mount Druitt will resume his seat. There is no point of order. The Treasurer is being relevant to the question.

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** The directors stood up to them, and then the Parliament asked two questions of them. What did they do in a democracy? They shut down Parliament. The *pièce de résistance* was when the member for Maroubra was signing off on the deal. When the bids came in, three bids were below the retention value. What did they do? They ticked the box. Labor said it was happy to sell assets of the State that were below the retention value. That is what Labor did. The good news for the people of New South Wales is that the Coalition will not do that. We will make responsible decisions. We will continue to look for funds to build for the people of New South Wales the backlog of infrastructure left by Labor. We are getting on with the job and we will continue to do so, but we will not do it at any price. We will act in the interests of the people of New South Wales.

#### **WALLARAH 2 COAL PROJECT AND MR NICK DI GIROLAMO**

**Mr MICHAEL DALEY:** My question is directed to the Treasurer. In November 2011, just months after a new planning application was lodged for the Wallarah 2 coalmine, the Treasurer spent almost \$20,000 on a taxpayer-funded trip to Korea. What meetings has the Treasurer or members of his office had regarding the Wallarah 2 coalmine, including with people like lobbyist Nick Di Girolamo, who is now before the Independent Commission Against Corruption?

**Mr MIKE BAIRD:** None.

#### **MAJOR EVENTS AND EXHIBITIONS**

**Mr JONATHAN O'DEA:** My question is addressed to the Deputy Premier. How is the Government supporting jobs in the exhibition and events industry?

**Mr ANDREW STONER:** I thank the member for Davidson for a very good question.

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

**Mr ANDREW STONER:** The Liberal-Nationals Government came to office with a promise to make the New South Wales economy number one again. We did so because we care about jobs for the people of New South Wales.

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

**Mr ANDREW STONER:** This Government is interested in the wellbeing and prosperity of the citizens of this State. I am sorry to say the only jobs that the former Labor Government was interested in were their own jobs. That is why they languish over there, a rump of the once proud Labor Party.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! There is too much audible conversation from Government members.

**Mr ANDREW STONER:** But enough of that. Let me talk about the exhibitions, events and conventions industry in New South Wales. Exhibitions and events are worth \$100 million to the New South Wales economy attracting more than 500,000 people every year.

**Mr Barry Collier:** They were coming here anyway.

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

**Mr ANDREW STONER:** This industry provides thousands of jobs. He hates the fact that we are investing in new and updated facilities for Sydney, just like Labor hates coalmining, trade missions and everything associated with growing the New South Wales economy.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! This is not an opportunity for the member for Keira to debate or discuss the matter. Opposition members will come to order.

**Mr ANDREW STONER:** The member for Miranda should have stayed retired.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! All Opposition members who have been placed on one call to order are now deemed to be on three calls to order. If they are called to order again, they will be removed from the Chamber for the rest of the day. I have been very tolerant but Opposition members are being disorderly. The member for Cessnock is in my line of sight and hearing; he should remain silent.

**Mr ANDREW STONER:** The exhibitions and events industry provides tens of thousands of jobs in this State for builders, designers, electricians, hospitality staff, labourers, and audiovisual and staging experts, to name just a few. In fact, just one of the exhibitions and events hosted in this State, the Sydney International Boat Show, provides work for around 5,000 people. There are also international events and conventions, including from China. I acknowledge my friend Mr Li Huaxin, Consul General of the People's Republic of China, and his colleagues Tang Ying, Fu Aimin and Deng Cong, who are attending question time today. I apologise for the bad behaviour of members opposite.

Events that have been staged in New South Wales include Perfect China, which held its leadership seminar in Sydney in July 2012. It attracted more than 3,000 delegates, who also engaged in other activities like the Sydney Harbour Bridge climb, a harbour cruise and a visit to a working sheep station. In 2012 I had the pleasure of opening the worldwide Chinese Life Insurance Congress in Sydney, the first time it had been held outside Asia. That is why this Government is getting on with the job of revitalising our convention, exhibition and entertainment precinct at Darling Harbour with a \$1 billion investment in regeneration. This investment will provide \$5 billion in economic benefits for our State over 25 years, 3,700 jobs during construction and a further 4,000 jobs on completion. That is why we also have delivered on another commitment associated with this transformation, that is, for the interim facilities at Glebe Island.

I was delighted to perform the opening of the temporary Sydney Exhibition Centre at Glebe Island—which we completed in just six months, on time and on budget—for the first event of the 2014 season, the Reed Gift Fair, attended by over 20,000 people. The fair and other exhibitions like it are critical to the success of many businesspeople across New South Wales, including regional New South Wales. I had the pleasure of sharing the first ferry to Glebe Island for that event with the boys from Bee Dee Bags in Wagga Wagga who were to sell their wares at that exhibition.

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

**Mr ANDREW STONER:** The facility is so good that it is attracting events other than exhibitions, including last Wednesday night when the National Rugby League held its biggest-ever season launch in that magnificent facility. [*Extension of time granted.*]

I thank the member for Davidson and his colleagues, who are obviously interested in the economy and jobs for the people of New South Wales. As I said, the National Rugby League held its season launch at the temporary facility at Glebe Island just last week. The feedback from industry has been fantastic, including from the Exhibition and Events Association of Australasia where Chief Executive Joyce DiMascio stated:

This has been a big team effort and the Exhibition and Event Association of Australasia [EEAA] would like to thank New South Wales Deputy Premier Andrew Stoner for backing this project and ensuring our members have a place to do business in 2014, 2015 and 2016 while the permanent facilities at Darling Harbour are being built.

Debbie Evans, managing director of Reed Exhibitions Australia, stated:

Our customers love it; the natural light and environment is highly conducive to conducting business.

It is a terrific interim facility, as we prepare Australia's largest, state-of-the-art integrated convention, exhibition and entertainment precinct at Darling Harbour. The Opposition's position in relation to the stimulation of this industry was revealed by the Leader of the Opposition in an interview with the *Daily Telegraph* on 6 October 2013. The Leader of the Opposition stated he wanted to cancel projects like the Darling Harbour redevelopment. The Leader of the Opposition wants to kill progress in the industry.

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

**Mr ANDREW STONER:** In so doing the Leader of the Opposition opposes the major international events that New South Wales has secured for the new international convention centre.

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

**Mr ANDREW STONER:** It will bring over 11,000 delegates to Sydney, fill hotels and restaurants and provide an economic boost of \$50 million to the New South Wales economy. That is in contrast to the economic policy of those opposite.

### WALLARAH 2 COAL PROJECT AND MR NICK DI GIROLAMO

**Mr JOHN ROBERTSON:** My question is directed to the Premier. The former resources Minister, who is now appearing before the Independent Commission Against Corruption, spent more than \$19,000 on a taxpayer-funded trip to Korea in late 2012 where he met with Wallarah 2 proponent Kores Resources Inc. How can the Premier claim that the decision about the Wallarah 2 coal project is being made at arm's length, given the numerous meetings held with Kores Resources, Nick Di Girolamo, the Premier and his office and Cabinet Ministers?

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The House will come to order.

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL:** The member for Terrigal is present in the House. I am happy to say this in front of the member: However many meetings he had or anyone else had about this matter, the fact is that under the terms of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act and the major project assessment process put in place by this Government the matter will be decided by the independent Planning Assessment Commission on environmental, economic and social grounds.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I call the member for Marrickville to order. I warn the member for Macquarie Fields and the member for Cessnock that they are already on three calls to order.

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL:** The Opposition cannot on the one hand accuse me of interfering and then on the other hand accuse me of not honouring election promises. The fact is that this Government is clear in its direction: The matter will be decided by the independent Planning Assessment Commission along with other major projects and mines on the basis of merit, as set out in section 79C—

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

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL:** —of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act. That is the way it should be.

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

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL:** Unlike those opposite, led by the spawn of Eddie Obeid, this Government is determined to draw a line on the corruption that existed when those opposite were in government.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I warn Opposition members that they are on three calls to order.

**Ms Sonia Hornery:** Point of order—

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The House will come to order so that I can hear the point of order, if there is one.

**Ms Sonia Hornery:** There is.

**The SPEAKER:** I am sure that the member for Wallsend, unlike some of her colleagues, has a valid point of order.

**Ms Sonia Hornery:** My point of order relates to Standing Order 129, relevance.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I note the point of order. I ask the Premier to return to the leave of the question.

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL:** Section 79C of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act is incredibly relevant because it provides that this matter and other major projects will be determined on their merits and not in the manner they were determined by those opposite, as found by the Independent Commission Against Corruption. Despite the fact that in 2009 the Independent Commission Against Corruption identified risks in direct decision-making under part 3A and other sections used by those opposite and despite front-page stories in Fairfax newspapers, the Leader of the Opposition does not deny that he did not lift a finger.

Was there a referral to the Independent Commission Against Corruption by the Leader of the Opposition, senior Cabinet members or anyone in the Labor Party on those matters? No. It took a report commissioned by the former Minister for Resources and Energy referred to the Independent Commission Against Corruption to unveil all this corruption, which may well have cost taxpayers in the State more than \$100 million. This Government is absolutely determined to draw a line.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I remind the Leader of the Opposition that he is already is on three calls to order.

**Mr BARRY O'FARRELL:** That means that these matters will be decided on merit. Every other week Opposition spokespeople condemn the Government for decisions the Planning Assessment Commission has made to allow mines and other projects to proceed, but they do not refer to decisions such as the refusal of Apex Energy's application for coal seam gas mining in the southern catchment. The same independent process ensured that that project did not proceed because of concerns about water. It is a merit-based selection process at arm's length from government. It is not directed by government. That process was set in place by this Government because we never want to see a repeat of the Obeid-Macdonald corruption. It may be acceptable to those opposite, who sat through it and did nothing, and it may be acceptable to the Leader of the Opposition, who was put in his job as the last act of Eddie Obeid as a member of Parliament, but it is unacceptable to this Government and to people outside this Chamber.

## HOUSING INDUSTRY

**Mr DAVID ELLIOTT:** I address my question to the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Infrastructure NSW. How is the Government supporting jobs in the housing industry?

**Mr Nick Lalich:** I don't think they are.

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

**Mr BRAD HAZZARD:** You would not know because nobody on that side of the Chamber did the job when you were in government.

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

**Mr BRAD HAZZARD:** I thank the member for Baulkham Hills for his question. I also thank the Liberal members in Western Sydney and all Coalition members, who are strongly supportive of jobs and housing. Building houses means jobs and opportunities for families to buy into an area that they could not buy into under the former Labor Government. The latest housing figures indicate that in Sydney and New South Wales it is boom time for housing.

**Mr Barry Collier:** I don't like Mondays.

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

**Mr BRAD HAZZARD:** You do not like any day because you do not like working at all. Over the next 20 to 25 years we are expecting a population increase of around 1.3 million people. That is a prediction; I expect the numbers will increase. Under the former Labor Government there was a pronouncement by a former Premier who said, "Sydney is full." He ensured that no money went into infrastructure and he did not make any serious effort to encourage the housing industry to build in Sydney or in New South Wales.

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

**Mr BRAD HAZZARD:** We saw a complete drop in the number of houses to the point where, under former housing Minister Keneally, who later became Premier for a short time, we had the lowest housing numbers in decades.

**Mr John Robertson:** I wouldn't worry about that.

**Mr BRAD HAZZARD:** The member for Blacktown should not talk. I recently visited Bunya.

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

**Mr BRAD HAZZARD:** For those in the public gallery who do not know, that is the Leader of the Opposition. You may not recognise him; the residents of his own electorate do not recognise him. When I visited Bunya, I was told by the community that they wished the former Labor Government had done more to provide housing.

**Mr John Robertson:** Is that right, Brad?

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

**Mr BRAD HAZZARD:** I spoke to families in the electorate of the Leader of the Opposition. They are good people. I spoke to a couple of ladies, both of whom are nurses and one of whom was a number of months pregnant. They told me that each morning they go to the Landcom office and ask when the next release of housing will be made available. I spoke to the husband of one and another gentleman who made it clear that they were disappointed that under the former Government not enough housing was supplied. That is the bottom line. They also said they had not seen the member for Blacktown around.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I remind the Leader of the Opposition that he is already on three calls to order.

**Mr BRAD HAZZARD:** The bottom line is that we have seen 47,900—

**Mr John Robertson:** How many houses are there at Bunya?

**Mr BRAD HAZZARD:** Actually, Bunya has about 800 homes.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Minister will not respond to interjections. He will direct his comments through the Chair.

**Mr BRAD HAZZARD:** There are about 650 of 800. I know more about your electorate than you could know in 1,000 years because you do not spend much time there.

**Mr John Robertson:** I live there, you boofhead.

**Mr BRAD HAZZARD:** Your constituents do not know you live there.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I direct the Leader of the Opposition to remove himself from the Chamber until the conclusion of question time.

*[Pursuant to sessional order the member for Blacktown left the Chamber at 2.59 p.m.]*

**Mr BRAD HAZZARD:** His constituents will be pleased he is out of the Chamber again. They cannot find him out there and now we cannot find him in here.

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

[Pursuant to sessional order the member for Maroubra left the Chamber at 3.00 p.m.]

**Mr BRAD HAZZARD:** I understand why members opposite do not want to hear the good news. They do not want to hear that under this Government their constituents are being offered a lot more opportunities for housing. Under the Kristina Keneally Government the number of housing approvals got down to 26,900. That figure was almost doubled last year at nearly 48,000. We have done what the former Labor Government failed to do, that is, to deliver for the people of Sydney and New South Wales. We recognised at the outset that there were problems because the former Premier indicated— [*Extension of time granted.*]

As soon as we came to office we recognised a major problem following 16 years of Labor governments. We looked at why so many rezoning announcements were made under a succession of former planning Ministers but they did not achieve the necessary numbers of houses. We asked the Department of Planning to produce at least 40 examples of that. We sat down with them and a group of Ministers identified the issues, which were particularly around a lack of funding for infrastructure. With the help of the great Premier and Treasurer, the Government will invest \$500 million in infrastructure over a four-year period.

Upgrades to roads in the western suburbs that Labor members probably would not recognise these days, such as Camden Valley Way, Richmond Road, Schofields Road and Erskine Park Road, are all funded. People taking a drive down Camden Valley Way will see massive development occurring. The road is being worked on and a development is being built right next door.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Members will come to order.

**Mr BRAD HAZZARD:** The Stockland development is known as Willowdale. The chair of Stockland informed me that his company, like so many others, abandoned New South Wales under the former Labor Government. They were not buying properties in New South Wales. They are now all back and buying land. We are moving development forward, working across agencies and providing infrastructure. We are working to provide homes for the people of Sydney and New South Wales.

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

**Mr BRAD HAZZARD:** The net result is we now have a massive increase in housing numbers. As I said, new housing approvals are almost double the number they were reduced to under the former Labor Government. I say to the people of Sydney and New South Wales that the O'Farrell Liberal-Nationals Government will continue to work hard to get them more homes. The name of the game is jobs and housing opportunities for New South Wales.

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

**Ms LINDA BURNEY:** My question is directed to the Minister for Family and Community Services. It is now one year since the Minister wrote to her department instructing them to fill all caseworker vacancies. Why has the vacancy rate increased and the percentage of children at significant risk of harm receiving a face-to-face visit from caseworkers decreased?

**Ms PRU GOWARD:** Congratulations, member for Canterbury, you have found the website.

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

**Ms PRU GOWARD:** The data has been on the website for three or four days but the member for Canterbury is off to not a bad start for a slow learner. Let us look at the facts. Under Labor only 21 per cent of at-risk children were being seen.

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

**Ms PRU GOWARD:** The Ombudsman said that under former failed Minister Linda Burney in 2010 there was a 55 per cent drop in the number of face-to-face responses to reported children at risk.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Minister does not need the assistance of Government members.

**Ms PRU GOWARD:** He also said that only 21 per cent of children received a face-to-face assessment. That is fewer than 13,000 children. The second fact is that under this Government more than 27 per cent of those children are now being seen. The figures are 27 per cent versus 21 per cent. More than 18,000 face-to-face assessments are conducted per year under this Government compared with fewer than 13,000 under the former Government. What a disgrace they were. I want our caseworkers to know how much we appreciate their hard work and the job that they do. They are doing so much better than they were under the failed former Minister.

**Ms Carmel Tebbutt:** Point of order: Standing Order 75 makes it clear that members are to be referred to by their correct titles. The Minister constantly refers to members incorrectly. It is offensive and unnecessary. I ask you to ask the Minister to adhere to the standing orders.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I uphold the point of order. I ask the Minister to refer to members by their correct titles.

**Ms PRU GOWARD:** In 2010 things were so bad under the leadership of the member for Canterbury and the former failed Minister that staff lived in fear of her regime.

**Ms Carmel Tebbutt:** Point of order—

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Is the member's point of order taken on the same basis as her previous point of order?

**Ms Carmel Tebbutt:** Yes.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I uphold the point of order. I ask the Minister to refer to members by their correct titles.

**Ms PRU GOWARD:** In an article published in the *Sunday Telegraph* a source said:

If the child is killed or seriously injured, if we say we were too busy to go out and see the child, we don't get blamed, but if we do go out and make a mistake, we will get blamed.

How appalling. That was under the regime of the member for Canterbury.

**Ms Linda Burney:** Point of order: My point of order is relevance under Standing Order 129. My question was about the number of caseworker vacancies which has increased and the number of visits which has decreased.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Minister is being relevant to the question asked. The member for Canterbury will resume her seat.

**Ms Linda Burney:** The Minister needs to take responsibility for her regime and not be so insulting.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! I direct the member for Canterbury to remove herself from the Chamber until the conclusion of question time.

[Pursuant to sessional order the member for Canterbury left the Chamber at 3.06 p.m.]

**Ms PRU GOWARD:** Let us get back to the facts. In one quarter alone we have reduced the caseworker vacancy rate from 13 per cent to 11 per cent.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Government members will come to order.

**Ms PRU GOWARD:** How does that compare with the former Minister's record? She is not in the Chamber to hear this because she would be ashamed. This is the final fact: How many vacancies does the Ombudsman say there were in 2010 under the former regime? Can anyone guess? Can I have a bid on 200 or 300?

**Dr Andrew McDonald:** Point of order: It is disorderly for the Minister to canvass answers from the members.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! The Minister will refrain from doing that because it encourages disorderly conduct. The Minister will direct her comments through the Chair.

**Ms PRU GOWARD:** The number of vacancies was 497. Members opposite just cannot believe it. They do not like admitting we are doing better than they did. They cannot stomach that a conservative government is doing better in its social policy than they ever could.

### ALCOHOL- AND DRUG-RELATED VIOLENCE

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN:** My question is addressed to the Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Hospitality and Racing, and Minister for the Arts. Will the Minister report on the first weekend of the Government's latest initiative to crack down on alcohol- and drug-fuelled violence?

**Mr GEORGE SOURIS:** On 24 February the newly created Sydney CBD Entertainment Precinct, covering more than 1,300 licensed venues in Kings Cross, parts of Surry Hills and Darlinghurst, The Rocks in the north and Cockle Bay, came into effect. New laws requiring 258 licensed venues throughout the newly created precinct came into effect requiring these venues to enforce a 1.30 a.m. lockout and to cease service of alcohol at 3.00 a.m. These restrictions, together with a statewide ban on takeaway alcohol after 10.00 p.m., were recently passed by a recalled Parliament to help reduce alcohol- and drug-fuelled harm. The first major test of the new laws occurred last Friday and Saturday nights, coinciding with Mardi Gras weekend which saw tens of thousands of extra patrons in the central business district.

The Office of Liquor, Gaming and Racing and police were out in numbers focusing on enforcement of the new laws and to ensure licensed premises adopted good management practices. I am pleased to say that the Office of Liquor, Gaming and Racing and police reported high levels of compliance from licensed premises. The Office of Liquor, Gaming and Racing conducted 164 venue inspections over Friday and Saturday nights. No breaches of the 3.00 a.m. cease service were detected by the Office of Liquor, Gaming and Racing, and only one technical breach of the 1.30 a.m. lockout when a venue allowed two patrons temporary re-entry to collect personal belongings left behind. Over the weekend the Office of Liquor, Gaming and Racing detected 26 breaches of gaming and liquor legislation, 16 of which were related to responsible service of alcohol competency.

The high levels of compliance with the new laws that were observed over the first weekend are welcome and indicative of the collaborative approach that was undertaken by government agencies and industry to ensure a smooth implementation of the new laws. The Office of Liquor, Gaming and Racing undertook extensive communication and engagement activities in the lead-up to the first weekend of the new laws. These included briefing sessions to over 300 industry participants, direct engagement with nearly 500 licensees, written correspondence to thousands of venues across the State and the development of a range of communication and resource materials. Police reported that they conducted more than 320 business inspections across the central business district and Kings Cross precincts, detecting two alleged breaches of the 1.30 a.m. lockout, where a King Street venue and Flinders Street venue allowed people to re-enter. The King Street venue also incurred a strike for permitting intoxication. No breaches of the 3.00 a.m. cease alcohol service or 10.00 p.m. curfew on takeaway alcohol sales were reported.

Police also reported that they issued 15 temporary banning notices and charged a man for breaching a notice, issued four applications for long-term banning notices and detected licensing breaches in three other licensed venues in Kings Cross. Assistant Police Commissioner Alan Clarke said that the weekend was always going to be a big test for the new laws and in relation to revellers he said, "They moved in, they enjoyed it and then they moved out." What was most pleasing were the words of Dr Gordian Fulde, Director of Emergency Services at St Vincent's Hospital, who wrote in part in the *Daily Telegraph* yesterday:

We upped our staff, cleared beds and made contingency plans with ambulances. There were worries about the lockouts and the 3am surly crowds. But there were actually less problems. My staff and I waited in vain for the injured ...

There was no chaos on the streets when the 1.30 a.m. lockouts began and nor were there any major problems or a mass exodus of patrons from licensed venues when the 3.00 a.m. cease alcohol service commenced. By all reports public transport worked smoothly and there were no problems reported with displacement of patrons to surrounding areas outside the precincts. While it is still early days and there will be further challenges in the weeks and months ahead, the weekend result was very encouraging.

**Question time concluded at 3.13 p.m.**

**COMMITTEE ON THE HEALTH CARE COMPLAINTS COMMISSION****Government Response to Report**

**The Clerk** announced the receipt of the Government response to report 2/55 entitled "Inquiry into Health Care Complaints and Complaint Handling in NSW", received out of session and ordered to be printed on 28 February 2014.

**LEGISLATION REVIEW COMMITTEE****Report**

**Dr Geoff Lee**, on behalf of the Chair, tabled the report entitled "Legislation Review Digest No. 51/55", dated 4 March 2014, and minutes of the committee meeting regarding Legislation Review Digest No. 50/55, dated 25 February 2014.

**Report ordered to be printed on motion by Dr Geoff Lee.**

**PETITIONS**

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

**GyMEA College of TAFE**

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

**Sydney Electorate Public High School**

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

**Sutherland Shire Fire Stations**

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

**Independent Investigation of Police Actions**

Petition requesting the establishment of an independent complaints body with investigatory powers over police stations, received from **Mr Alex Greenwich**.

**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**.

**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**.

**Walsh Bay Precinct Public Transport**

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

### **Pymont and Ultimo Bus Services**

Petition requesting the improvement and expansion of bus services to Pymont and Ultimo, received from **Mr Alex Greenwich**.

### **Companion Animals on Public Transport**

Petition requesting that companion animals be allowed to travel on all public transport, received from **Mr Alex Greenwich**.

### **Pet Shops**

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

### **Pig-dog Hunting Ban**

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

### **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**.

## **BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

### **Business Lapsed**

**General Business Notices of Motions (General Notices) Nos 2710 to 2723 lapsed pursuant to Standing Order 105 (3).**

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

### **Jobs Action Plan**

**Mr CHRIS PATTERSON** (Camden) [3.17 p.m.]: My motion, which should be accorded priority, is in the following terms:

That this House:

- (1) Notes the Government has created 91,000 jobs in the State since its election.
- (2) Notes the Government's plan to support workers who have lost their jobs through major restructures.
- (3) Notes that under the previous Government, New South Wales had the lowest employment growth of any State.
- (4) Calls on the Opposition to show its support for workers by supporting the Government's Jobs Action Plan.

**The SPEAKER:** Order! Members will not interject during debate on consideration of motions to be accorded priority.

**Mr CHRIS PATTERSON:** This motion should be accorded priority because workers are the backbone of our economy and need all the support they can get in times of need. The New South Wales Government is committed to assisting workers who have lost their jobs through restructures by giving business

an extra incentive to hire them. This Government understands the negative impact that job losses can have on families and that job losses can be life-changing for the family concerned. This motion should be accorded priority because financial hardship can put a strain on mortgages, lifestyles, providing basic necessities and even personal relationships. Social and economic impacts can be devastating for individuals, their families and, in some instances, entire communities.

That is why this motion should be accorded priority. Government members understand the importance of job creation—the very backbone of our economy. We have created 91,000 jobs so far since the election and moved New South Wales from being the slowest economy of any State over the past decade, as it was under the former Government, to being the second strongest economy. The Fresh Start support scheme will provide a \$6,000 payroll tax rebate for businesses employing workers who have recently lost their jobs through large-scale restructures. The New South Wales Government is determined to do all it can to support these workers by giving them opportunities for new employment. With payroll tax rebates businesses have an incentive to grow their business and create long-term sustainable jobs. This motion should be accorded priority. As the Treasurer said, we increased the payroll tax rebates available under our Jobs Action Plan in last year's budget to further boost employment and we are seeing positive results.

I call on Opposition members to get behind this motion and not to play politics with workers' lives. Labor trumpets that it is the workers' party; it can prove that today by supporting this motion. This motion is not about backing powerful, corrupt union officials; it is about looking after the real workers who need Labor's help and support. Labor should get behind the real workers in need and not its union colleagues and cronies.

#### **Department of Family and Community Services Caseworker Vacancies**

**Ms LINDA BURNEY** (Canterbury) [3.20 p.m.]: On 11 September 2013 the Minister for Family and Community Services stood in this Chamber and said:

I instructed the Director General in March, in writing, to fill all budgeted caseworker positions.

One year later, 234 positions—or 11 per cent of the caseworker workforce—remain unfilled, according to Community Services' latest dashboard. Extensive areas of New South Wales continue to experience unacceptably high caseworker shortages. In the Minister's own electorate in southern New South Wales, 31 per cent of caseworker positions are vacant—the highest in the State. In Murrumbidgee 16 per cent of caseworker positions are vacant, in northern Sydney 20 per cent, in western New South Wales 17 per cent and in Nepean-Blue Mountains 17 per cent. Most alarming is that in the Joint Investigation Response Team, whose caseworkers investigate crimes against children, crimes of sexual assault and criminal neglect, 17 per cent of caseworker positions are vacant.

These vacancies are having a devastating effect on the ability of Community Services to protect children. The proportion of all children at risk of significant harm being seen by Community Services has fallen from 28 per cent to 27 per cent. Incredibly, the Government's figures show that more than 48,000 children and young people at risk of significant harm in New South Wales are not being seen by Community Services. Last year, 24 children in out-of-home care were the subject of substantiated risk of significant harm reports, with the person believed responsible being in the household. Last year, 346 fewer children at risk received early intervention.

In 2011-12, 20,402 secondary assessment stage one cases closed due to competing priorities. In the case of Aboriginal children, 1,133 have not been placed according to the Aboriginal placement principle—the highest rate since reporting commenced in 2005. Last year only 58.8 per cent of children in out-of-home care had a current documented and approved case plan. It is a requirement of the out-of-home care accreditation system that decisions and outcomes are recorded on each child's case plan. It is clear that the case planning of this Government is not meeting the standard. Now the Minister has lost control of her department: she demands that the department fill all vacancies and it ignores her.

Morale at the Department of Community Services is at rock bottom. An entire year has lapsed since the Minister directed her department to fill all caseworker vacancies. Every empty position is a lost opportunity to protect a child in this State. This is a silent tragedy playing out in communities across New South Wales, and it is all because of the Liberal Government's cuts to Community Services. Community Services is everyone's business and this Minister has abrogated her responsibility. [*Time expired.*]

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

**The House divided.**

**Ayes, 65**

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

**Noes, 24**

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

**Question resolved in the affirmative.**

**JOBS ACTION PLAN**

**Motion Accorded Priority**

**Mr CHRIS PATTERSON** (Camden) [3.32 p.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) Notes that the Government has created 91,000 jobs in the State since its election.
- (2) Notes the Government's plan to support workers who have lost their jobs through major restructures.
- (3) Notes that under the previous Government, New South Wales had the lowest employment growth of any State.
- (4) Calls on the Opposition to show its support for workers by supporting the Government's Jobs Action Plan.

When the Coalition came to government, New South Wales economic growth had been the slowest of all of the States of this nation for a decade. Finances were unsustainable, with expense targets consistently ignored. If the former Government had kept to its budget over 16 years, as the Treasurer has pointed out, New South Wales

would be \$20 billion better off. What have the Liberal-Nationals done since coming to office? Some 91,000 jobs have been created. New South Wales now has the second-lowest unemployment rate, behind only Western Australia. We are securing the future for New South Wales by investing in key levers of economic growth—infrastructure and housing.

I go to the first of the key factors, jobs growth. Under Labor, jobs growth was the slowest of any of the States for the past decade. It is now second, behind Western Australia. The next is economic growth, which under Labor was the slowest of any State for the past decade. It is now the second strongest of all States on an annual basis. A further key factor is business confidence. Under the former Government, it was the lowest of any State amongst small and medium businesses for most of the past five years under Labor administrations. Now, it is the second strongest of all States. Locally, due to this business confidence, a shopping centre in Narellan undertook a \$200 million redevelopment, with the support of this Government. That will create 1,200 jobs. Though it would not do that under Labor governments, it is very happy to proceed with that redevelopment under this Government.

I turn to housing supply. In question time we have heard that under this Government more housing has been delivered in three years than was delivered by former Labor governments in 16 years. Labor governments sat on housing supply. It has just been proven that this Government has delivered more again. Retail trade, under those Labor governments, had the lowest average annual rate of any State. Now, retail trade in New South Wales is the strongest of all States. Today, the Government is offering additional support to create new jobs for retrenched workers. The New South Wales Government will provide a \$6,000 payroll tax rebate to businesses that employ workers who have recently lost their jobs through large-scale restructures.

The Premier and Treasurer announced that the New South Wales Government is committed to assisting workers who have lost their jobs through restructures by giving business an extra incentive to hire those workers. We understand the impacts that job losses can have on families, and that is why the New South Wales Government is determined to do all it can to support those workers and create new employment opportunity. We are very proud of supporting the tens of thousands of jobs across New South Wales through our record infrastructure building program, and we recognise the need to do more. Rather than criticise, take cheap shots and make offhand remarks, why does the Opposition not get on board and support what this Government is doing? Labor is the party that professes to be for the worker. Today let those opposite support the workers. The Jobs Action Plan is about supporting the workers who are most in need—not the unions and the highly paid. As the Premier said—his words were quoted in the *Daily Telegraph*:

I understand the impact jobs loss can have on families and that's why the NSW government is determined to do all we can to support those workers and create new employment opportunities.

Locally what has the Government done? It has put \$400 million into Camden Valley Way and \$2.1 billion into the South West Rail Link. That is all about creating jobs. But it is also creating infrastructure and a network to enable people to work locally. That is what former governments could not deliver—jobs locally. We have created white collar, blue collar, commercial, industrial and retail jobs locally. I am very proud of that.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** Order! There is too much audible conversation in the Chamber. I warn members who are on three calls to order that if they continue to be disorderly they will be removed from the Chamber.

**Mr MICHAEL DALEY (Maroubra)** [3.37 p.m.]: If the member for Camden really wanted to do better than he did in his mediocre performance he would do something substantial for his electorate and surrounds. He would walk out of this Chamber, get in the lift and go up to level 9, ask if he could have 30 seconds with the Premier, and if so walk into the Premier's office. There he would deliver a very blunt message that would deliver jobs closer to the people of his electorate by saying, "Premier, build Badgerys Creek. The best thing you could do for the people of Western Sydney would be to create 50,000 jobs by building Badgerys Creek." It is no use the member walking into this Chamber and boasting that, on his count, 91,000 jobs have been created, when in fact 40,000 more people have joined the unemployed in the short three years since the O'Farrell Government came to office. What is the response today of the O'Farrell Government to job losses?

The Jobs Action Plan is no more than a \$1,000 gimmick—an augmentation of \$1,000 to a failed \$5,000 scheme. Do not take my word for that; take the word of the NSW Business Chamber, which has absolutely pilloried this scheme. Let me give 17 reasons to show that the contribution of the member for Camden is bunkum: Electrolux, Downer EDI, Simplot, National Engineering, Norsk Hydro, Rio Tinto, St Hilliers, Kell & Rigby, Reed Construction, Heyday, Suncorp, Reckitt, Bonds, DSI, Caltex, Darryl Lea and Telstra. Those

17 companies have gone or are going broke—being liquidated on the watch of the O'Farrell Government—and 3,500 jobs have been lost there alone. I note the member for Bathurst, who is in the Chamber, is saying not a word.

I think there have been more job losses in Bathurst than anywhere in the State, so he might want to seek leave to take part in this debate. If he wants to tell us how well his electorate is going with job retention in Bathurst, we will grant him leave to do so. If this Government were serious about wanting to help retrenched workers, particularly in the manufacturing industry, it would reverse its gutting of and cuts to TAFE. Most of the people who will lose their job with Qantas and all the other manufacturing and supportive industries in New South Wales will be 40, 50 or 60 years of age and will find it very difficult to get another one in a manufacturing sector that now produces only 8 per cent of the State's gross domestic product. They will need retraining and reskilling. Who has been the pre-eminent provider of educational skills for such people in New South Wales in the past?

**Mr Ryan Park:** TAFE.

**Mr MICHAEL DALEY:** Yes, it was TAFE. The shadow Minister for Education knows. What has the Government done to TAFE NSW? The Premier and the Deputy Premier have ripped \$1.6 billion from the Education budget. If they wanted to help these workers they would reskill and retrain them and reverse the TAFE budget cuts. They might also stop playing favourites. I referred to Kell and Rigby, Reed Constructions and others. Last year the Minister for Finance and Services introduced a bill designed to help subcontractors who had not been paid because of collapses in the construction industry. The bill was passed by this House on 14 November 2013, but where is it? It provided for the establishment of a retention fund to secure payments to subbies, and various other things were provided for in amendments moved by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition in the Legislative Council. That bill is still in the ether; it has not been proclaimed.

The Ralan Group, which donated \$200,000 to the Liberal Party, has gone broke owing an estimated \$30 million to subcontractors. What has the Government done for those subcontractors and others in the construction industry? It has done nothing for them. The Premier talks about designated employees. Why does he not ask his Minister for Finance and Services to proclaim that legislation so that those subcontractors and their families can be designated? This Government is playing favourites and is sitting on its hands while people are going broke. This Government is a disgrace.

**Mr PAUL TOOLE** (Bathurst—Parliamentary Secretary) [3.42 p.m.]: It is my pleasure to support the motion moved by the member for Camden, which all members should support because it is vital to the people of New South Wales. This motion supports jobs, jobs growth, business confidence and investment growth across this State. Not once did the member for Maroubra refer to the bloated union officials who have out-dated working conditions and arrangements. Not once did he refer to their misuse of funds or union resources.

This Government has created 91,000 new jobs through its Jobs Action Plan. When we were elected three years ago New South Wales was the worst performing State in this country in relation to economic growth, employment, retail activity and housing supply. The O'Farrell-Stoner Government needed to introduce incentives and schemes to turn the State around, and that is exactly what it has done. This Government has ensured that jobs growth is occurring across the State. New South Wales has the second lowest unemployment rate in the country and the highest employment rate in the retail sector. The Minister for Planning and Infrastructure has done an incredible job in increasing housing supply across this State.

This Government's Jobs Action Plan included a \$4,000 payroll tax rebate that worked very effectively, and when it was increased to \$5,000 housing supply skyrocketed again. The Government is now providing \$6,000 in payroll tax rebate through the Fresh Start support program. Members on this side of the House do not want to see any job losses. That is why this Government is providing incentives to ensure that people can re-enter the workforce. It is creating an environment which encourages investment and in which businesses can continue to grow. The electorate of Bathurst has experienced changes, but it has a low unemployment rate compared to many other parts of New South Wales. Four weeks ago I opened the Masters retail development in Bathurst, which cost more than \$30 million, involved 150 construction jobs and created 100 new jobs. Grainforce Pty Limited, an existing business, is now providing 80 additional jobs.

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

**Mr PAUL TOOLE:** Local contractors have won \$8 million worth of work on Denison College. Friskies will create another 80 jobs as a result of its expansion. The Government understands there are challenges and opportunities, but the Fresh Start support program will safeguard those jobs and the interests of the people of New South Wales.

**Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) [3.45 p.m.]:** Members opposite have the hide to support this motion. People in Australia are reeling as a result of the Qantas job cuts. I am not surprised that Government members arrogantly praise themselves on jobs growth when they know that the people of this State are hurting. What the member for Maroubra said should resonate in the minds of members opposite, but I doubt that it will. The 27 per cent swing against the Government in the Miranda by-election should have been a strong enough message to the Government that the slashing and burning that it has done over the past three years, particularly in the public service, will not be tolerated.

The Government has delivered 15,000 jobs cuts from the public service—3,500 of which were in the hospitals and health system—almost 2,500 job cuts in TAFE and more than 1,000 job cuts in rail safety and maintenance. This Government has cut public service jobs in every electorate in this State and people are reeling as a result. Members opposite are arrogant enough not to want to hear about public service job cuts. The State's unemployment rate is skyrocketing, particularly youth unemployment and regional unemployment. One person in five in the Central West is unemployed. I would have thought those figures would matter to those governing this State, but they do not. The Government may be concerned about comments made by the NSW Business Chamber. Many members opposite are probably members of the chamber and they would be keen to hear what it is saying about the Government's jobs inaction plan. It states:

Feedback from our members has overwhelmingly indicated that the current scheme is ineffective and is not providing employers with any significant incentive to take on additional staff.

That is not enough for the member for Hornsby who I am sure has many friends in the NSW Business Chamber. It says that the Government's plan is not effective. Members opposite should have supported the Opposition's proposal to establish a jobs commissioner who would create and protect jobs.

**Mr CHRIS PATTERSON (Camden) [3.48 p.m.], in reply:** We have all heard the saying, "You are only as good as your last term in government." Under the former Labor Government over the past decade New South Wales had the slowest rate of jobs and economic growth in this country. Over the last five years under Labor it had the slowest growth in small or medium businesses, the lowest number of new dwellings per capita and the lowest average annual growth in retail trade.

The new breed of Labor members—namely, the members for the electorates of Cessnock, Bankstown, Keira, Fairfield and Heffron—have been sent in to rewrite history. They are in denial. During its three years in office this Government has been doing what Labor should have done during its 16 years in office. This Government's actions have been positive. Labor members should not oppose everything simply for the sake of it. They should simply say, "Premier, you have done a great thing. Minister for Planning, you are on a winner here because you are delivering houses. Treasurer Baird, you are the best we have seen in a decade." Members should get behind them and support them.

I turn now to the Government's local achievements. I refer to widening of the M5 West, Camden Valley Way and the South West Rail Link. These projects not only will create jobs during construction but also will create further employment and enable local people get to work and home to their families more quickly. With the support of this Government, Narellan Town Centre will have the confidence to invest \$400 million, thereby creating 1,200 jobs. Six months ago the Minister for Planning visited my electorate and as a result I am pleased to inform the House that commercial land to be released at Oran Park will increase from 5,000 square metres to 50,000 square metres, generating further employment. More affordable housing will be available in south-western Sydney because builders want to build, businesses want to employ people and people are buying those houses. That is an indication of confidence in the State after a slow start. The Government promised to make New South Wales number one again and under Minister Hazzard and Premier O'Farrell, it is doing just that.

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

**The House divided.**

**Ayes, 67**

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

**Noes, 21**

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

**Question resolved in the affirmative.**

**Motion agreed to.**

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** Order! It being before 4.00 p.m., Government business will now be proceeded with.

**SNOWY HYDRO CORPORATISATION AMENDMENT (SNOWY ADVISORY COMMITTEE) BILL 2013**

**Second Reading**

**Debate resumed from 27 February 2014.**

**Mr GEOFF PROVEST** (Tweed—Parliamentary Secretary) [3.59 p.m.]: I will continue my interrupted contribution to the Snowy Hydro Corporatisation Amendment (Snowy Advisory Committee) Bill 2013. The bill states:

The object of this Bill is to amend the Snowy Hydro Corporatisation Act 1997 to establish the Snowy Advisory Committee to advise the Water Administration Ministerial Corporation each year on the timing and pattern for the release of water for environmental reasons under the Snowy water licence. The Snowy Advisory Committee replaces the Snowy Scientific Committee, which is to be dissolved by the proposed Act.

As previously stated, the Snowy Scientific Committee had a narrow focus primarily on Jindabyne Dam. I have been impressed in recent times by the member for Monaro's deep understanding not only of the people of the

great electorate of Monaro but also their individual issues. I visited the member's electorate last year in my role as Parliamentary Secretary with responsibility for bushfires when there were fires at Cooma. The member was proactive in the field and was widely respected by the Rural Fire Service volunteers. That is a tribute to him and his fine calibre. I wish him all the best. The member gave me a deep understanding of the situation facing the Snowy Hydro Corporation.

There may be concerns about the committee becoming advisory rather than remaining an independent body, but it will still have an independent chair and the Minister will have no influence over the content of the advice the committee provides. I know that the Deputy-Speaker, and member for the fine electorate of Lismore on the Far North Coast, is a great believer in and supporter of local people recognising local issues and, more importantly, coming up with active advice to address those issues. The Deputy-Speaker is active in Murwillumbah and Lismore, as I am in my electorate of Tweed. It is good to see that this Government has taken the initiative to set up a committee that takes particular notice of the local community groups.

It would be remiss of me not to mention that this bill follows discussion with the indigenous owners of the land who were initially concerned about the lack of recognition and consultation. The New South Wales Office of Water has initiated a cultural water assessment of the Snowy River with a local committee to inform the new committee. As a proud Australian, the poem *The Man from Snowy River* represents a heritage of which we are proud.

**Mr Barry Collier:** "There was movement at the station, for the word had passed around that the colt from old Regret had got away ...".

**Mr GEOFF PROVEST:** I note the member for Miranda has a deep interest in the man from Snowy River riding down the mountains.

**Mr Barry Collier:** I do; I love it.

**Mr GEOFF PROVEST:** This bill addresses many issues. It is about being open and transparent. I am proud to be part of the O'Farrell-Stoner Government, an open and transparent government that encourages wider community input in decision-making. That has not happened for a long time in this State. A poll published last Sunday clearly reflects community acceptance. Whether it is in the electorates of Monaro, Lismore or Tweed, people are involved in the process and appreciate the openness and honesty of this Government. The community appreciates direction and the increase in economic wealth evidenced by jobs and housing growth that we have not seen for a number of years. It is flowing through the wider community. I strongly commend the Snowy Hydro Corporatisation Amendment (Snowy Advisory Committee) Bill 2013 to the House.

**Mr DARYL MAGUIRE** (Wagga Wagga—Parliamentary Secretary) [4.06 p.m.]: I support the Snowy Hydro Corporatisation Amendment (Snowy Advisory Committee) Bill 2013. I do so in my capacity as the member for Wagga Wagga and as a member who has part of the magnificent Snowy Mountains Scheme in my electorate. From 1999, when I was elected, until the redistribution in 2007, the areas of Tumberumba and Holbrook were included in the Wagga Wagga electorate, which incorporates much of the Kosciuszko National Park and the Snowy Mountains Scheme.

It is important that the Snowy Advisory Committee reflect a wide range of technical and community expertise. The former Snowy Scientific Committee had a limited membership and focused on ecological and scientific issues only surrounding flow releases from Jindabyne Dam. Indeed, flow releases are a hot topic of discussion, particularly in communities below Blowering and Burrinjuck dams. The Snowy Mountains Scheme was built to store water for the creation of energy through hydroelectric schemes using a number of dams and turbine generators as well as to provide water, mainly from Burrinjuck Dam but supplemented by Blowering Dam, for irrigation.

The Murrumbidgee River, which connects the Murray River to the Tumut River, now has increased water flows. That has also been a topic of discussion. It is important that local council, chamber of commerce, fishing, recreation and Aboriginal cultural concerns are considered by the committee. That is what this bill will do. Aboriginal groups in particular have been concerned at the lack of recognition of and consultation about their cultural needs. Whilst this concerns the Snowy River area, Aboriginal communities in other areas have been concerned about their views being heard. A dear friend of mine, the late Elder Vince Bulger, OAM, was passionate about rivers, waterways and the lands. Uncle Vince would often say when he spoke at functions that, "If you look after the land and the water it will look after you."

As a child he fished in the Tumut River and Brungle Creek. To his grandchildren and every other child who tagged along on fishing expeditions up into the bushland and along the waterways he taught the importance of managing the environment. He also passed on the traditions and cultures that are important to Aboriginal people. We can learn those things. This bill is important because through word of mouth and spoken language those important lessons will be passed on. I am pleased that Aboriginal communities will have a say. They will be recognised and listened to in the new organisation. The New South Wales Office of Water has initiated a cultural water assessment of the Snowy River with the local community to inform the new committee. I am pleased that a wider range of groups will now have a voice and be able to give input into the environmental flow strategy for the river.

We all want to see a healthy Snowy River. I can recall in the lead-up to the election in 1998 and 1999 the Snowy River was highlighted in many media articles, as was the former Labor Government policy of water harvesting. I can clearly recall the articles that featured in the *Sydney Morning Herald* and other newspapers. I also remember that the response to those articles from regional and rural communities was that they felt they were not able to have a constructive dialogue with the government of the day. Indeed, part of the reason why I won preselection and went on to win the election was the fact that water policy was skew-whiff under the Carr Government.

As I said, while there may be some concerns about the committee being advisory it will still be independent. It will have an independent chair and the Minister will be unable to have influence over what committee members discuss or the content of the advice they provide. That is a good thing. It should encourage the membership of that committee to have their say. It is important that they be up-front and say it as they see it. They will be under the same expectations as members of Parliament, councillors and others to fiercely advocate on issues about which they are passionate. It is right that the committee also have relevant government experts involved to ensure that a balanced and practical environmental water strategy can be implemented. It makes little sense to have a separate advisory committee with no access to the expertise, resources and information of government officers, as well as their practical knowledge of how water can be released and the limitations on the size and pattern of releases.

Last Thursday the Premier and I travelled to Canberra to sign the Murray-Darling Basin agreement, which is an historic agreement that treats the Murray-Darling as one river for the first time. It is a political achievement of the Abbot Government and the State agriculture and water Ministers. I know the New South Wales Minister with responsibility for agriculture and water worked very hard to bring about a better outcome for landholders and users of that precious water resource. The Minister held out for a better deal for this State and got it. Previously it was a case of buying water back with no compensation or no plan to upgrade the infrastructure that delivers the water. The Snowy Mountains Hydro-Electric Scheme was the biggest engineering feat this country had seen. There is a possibility that similar feats can occur if someone has a grand vision. In the meantime, the Federal Government has invested some \$80 million for infrastructure upgrades that will also preserve our precious water resource.

When I was in Canberra I mentioned the Pratt report, which came out in about 2000 and talked about ways and means of further delivering water to regional communities through the use of piping and covered channels. Much of the work discussed in the report has been carried out now. It talked about piping the water from Blowering and Burrinjuck dams in plastic pipes rather than using rivers, which, as I said, is a concern to local communities. That is because an enormous amount of water now needs to get down the river through environmental flows. Rightly, landholders are concerned about the environmental flows and are worried that they will be flooded. My response has been that we will not let that occur.

Environmental flows that meet the agreed guidelines are important but so too are the landholders along the way. I have reassured those landholders that they will not be flooded out. Our Government is certainly not in the business of making life difficult for landholders; we want to work with them. The benefit of this committee is that we will appoint people from the community to give them a say. We will not put restrictions on them and they will be able to say it as it is and inform the Government about what needs to happen. I look forward to the implementation of the committee. I urge members to support this bill. I wish the committee well and commend the long-overdue bill to the House.

**Mr BART BASSETT** (Londonderry) [4.16 p.m.]: I support the Snowy Hydro Corporatisation Amendment (Snowy Advisory Committee) Bill 2013. As other members have highlighted, when talking of the Snowy the great bush poet Banjo Paterson comes to mind. However, we are not talking about a prized colt that got away because in this instance what got away was any sense of a moral compass from the Labor Opposition,

which is engaging in pure cheapjack opportunism and revisionist history. There was movement in the Labor ranks, for the word had passed around that the nags from Sussex Street had got away. They joined the revisionist history brigade whose goal was to confuse and complicate, so all the Labor hacks gathered to the fray.

**Mr Barry Collier:** Point of order: Not only is the member misquoting Banjo Paterson, he is also straying from the leave of the bill. The bill is about the Snowy Advisory Committee, not his views on the Labor Party.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** Order! I ask the member for Londonderry to return to the leave of the bill.

**Mr BART BASSETT:** I thank the member for Miranda for his assistance. I cannot understand Labor members' refusal to support the Snowy Hydro Corporatisation Amendment (Snowy Advisory Committee) Bill 2013 considering that in 16 years of government they had a scientific committee only between 2008 and 2011. When the reappointment of the committee lapsed they did not bother making new appointments. I find it astounding that in the dying days of the former Government those members could make a raft of other appointments to boards of State-owned enterprises in the dead of night but could not find the time to make appointments to this committee, which they now regard as a sacred cow.

Is it a sacred cow or is the Labor Opposition just after another favourable deal with The Greens? If so—and I suspect that to be the case—then so much for Sam Dastyari's much lauded but hollow pledge to put The Greens last on Labor Party preferences. Labor's attitude is hypocritical but it is not surprising to see obstructionism from a party with a dash-for-cash and dash-for-preferences track record and reputation. Remember 2006? Only eight years ago Labor wanted to flog off the Snowy Hydro. Thankfully for the people of New South Wales, many of us who ran in the 2007 campaign ran a successful petition to save the project. I am proud to have been one of them.

But Labor Party members want us to forget about their little failed money grab and now, typically, they are trying to rewrite history in this House. They are great at that. Labor members' meddling in the Snowy hydro scheme is eerily familiar to the gutting of charitable medical helicopter services purely for the purposes of taking care of their mates. Labor destroyed CareFlight and lifesaving non-government helicopter medical services—

**Mr Paul Lynch:** Point of order: Whatever this excursion is about, it is entirely unrelated to the bill before the House. I know the member concerned has a penchant for ignoring standing orders at every conceivable opportunity, but he must be dragged back to the leave of the bill.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** Order! I ask the member to direct his comments to the leave of the bill.

**Mr BART BASSETT:** My remarks do relate to the bill because part of the medical helicopter services of this State is sponsored by the Snowy Hydro.

**Mr Paul Lynch:** Point of order: The member is ignoring your ruling, Mr Deputy-Speaker. Not only is he now in breach of standing orders, he is flouting your position as Deputy-Speaker. Members on this side of the House would be directed to return to the leave of the bill. The member must abide by your rulings and return to the leave of the bill.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER:** Order! The member is relating his arguments to the Snowy Hydro sponsorship.

**Mr BART BASSETT:** That is exactly what I am doing. One of the helicopter services in New South Wales is backed by the Snowy Hydro. Coming back to my comments, Labor is running around saying not to trust us Tories because we have removed a scientific person from the committee membership. That is rubbish. As we have already heard from several members in recent days, the Snowy Scientific Committee was no longer appropriate and needs to be replaced. The role of the Snowy Scientific Committee was to advise on the adequacy of the environmental releases, review programs for the restoration of the catchments, conduct ongoing monitoring and reporting, and produce a public state of the environment report on the catchments. These roles are no longer appropriate for the new Snowy Scientific Committee.

Ongoing restoration and management of catchments is the role of the National Parks and Wildlife Service's national park estate and catchment management authorities, which are now part of the Government's

reformed Local Land Services. Monitoring, modelling, research and reporting on environmental flow releases are mostly undertaken by the New South Wales Office of Water. The Snowy Scientific Committee also did not produce an annual state of the catchment report in its three years of operation. Does that mean the committee did nothing during that time so there was nothing to report, or does that simply mean the committee was slack in its administration, paperwork and reporting? This work was undertaken as part of the government's state of the environment reporting program, so it was important that it be reported.

In short, the Snowy Scientific Committee needed to be reviewed and changed. That is exactly what this Government is doing. The Snowy hydro scheme is recognised as one of the modern civil engineering wonders of the world. It is the job of government, this Government, to ensure that this world-class project remains first rate. To do that, it must evolve. One stage in the evolutionary process is to regularly review the advisory committee. Labor and its mewling pets The Greens are banging on about there being no scientist on the new advisory committee. There was a scientist on the committee before to no effect. In any case, there is nothing stopping any officially qualified scientist being appointed to the new committee, or the make-up of the committee being changed if needs be.

New section 57 (2) of this bill does not limit the functions of the committee. It actually broadens the ability of the committee to look into a variety of issues and gives the committee more flexibility. As the member for Monaro said last week, in almost poetic language when he spoke proudly about the jewel in the crown of his electorate:

The Snowy Hydro Scheme is a great nation-building project that initiated the concept of multiculturalism on the back of strong immigration to this country.

I understand the importance of controlled environmental flows to the Snowy River and the need for a committee to oversee the project after dealing with similar challenges for the Hawkesbury-Nepean Catchment during the series of droughts in recent decades which affected my electorate of Londonderry and the Hawkesbury local government authority during my time as Hawkesbury mayor. I believe that the Snowy Advisory Committee is now the most appropriate body to advise the Government.

The previous Snowy Scientific Committee advised government on the pattern of environmental releases. As I have said, it did not adequately do that. However, the new Snowy Advisory Committee, which includes representatives from interest groups, is more likely to do that because it has a more genuine and sincere interest in this particular project and the local region. The new advisory committee will provide a better opportunity for transparency and community input. The membership of the committee is to consist of at least two community representatives, two of whom are to be nominated by the Victorian Government Minister; at least one member must be a representative of environmental interest groups; at least one must be a representative of Aboriginal interests; and at least one member must be a representative of the New South Wales Government. Aboriginal and environmental group representatives will be diligent and passionate about protecting endangered or threatened species, maintaining natural habitats and maintaining wilderness and national park values.

At the very least, all members of the committee will be very well educated, if not expert, in the scope and subject of the committee, with the added bonus and motivation of having a vested community interest in it. It is also now time for the local council, the chamber of commerce and fishing, recreational and Aboriginal cultural concerns to be considered and to be a priority. For these reasons, I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr ADAM MARSHALL** (Northern Tablelands) [4.25 p.m.]: I support the Snowy Hydro Corporatisation Amendment (Snowy Advisory Committee) Bill 2013 and I commend the work of the member for Monaro, who as the local member is concerned about this bill. I note his support for the bill and the fine work he is doing in representing the good people of Monaro. In 2011 the people made a choice to vote him in to this place and, given all the good work that he has been doing, I have every confidence they will do the same next year. The object of the bill is to amend the Snowy Hydro Corporatisation Act 1997 to establish the Snowy Advisory Committee to advise the Water Administration Ministerial Corporation each year on the timing and pattern for the release of water for environmental reasons under the Snowy Water Licence. This Snowy Advisory Committee replaces the Snowy Scientific Committee, which is to be dissolved under this bill.

I understand that, despite being part of the 1997 Act, the Snowy Scientific Committee was not set up by the previous government until 2008. The reappointment of the committee lapsed in 2011, after the initial three-year term, and replacements were not appointed. This clearly demonstrates, in my view, that the Snowy

Scientific Committee is not the right committee for the job and it is time for it to be replaced. In that respect, this bill is timely. I also understand that the role of the Snowy Scientific Committee was to advise on the adequacy of the environmental releases, programs for restoration of the catchments and ongoing monitoring and reporting, and to produce a public state of the environment report on those catchments.

I believe those roles are no longer appropriate for the Snowy Advisory Committee. The size of the environmental releases is determined, first, by the recovery of the entitlements, which is 212 gigalitres, as targeted under the new Snowy Initiative, and, second, the amount of allocated water available each year under these entitlements. The ongoing restoration and management of catchments is the role of the National Parks and Wildlife Service in the national park estate and, elsewhere, catchment management authorities, which are part of the government's Local Land Services. Monitoring, modelling, research and reporting on these environmental flow releases are mostly undertaken by the New South Wales Office of Water.

In addition, the Snowy Scientific Committee did not produce an annual state of the catchment report in its three years of operation. This work was undertaken as part of the Government's state of the environment reporting program. For all those reasons, it is timely that we refine the role of the committee, ensure that it is not duplicating work carried out by other government agencies, and bring it into line with other such committees across the State. Therefore, the bill is worthy of the support of this Parliament. While talking about making necessary reforms involving water storages, we need not look any further than Copeton Dam, in the electorate of Northern Tablelands. Last year we saw the completion of a \$60 million safety upgrade of Copeton Dam and it is now able to withstand the biggest flood considered possible in that region. The safety upgrade was completed five months ahead of schedule, on budget, with local jobs, local involvement and great safety and environmental records. Not only are the downstream communities from Copeton Dam better protected from extreme floods but they have retained significant economic benefits over the duration of this project.

The New England north-west region, covering the Northern Tablelands electorate, is estimated to have retained between \$15 million and \$20 million through economic gains as a result of this project. Around half of the 250 people who worked on the safety upgrade were locals and 28 suppliers were from Inverell, Armidale, Tamworth and Moree—all within the New England north-west area. The community and the stakeholders can be proud of their involvement during the construction of this very important project for the Northern Tablelands. It is a \$60 million project supporting 200 local jobs and generating millions of dollars for the local community.

Construction of Malpas Dam near Armidale was completed in 1968 and currently has a storage capacity of 13,000 megalitres with an expansion capacity of 26,000 megalitres. The dam is located south of Guyra and it is the major water supply for the city of Armidale, the major centre in the Northern Tablelands electorate. The dam has beautiful picnicking and viewing facilities and it is used extensively by a number of local community groups, including the Armidale Dam Dragons club, whose president, Phil Brown, is doing magnificent work. The club recently received funding from the Government to purchase a boat trailer to help members of the club get their boats in and out of the wonderful waters of Malpas Dam. Five members of the club have recently won selection to the New South Wales team to contest the upcoming national championships. Good on the Dam Dragons.

The New England Sailing Club, St Kilda Hotel Fishing Club, Armidale Trout Anglers, the Armidale Rowing Club, the University of New England Kayak Club, the State Emergency Service and Sailability New England are all great users of Malpas Dam. The dam is still quite full despite the incredibly dry conditions that the Northern Tablelands area is experiencing. It is a wonderful facility for recreation as well as being an important water supplier for Armidale and the broader regions. The Snowy Hydro Corporatisation Amendment (Snowy Advisory Committee) Bill 2013 is a wonderful, common-sense bill. It is worthy of the support of this Parliament and I encourage those opposite to reconsider their position in relation to this bill. The bill is about establishing a committee that is going to do its job properly. [*Quorum called for.*]

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

This bill is worthy of the support of this House and I invite the Opposition to reconsider its position. The Snowy Advisory Committee will replace the Snowy Scientific Committee—a committee that the Opposition did not take seriously when it was in government, which is evident by the fact that the former Government did not appoint members of the committee at the appropriate time; nor did it reappoint them when their term expired. This new committee will do the job it is tasked to do and will do it properly.

**Mr MARK SPEAKMAN** (Cronulla—Parliamentary Secretary) [4.35 p.m.]: I support the Snowy Hydro Corporatisation Amendment (Snowy Advisory Committee) Bill 2013. The bill will amend the Snowy Hydro Corporatisation Act 1997 to establish the Snowy Advisory Committee, which will advise the Water Administration Ministerial Corporation each year on the timing and pattern for the release of water for environmental reasons under the Snowy Water Licence. The Snowy Scientific Committee will be dissolved by the proposed Act and will be replaced by the Snowy Advisory Committee.

Section 57 of the principal Act will be omitted and will be replaced by a new section 57, which establishes the committee. Section 57 (2) will provide that the function of the committee is to advise the Water Administration Ministerial Corporation each year on the timing and pattern for the release of water for environmental reasons under the Snowy water licence. There has been some criticism from the Opposition, but I note the very broad words in new section 57 (2) and the broad function that is conferred on the proposed committee by that subsection.

New section 57 (3) deals with the composition of the committee. The committee will consist of at least six members appointed by the Minister and a member appointed by the Minister who, by the instrument of appointment, is to be the chairperson of the committee. The membership of the committee will be appropriately diverse and representative. There will be at least two community representatives, and of those community representatives two are to be nominated by a Minister of Victoria. At least one member must be a representative of environmental interest groups, at least one member must be a representative of Aboriginal interests, at least one member must be a representative of the government of New South Wales and at least one member must be a representative of the government of Victoria.

The member for Liverpool and the member for Bankstown said that this bill will dilute environmental performance or monitoring. Those concerns are unfounded. The former Labor Government was empowered under the legislation to appoint a scientific committee from 1997 but it only bothered to do so for the years between 2008 and 2011. Opportunities in the current section 57 of the Act were not utilised by the former Labor Government. This bill will reflect community aspirations and, at the same time, the need to maintain appropriate environmental flows. Those community aspirations were recognised by this Government in the consultation process. The Minister released a discussion paper in February last year and received 29 submissions in response to it. There was a general recognition that a new approach to the committee was needed.

The Government has been meeting its obligations to recover water for the Snowy. In 2013-14 we will see the largest volume of environmental water released into the Snowy River from Jindabyne Dam—more than 190 gigalitres—and that will be achieved through a more variable flow regime, which includes a trial of five high-flow releases over the spring period instead of one large event. The purpose of that is to improve the habitat of the river for fish and other species. Good results have been seen from this new pattern of variable releases. The committee is changing from what might be called a technocratic advisory committee to one that is more community focused. There is concern that the current advisory committee does not appropriately represent community interests such as those of Aboriginal groups. I understand Aboriginal groups have been concerned about their current lack of involvement in the committee.

As I have said before, there will be broader community involvement through this committee. So far as independence is concerned, the committee will have an independent chairman. The content of the advice that the committee provides will be determined by the committee. The committee, rather than allowing environmental protection to be diluted, will see that protection enhanced because the committee will have access to all the resources of government. The bill proposes a committee that avoids duplication of functions already undertaken by other bodies at the moment. This is sensible legislation. It reflects that times have evolved since 1997. At that time it was envisaged that there would be environmental releases into the Snowy River and the other montane streams affected by the Snowy Scheme. But at that time the size and nature of those releases were unknown. The current section 57 reflects the situation as it was in 1997. Five years later the Snowy Initiative was formally established, and we have a recovery target.

Under the Snowy Initiative three governments—those of New South Wales, Victoria and the Commonwealth—have committed funds and agreed to recover water through water saving projects in the Murrumbidgee and Murray valleys. It was agreed that 212 gigalitres—which is 21 per cent of the average natural flow of the Snowy—would be recovered over a 10-year period, and that that water would be returned to the Snowy River and Snowy montane rivers. In July 2012 that target was achieved. Before 2010, only small volumes of water were available to be released. That is because not all entitlements had been recovered, and there was a drought as well. From the time of its establishment in 2008—11 years after the previous Labor

Government had the statutory power to establish the committee—the Snowy Scientific Committee has provided advice on environmental release. That advice has generally been adopted and has influenced release patterns over the past few years.

But now, in 2013-14, on the recommendation of the New South Wales Office of Water, and with the consent of Victoria and the Commonwealth, there is a trialling of a different release pattern. This aims to increase the variability of flows to achieve a better reflection of the hydrology of a Snowy Mountain river, to provide multiple high-flow events, and to test the release capability of Jindabyne Dam. All that water has been recovered, and a range of flows and patterns of releases have occurred. So this is a bill that is appropriately inclusive. The composition of the proposed committee reflects the composition of similar committees in New South Wales in an environmental context. It does not represent a dilution of environmental protection; rather, this more broad-based committee takes into account various community interests. It will have access to expert government advice. In those circumstances, I support the bill and I commend it to the House.

**Mr KEVIN ANDERSON** (Tamworth) [4.42 p.m.]: I support the Snowy Hydro Corporatisation Amendment (Snowy Advisory Committee) Bill 2013 even though it has to do with a scheme that is a fair distance from the Tamworth electorate. This is yet another progressive step achieved by a common-sense approach and by the streamlining of operations that this Government has put in place since 2011, when it came to office. That is being implemented right across the board, but particularly with this bill. It is important that the Snowy Advisory Committee reflects a wide range of technical and community expertise. The former Snowy Scientific Committee had a limited membership and was focused on ecological and scientific issues only surrounding the environmental releases from Jindabyne Dam.

When it comes to environmental flows, water capacity, storage and dams, I think everybody in this place has a responsibility to keep up to date with fluctuating changes in their regions, given the extreme environmental conditions being experienced right across this State. Environmental flows and releases are always a cause for great discussion by a range of stakeholders, whether they be upstream or downstream of the system. In particular in the Tamworth electorate, with Lake Keepit, the flow releases into the Namoi come from Split Rock, down through the Manilla River into Lake Keepit downstream and beyond. Flows from Split Rock Dam, which has about 397,000 megalitres—or about 75 per cent of Sydney Harbour—go to Lake Keepit, which has a capacity of about 423,000 megalitres, or about 77 per cent of Sydney Harbour.

It is important to note that these flows are managed. Flows released for irrigation purposes are particularly recognised, although some question Lake Keepit being a recreation dam when dam levels fall and people are unable to access their favourite parts of the dam due to lack of water. But that comes from the context of flows. I would now like to talk about flows from Chaffey Dam, in the Tamworth electorate. This is the main source of flood irrigation, irrigation and the water supply of Tamworth city. Chaffey Dam, which has about 62,000 megalitres, is in the process of being upgraded to 100,000 megalitres to ensure there is continuing supply and water security for our region. I am very familiar with Chaffey Dam.

I was there on Sunday with my family and a number of other families, boating merrily on Chaffey Dam when our boat broke down. My wife and I, our friends and our kids rowed our boat back to the shore of Chaffey Dam—some two or three kilometres. Sunday was not a happy day on Chaffey Dam. We managed to reach a little island right in the middle of Chaffey Dam. I do not know whether it has a name, but we nicknamed it Andara Island, on behalf of the Anderson and O'Mara clans, who rowed safely to that island and then on to shore, before being picked up.

**The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George):** Why did you not call the NRMA?

**Mr KEVIN ANDERSON:** We were out of phone range. I return to water resources right across the State. Community interests, such as the local council, chamber of commerce, fishing, recreational and Aboriginal cultural concerns are other aspects of the Snowy Hydro that need to be considered. I understand that Aboriginal groups in particular have been concerned at the lack of recognition of and consultation on their cultural needs. The New South Wales Office of Water has initiated a cultural water assessment of the Snowy River with local communities to inform the new committee. That community consultation process is critical. I know it has been thorough. I know that this is a new way of doing business, under this Government, purely because of what has happened with the upgrade of Chaffey Dam. As I mentioned earlier, there has been extensive consultation on what will happen with surrounding land that will be resumed when the dam's capacity is increased to 100,000 megalitres.

I am pleased that a wide range of relevant groups will now have a voice on and input to the development of an environmental flow strategy of the Snowy and Snowy montane rivers. I am sure the Snowy hydro infrastructure of earlier times was ground breaking, and that to make sure we have sufficient electricity and an innovative way of doing things, governments of vision took up the challenge. We all want a healthy Snowy River, and this aim needs to be achieved in a way that recognises all interests and uses of the river. While there may still be some concerns about the committee becoming an advisory rather than an independent body, it will still have an independent chair, and the Minister will have no influence over the content of the advice that the committee provides. This is common sense.

Elsewhere in the State, such advisory committees on environmental releases are made up of a range of community and government representatives, just as they are in the Tamworth electorate for the dams in our area, namely, Lake Keepit, and the smaller dam at Dungowan of 6,200 megalitres, as well as Chaffey and Split Rock dams. It is great to see that this Government is putting things in place. We are living in a changing environment. We have to change rules, regulations and committees to fit in with community expectations. This Government listens to the community and has its interests at heart. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr BRYAN DOYLE** (Campbelltown) [4.50 p.m.]: I support the Snowy Hydro Corporatisation Amendment (Snowy Advisory Committee) Bill 2013, which has as its object to amend the Snowy Hydro Corporatisation Act 1997 to establish the Snowy Advisory Committee, which will advise the Water Administration Ministerial Corporation each year on the important task of the timing and pattern of the release of water for environmental reasons under the Snowy water licence. The Snowy Advisory Committee replaces the Snowy Scientific Committee, which will be dissolved under this Act, which is important for a number of reasons under NSW 2021: A plan to make NSW number one, which relates to strengthening our local environment and communities and is designed to help protect our natural environment and to increase opportunities for people to look after their neighbourhoods and environments. It also makes it easier for people to be involved in their community and fosters an opportunity for partnership with Aboriginal people.

I note in particular a number of people are required to be represented on the Snowy Advisory Committee, two of whom will be community members—a Victorian, a person from New South Wales and, importantly, an Aboriginal person. The former Snowy Scientific Committee had a limited membership and focused more on ecological and scientific issues surrounding environmental flow releases from Jindabyne Dam. Community interests such as the local council, chamber of commerce, fishing, recreational and Aboriginal cultural concerns are also aspects that need to be considered. These amendments will ensure that Aboriginal groups in particular who have been concerned at the lack of recognition and consultation on their cultural needs will have a voice at the table. It is important to note the New South Wales Office of Water has initiated a cultural water assessment of the Snowy River with the local community to better inform the new committee.

A healthy Snowy River is important and forms the basis of the Snowy Mountains Hydro-Electric Scheme, which is by far the largest engineering project ever undertaken in Australia. It is also one of the largest and most complex hydroelectric schemes in the world. The Snowy Mountains scheme consists of 16 major dams, a number of power stations, a pumping station and almost 225 kilometres of tunnels, pipelines and aqueducts. Work on the project started in 1949 and was finished in 1974, taking 25 years to complete, and its ramifications continue today. I refer to the important environmental impacts of the scheme. The Snowy Mountains Scheme is situated in Kosciuszko National Park. The balance between the scheme's operations and the surrounding environment is closely monitored. Soil erosion must also be prevented and its impact on plants and animals monitored. Diverting and storing water for the scheme has changed the nature of the Snowy River and other rivers in the region. In some places, the Snowy River was reduced to carrying only 1 per cent of the water that it used to before the scheme was built.

In 1998 the New South Wales and Victorian governments commissioned the Snowy water inquiry to find a solution that balanced environmental, economic and social factors. Those governments agreed to restore a greater flow to the Snowy River. Eventually the river flows were restored to more than 25 per cent, which is what was needed to restore the river to good health. As I said earlier, the scheme is situated in Mount Kosciuszko National Park, which was named after Tadeusz Kosciuszko, a famous Polish patriot who fought in the American Civil War and also for the freedom of Poland. The mountain was named in 1840 by Pawel Edmund Strzelecki, another Polish explorer, in honour of his hero Tadeusz Kosciuszko, because of its perceived resemblance to the Kosciuszko Mound in Krakow which was built by the people of Poland in memory and honour of the service of Tadeusz Kosciuszko in defence of the Polish homeland. Initially Mount Kosciuszko was spelt wrongly but that was corrected in 1997.

Water is diverted from the Snowy River scheme to feed into the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area, one of the most important economic drivers in New South Wales. The water is fed into an area that covers about 84,000 square kilometres and in which both Canberra and Wagga Wagga, the largest inland city, are located. The irrigation industry produces 25 per cent of the fruit and vegetables in New South Wales, a larger amount of the State's grapes and half of Australia's rice production. Other industries in the catchment area include dry-land agriculture, beef production, intensive poultry production, sheep and wool, cropping and softwood plantations. It is one of the most important areas for the economy of New South Wales. The bill, which fits into our corporate plan to make New South Wales number one, will restore and strengthen our local communities and environment, and restore government accountability. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr RAY WILLIAMS** (Hawkesbury—Parliamentary Secretary) [4.57 p.m.]: I support the Snowy Hydro Corporatisation Amendment (Snowy Advisory Committee) Bill 2013, which has as its object to amend the Snowy Hydro Corporatisation Act 1997 to establish a committee to advise the Water Administration Ministerial Corporation each year on the timing and pattern for the release of water for environmental reasons under the Snowy water licence. It is no secret that authorities now place a greater emphasis on the importance of environmental flows. The Snowy Advisory Scheme not only relies on water for the generation of hydroelectricity but also is vital to ensure and maintain the health of the Snowy River under a committee that will advise the Minister on releases for the Snowy River.

A number of books have been written and a number of films have been produced about the Snowy River—an icon that is enshrined in Australian history. I recall the film *The Sundowners*, which encapsulated life in the Australian bush. The Deputy-Speaker will remember that film not only because of its vintage but also because it was popular. The film was somewhat of a landmark in Australian film-making because we embraced the talents of some incredible and high-profile American actors, not the least being leading star of stage and screen in those days Robert Mitchum, together with Peter Ustinov and Deborah Kerr, who were coerced into making this legendary film. I mention this film because, as the Deputy-Speaker would know coming from a migrant background, at the beginning of European settlement migrants and convicts built this country through their hard labour and toil. Their ownership of land has allowed us to build strong families and wonderful communities, making Australia the great country that it is today.

There is no greater example of the efforts of migrants than the Snowy Hydro Scheme. Many hundreds, if not thousands, of migrants came from Italy, Malta and Greece to work and toil for years and years, some of them going straight to work after arriving in this country. It is to their great credit and their wonderful work ethic that we have this engineering masterpiece and construction marvel of the Snowy Hydro Scheme that provides electricity and has become entrenched in Australian history. Apart from our Indigenous brothers and sisters we have all been migrants to this country and migrants have played a significant role in building the wonderful monuments that remain to this day.

Cooma, the local township, became a booming town through construction of the Snowy Hydro Scheme and although people were paid to work and obviously were carving out a living for themselves in this country, they needed to be entertained. For months on end that entertainment was provided to many people living in Cooma. As I have stated previously in this House, my father, Allen Williams, was the heavyweight boxing champion of this country. As part of that entertainment people involved in the Snowy Hydro Scheme decided to hold an Australian heavyweight championship title on behalf of the people of Cooma and my father agreed to fight. A great Italian Australian boxer by the name of Carlo Marchini—

**Mr John Sidoti:** Marchini was the best.

**Mr RAY WILLIAMS:** He was not the best but he was an Italian boxer of some repute and he was rated. My father agreed to fight Carlo Marchini for the Australian belt and my father defended his title more times than any other boxer in this country. My dad firmly believed that anybody who fought deserved the opportunity to win the title. He agreed to fight and it was a great spectacle. One of the great features of the entertainment was that *The Sundowners* was being filmed a short distance away from the Snowy site and Robert Mitchum, Peter Ustinov and Deborah Kerr were asked to attend the fight. My dad had the great fortune not only of beating Carlo Marchini decisively but also meeting the great Robert Mitchum, Peter Ustinov and Deborah Kerr, although he did mention to me that Peter Ustinov was slightly inebriated and required some assistance to get in and out of the ring. Nevertheless, it was exciting for my father to meet those wonderful actors.

Often my father and I would sit down together to watch *The Sundowners* and he would reflect on the time when that great film was being made. I do not think there is another film that fully encapsulates our

wonderful Australian outback, although ironically with its heavy American acting influence. The film encapsulated the sheep, the outback and highlighted an instance in which a racehorse was obtained and raced at one of the picnic races. It really encapsulated some of the great aspects of the Australian bush at that time. When the Australian title belt was put on the line, Carlo put up a good show. Carlo Marchini was of Italian heritage and his family would be well known to the member for Drummoyne. Once Carlo finished his illustrious career in the ring, despite not becoming a champion, he went on to train many standard bred horses. Carlo and my father became reacquainted. We grew up on a farm and used to agist a lot of horses, whether they were thoroughbreds or standard breeds. Carlo and dad were reunited as Carlo would send some of his horses to our place to be spelled.

It was a great pleasure of mine to meet Carlo, who thought dad was a great fighter—and he certainly was—and Carlo always had the respect of my dad. On the night that title fight was held in Cooma dad was not the crowd favourite because of the huge number of Italian immigrants present. He did not let down his good European heritage and upheld the title. It has been a great pleasure to put some of those recollections on the record and to reiterate that the Snowy Hydro Scheme is entrenched in Australian history. I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET** (Castle Hill) [5.06 p.m.]: It is a great pleasure to speak in debate on the Snowy Hydro Corporatisation Amendment (Snowy Advisory Committee) Bill 2013. From the outset, I note that the bill will amend the Snowy Hydro Corporatisation Act 1997 to establish the Snowy Advisory Committee to advise the Water Administration Ministerial Corporation each year on the timing and pattern for the release of water for environmental reasons under the Snowy water licence. The Snow Advisory Committee will replace the Snowy Scientific Committee, which will be dissolved by the proposed Act.

The committee is being dissolved for good reason. The Scientific Committee has a limited membership and specifically focuses on environmental issues that are no longer relevant under the bill. I note that the replacement committee will advise on a broader range of issues that are more relevant to the current position. I note that in schedule 1 to the bill the committee is to advise the Water Administration Ministerial Corporation each year on the timing and pattern for the release of water for environmental reasons under the Snowy water licence. The committee will be broad ranging. I note that at least six members will be appointed by the Minister and a member appointed by the Minister who is, by the instrument of appointment, to be appointed as chairperson of the committee.

I note that at least two members must be community representatives and of the community representatives two are to be nominated by a Minister of the State of Victoria. At least one member must be a representative of environmental interest groups, which ensures there is still an environmental focus, at least one member must be a representative of Aboriginal interests, at least one member must be a representative of the Government of New South Wales and at least one member must be a representative of the Government of the State of Victoria. This bill will ensure that wider concerns with the Snowy Hydro Scheme are considered, such as important Aboriginal concerns and other concerns that will be identified by both the New South Wales and Victorian governments. It is always a pleasure to speak on infrastructure and that has been a focus of this Government. It makes sense that the Government has looked at the scheme and sought ways to improve it and to ensure that the scheme is healthy.

The member for Hawkesbury's contribution to the debate was relevant and displayed an understanding of the importance that infrastructure plays in north-west Sydney. For the first time in many years that area, which has been neglected for so many years, is now experiencing infrastructure investment. A member made a private member's statement this morning about development in The Hills district. People in The Hills are now very happy. One can see the joy in their faces when walking down the streets because they know they have a government which has their concerns at heart and which is giving them a return on their tax dollars. They did not have that during many years of neglect by members opposite.

It is important to mention some of the investments in infrastructure that have occurred in the north-west since this Government came to office three years ago. As the member for Hawkesbury knows, stations are being constructed throughout the north-west, and that is restoring confidence in local communities. The North West Rail Link project has seen 31 major tenders let and 51 contracts issued. It is a significant project for the region. After six months of this Government being in office, geotechnical drilling began and work has been under way at various station sites across the north-west since then.

In mid-2012 the multi-billion dollar tender process began for the 15-kilometre twin tunnels and six international consortiums, including 60 companies, signalled their intention to bid. On 25 June 2013 the

Government announced that the \$1.15 billion contract had been awarded to Thiess John Holland in a joint venture. Thiess John Holland has been doing a sterling job at various station sites across The Hills. It is particularly important that there be a focus on community consultation, and that includes learning from the locals on the ground about issues that the Government may not have considered. In light of that, this bill establishes an advisory committee that will comprise people with a wide range of expertise and perspectives to ensure that a greater range of views will be taken into account than the scientific issues considered by the Snowy Scientific Committee.

I will return to the important North West Rail Link project. The Government has committed, and is on track, to have the tunnel boring machines in the ground this year. The project is ahead of schedule and under budget. Thiess John Holland has contracted NFM Technologies in France—a top-tier manufacturer—to design, build and deliver the four boring machines that will cut the 15 kilometres of tunnel between Bella Vista and Epping. It will be Australia's longest tunnel. Like the Snowy Hydro Scheme, this is a significant, world-class infrastructure project. It will be the longest tunnel in Australia. It is a sign of innovation and initiative by a government that is focused on infrastructure, as the government was when the Snowy Hydro Scheme was established.

This innovative, state-of-the-art and highly specialised equipment is being made specifically for the north-west of Sydney by a world leader in tunnelling that has built more than 100 of these machines for a wide range of geological conditions. Like the Snowy Hydro Scheme, this is a mammoth logistical feat. Each of the four machines weighs more than 9,000 tonnes, or the same as 570 Holden Commodores. Each will comprise 38 large pieces that will fill 10 40-foot shipping containers. They will be assembled and tested overseas before being pulled apart and shipped to Australia.

It is with great pleasure that I support this bill. It demonstrates the Government's foresight and interest in investment in infrastructure in this State. It provides for the establishment of a committee that has a wider focus than the environmental concerns addressed in the Act. The small details of infrastructure such as the old Snowy Mountains Scheme do not escape this Government's focus and its constant effort to improve infrastructure. The North West Rail Link is another demonstration that, unlike the former Government, this Government is focused on infrastructure.

**Mr JOHN SIDOTI** (Drummoyne) [5.16 p.m.]: I support the Snowy Hydro Corporatisation Amendment (Snowy Advisory Committee) Bill 2013. The member for Hawkesbury summarised the bill and gave members a history lesson on his father's professional boxing career. The impact of an infrastructure project and engineering feat such as the Snowy Mountains Scheme is evident from history of the many migrants that worked on the scheme. The heavy lifting they did in the early years is a tribute to the migrants who worked on it and who went on to achieve self-sufficiency from government.

The Snowy Hydro Corporatisation Amendment (Snowy Advisory Committee) Bill amends the Snowy Hydro Corporatisation Act 1997 to establish the Snowy Advisory Committee, specifies its functions and does various other things. It is important that the Snowy Advisory Committee includes members with a wide range of technical knowledge and community expertise. The former Snowy Scientific Committee had a limited membership and was focused on ecological and scientific issues relating to environmental flows, which are important. However, concerns raised by local councils, chambers of commerce, fishers, recreational groups and Aborigines must also be considered. The committee established by this legislation will do that.

I understand that Aboriginal groups in particular have been concerned about the lack of recognition and consultation with regard to their cultural needs. The New South Wales Office of Water has initiated a cultural water assessment of the Snowy River with the local community to inform the new committee. Snowy Hydro Limited owns and operates the Snowy Mountains Hydro-Electric Scheme, a network of seven major power stations, 31 generating units, 16 dams and 225 kilometres of tunnels. Snowy Hydro Limited also owns and operates two gas-fired power stations in Victoria, one in the Latrobe Valley and the other in Laverton North on the outskirts of Melbourne.

Snowy Hydro Limited is also involved in community sponsorship and community programs and initiatives. It supports tourism, youth development, the environment and safety within both the local and broader communities. It is a major sponsor of Snowy Hydro SouthCare Rescue Helicopter service, which provides aeromedical rescue facilities to the Snowy Mountains region. The Snowy Mountains Scheme is one of the great engineering projects of our time. We do not need to reinvent the wheel; we need only look at the jobs created by

that wonderful project. We hear these days that we will never get another harbour bridge, Opera House or Snowy Mountains Scheme, but this Government has embarked on some wonderful projects which will regenerate jobs growth and which will echo the sentiments of a bygone era.

The WestConnex project will benefit the Drummoyne electorate, the inner west and Sydney and it will create many thousands of jobs. It will be great for Sydney. The member for Castle Hill spoke about the North West Rail Link, which is another fantastic project. The South West Rail Link will be completed soon. These are major job-generating projects that will bring wonderful benefits to the community.

Last week in a private member's statement I spoke about an independent economist in my electorate called Ian Spring. That gentleman has devoted his life to infrastructure and wants to give back to the community by using his expertise. He has an honours degree and a number of other degrees. At the tender age of 81 he has no motive other than to give back to industry. Ian Spring has spoken about some wonderful projects and the need to invest large amounts of money in infrastructure. He also has spoken about the time when building major projects was the responsibility of the Federal government. After the war the task of worrying about infrastructure was handed to the various States. That was great; the only problem was the States were not given the revenue they needed to build it. We now have 80:20 funding partnerships and so forth, but it is no wonder that revolutionary infrastructure programs were not implemented for a number of years.

I am happy that the projects I have mentioned are well underway or in the advanced stages of planning the process. I am particularly looking forward to WestConnex, which will bring major benefits to my community and other communities across Sydney. I made a private member's statement this morning in which I spoke about the need for a second airport. That is another major piece of infrastructure that will create thousands of jobs, particularly in Western Sydney. Investing in infrastructure projects will make money. When we create jobs people make money and they pay tax. As a result, the money spent on the project comes back to government.

The Government is undertaking worthwhile projects. We are not talking about home insulation or building school halls. We are talking about long-term projects that will bring big dollars to this State and create wealth and jobs for the next generation. After getting a bit side-tracked, I will now return to the bill. It is hard to match Parliamentary Secretary Ray Williams's wonderful life story.

**Mr Ray Williams:** That was only a small part of it.

**Mr JOHN SIDOTI:** It definitely was. It would take a lot longer than 15 minutes to talk about all of that. Returning to the bill, while there may be some concerns about the committee becoming an advisory rather than an independent body, it will still have an independent chair and the Minister will have no influence over the advice it provides. That is consistent with the Government's actions in the past three years. As expected, we are setting up programs and committees which are independent of government and which give fierce, independent advice. The committee also needs to have the relevant government experts involved to ensure that a balanced and practical environmental water strategy can be implemented. It makes little sense to have a separate advisory committee with no access to the expertise, resources or information that government officers have or their practical knowledge of how water can be released and the limitations on the size and the patterns of releases.

The bill will establish the Snowy Advisory Committee. The function of the committee is to advise the Water Administration Ministerial Corporation each year on the timing and pattern for the release of water for environmental reasons under the Snowy water licence. As the previous speaker said, the committee will consist of at least six members appointed by the Minister and a member appointed by the Minister who is, by the instrument of appointment, to be appointed as chairperson of the committee. The committee will comprise at least two members who must be community representatives. Of the community representatives, two are to be nominated by a Minister of the State of Victoria. At least one member must be a representative of environmental interest groups and at least one member must be a representative of Aboriginal interests. At least one member must be a representative of the Government of the State of New South Wales and at least one member must be a representative of the Government of the State of Victoria. As we can see, a broad cross-section of people will make up the committee. That diverse representation will encompass all different views.

The bill provides that the regulations may make provision with respect to the membership of the committee. The bill also provides that a member of the committee holds office for a period not exceeding three years as is specified in the member's instrument of appointment but is eligible, if otherwise qualified, for re-appointment. The committee is also subject to the control and direction of the Minister in the exercise of its function, except in relation to the contents of any advice given by it.

Projects such as this are fantastic. It is important that we nurture more and more infrastructure projects and end the debate about borrowing money. There is nothing wrong with borrowing. In the private sector it is perfectly normal to borrow as long as it done for good reason. In business, spending money on infrastructure and equipment is an investment in the business. That is a good thing. I will not bag Opposition members anytime they bring forward sensible proposals. Infrastructure projects of this nature are a win for everybody. I commend the bill to the House and I look forward to the Government undertaking many more great infrastructure projects.

**Mr MATT KEAN** (Hornsby) [5.26 p.m.]: I support the Snowy Hydro Corporatisation Amendment (Snowy Advisory Committee) Bill 2013. I have a great deal of affection for the Snowy River and the Snowy Mountains Scheme. When metropolitan and rural or regional members in this place turn their minds to nation-building projects, the first thing that comes to them is the Snowy Mountains Scheme. The Snowy Mountains Scheme was constructed from 1949 to 1974. It covers 5,000 square kilometres in southern New South Wales and has 16 major dams, seven power stations, a pumping station and 225 kilometres of tunnels, pipelines and aqueducts. It was a major project that transformed our nation. As I said, I am delighted to speak about something so iconic and Australian.

The Snowy Mountains Scheme and the Snowy River are two of the most iconic things in this country. Banjo Patterson romanticised the river in his famous poem *The Man from Snowy River*. It has been etched into the memories and hearts of all New South Welshmen as well as all Australians. That is why when speaking in debate on this bill I had to first acknowledge how important the river was and is to so many communities. We all want to see a healthy Snowy River.

**Mr John Sidoti**: That is a great point.

**Mr MATT KEAN**: I acknowledge the interjection. No-one wants a healthy Snowy River more than the member for Drummoyne. We must achieve that objective in a balanced way, which this bill proposes. It will recognise all interests in and users of the river. There has been some hysteria from the Opposition members and the Snowy River Alliance. In an opinion piece in the *Sydney Morning Herald*—everyone's favourite tabloid—Acacia Rose talks about the independence of the Snowy Scientific Committee being compromised. That is absolutely not the case. The chair of the committee will remain independent in line with the recommendations made by the oversight body.

There were some concerns that the committee would become advisory rather than independent. That is a fallacy. It will still have an independent chair and the Minister will have no influence over the advice received. This Government values independence in the governance process. We saw what happens when that independence is compromised or trashed under the former Government. We are seeing that played out in the Independent Commission Against Corruption at the moment. We are seeing what happens when a Minister steps in and overrides an independent process to trash it for everyone. We saw the former Minister for Mineral Resources, the Hon. Ian Macdonald, use his ministerial discretion and trash an independent process—some suggest to the tune of more than \$200 million. That is \$200 million of New South Wales taxpayers' money that is not being spent on schools, hospitals and roads. This bill will do the exact opposite. It will maintain the independence of this committee by ensuring that it has an independent chair and that the Minister does not direct what the committee does. The committee will comprise people representing a broad cross-section of stakeholders who use the river.

I point out that times have changed since the original section 57 of the legislation was incorporated into the Snowy Hydro Corporatisation Act 1997. When the Snowy Hydroelectric Scheme was corporatised in 1997, it was envisaged that there would be environmental releases into the Snowy River and other montane streams affected by the Snowy scheme. However, the size and nature of these were not known. Section 57, which deals with the Snowy Scientific Committee, reflects the situation in 1997. It was not until five years later that the Snowy Initiative was formally established and the recovery target was set. The member for Wollondilly has followed the happenings around the Snowy River with great interest. I am reminded by the member for Wollondilly that he represents the area in which the Warragamba Dam is situated. No-one knows more about these issues than the member for Wollondilly, although I suspect the member for Monaro might know as much. However, being from a metropolitan setting and a Liberal member, he knows these issues pretty well.

Under the Snowy Initiative the governments of New South Wales, Victoria and the Commonwealth committed funds and agreed to recover water through water-saving projects in the Murray and Murrumbidgee valleys. It was agreed that 212 gigalitres, or 21 per cent of the average natural flow of the Snowy River, would

be recovered over 10 years and that that water would be returned to the river. The target water entitlement was achieved in July 2012. It is now 2014 and we have come a long way since then. Prior to 2010 only small volumes of water were available for release because the entitlements had not been recovered in full and because of the drought the allocations to those entitlements were low. From November 2010 significant flushing flows—the primary short-term ecological objective of the environmental flows—were released. From the time of its establishment in 2008 the Snowy Scientific Committee has provided advice on environmental releases, but the advice has in the main been adopted and has influenced the release patterns over the past few years.

I am told that for the 2013 and 2014 calendar years, on the recommendation of the New South Wales Office of Water and with the agreement of the Victorian and Commonwealth governments, a different release pattern is now being trialled. This new release pattern aims to increase the variability of flows to better reflect the hydrology of the Snowy River, provide multiple high-flow events and test the release capability of the Jindabyne Dam. All the water has now been recovered and a range of flows and pattern releases have occurred. It is therefore time for aquatic scientists, government experts, water resource managers and the community to work together to advise on a strategy for the environmental releases. The key issue is that this brings all stakeholders to the table. Everyone with an interest in the river loves the river. They have affection for the Snowy River etched on their hearts. They care about the river and want it to thrive, and this bill enables them to be part of that process. The member for Drummoyne touched on this very eloquently when he said that the Snowy River is everyone's river and we all have a role to play in protecting this amenity and the character of this much loved Australian treasure.

**Mr CHRIS HOLSTEIN** (Gosford) [5.36 p.m.]: I support the Snowy Hydro Corporatisation Amendment (Snowy Advisory Committee) Bill 2013. It should be noted that, although part of the 1997 Act, the Snowy Scientific Committee was not even appointed by the previous Labor Government until 2008. The re-appointment of the committee lapsed in 2011, after the initial three-year term. That clearly demonstrates that the Snowy Scientific Committee was not the right committee to do the job and that it is time for it to be replaced. The Snowy Mountains Scheme is an Australian icon. It is our largest engineering project and it is very famous.

Water plays an important role in our community. Having served as the mayor of the City of Gosford for a number of years I know it is important to my community. Our water catchment was a major issue when we were in drought, just as our brothers and sisters in the west are now. The Gosford water catchment is supplemented through the Meadow Creek Dam. It is not of the scale of the Snowy Mountains Scheme, but it is important for my community. The Mangrove Creek Dam had retention issues in early 2008. Our dam, which holds 190 megalitres, supplies a catchment of about 101 square kilometres and is the main water source for not only more than 300 residents in Gosford but also residents in Wyong.

It was constructed in 1978, and was formally opened in 1982. It is on the headwaters of Mangrove Creek, which is a tributary of the Hawkesbury River. It is our largest storage dam, but it is not primarily a collection dam because it is relatively small. The shape of the valley and its geology enabled the construction of a relatively high wall. As I said, the dam holds 190 megalitres of water. Our water supply concerns were the result of a 15-year drought that saw the level drop to 10.27 per cent. This was highlighted in February 2007 when the dam reached such low levels that local government officials imposed extreme water restrictions.

The State Water Plan was established in 2007 and we were able to obtain assistance from our good friends in the Hunter Valley by utilising some of their local water supplies. Between 2010 and 2012 we established a link with Mangrove Creek Dam. I congratulate former Federal member Jim Lloyd, the member for Robertson and Government Whip in the Howard Government, who organised funding for a link to be established between Mardi Dam and Mangrove Creek Dam. The 21-kilometre pipeline enabled us to transfer water from Wyong Creek to the Mardi Dam and from the Mardi Dam into Mangrove Creek Dam. We were desperate at that time; the dam was a major concern for us because it had a major impact on our community. At one stage we were so desperate we looked at measures that would have included the building of desalination plants on the Central Coast.

I am highlighting the importance of water in our communities and the need for infrastructure. The Snowy Hydro-Electric Scheme has been a major benefit to not only New South Wales but to the people of Australia. I understand that the role of the Snowy Scientific Committee was to advise on the adequacy of environmental releases and on programs for restoration of the catchments, to carry out ongoing monitoring and reporting and to produce a public state of the environment report on the catchments. But in 2013 those roles are no longer appropriate for the Snowy Advisory Committee. The size of the environmental releases is determined

by the recovery of the entitlements—which is 212 gegalitres, as targeted under the Snowy Initiative—and by the amount of allocated water available each year under these entitlements. Ongoing restoration and the management of catchments are responsibilities of the National Parks and Wildlife Service in the national park estate; elsewhere, catchment management authorities, which are now part of the Government's reformed Local Land Services, have that role.

Monitoring, modelling, research and reporting of environmental flow releases are now undertaken by the New South Wales Office of Water. The Snowy Scientific Committee did not produce an annual state of the environment report on the catchments in its three years of operation. That work now will be undertaken as part of the Government's state of the environment reporting program. It is timely that the Government refine the roles of the committee to ensure that it is not duplicating work carried out by other agencies and to bring it into line with other committees across the State.

Water supply is important to all our communities. In my area we have gone through hard times and we have ensured that we have had major infrastructure projects built such as Mangrove Creek Dam, which had the support of previous governments and, as I have mentioned, the support of former Federal member Jim Lloyd, who got us the money to ensure water security on the Central Coast for many years to come. That foresight was reflected many years before in the Snowy Hydro program, but it is time for change. It is time to change the committee and for us to take action. For those reasons, I commend the bill to the House.

**Mr GARRY EDWARDS** (Swansea) [5.43 p.m.]: I support the Snowy Hydro Corporatisation Amendment (Snowy Advisory Committee) Bill 2013. I begin my contribution by apologising. Having been given the wonderful opportunity by the Government Whips to speak on this important bill, I was very eager not to miss that opportunity even though I have not had time to fully prepare my contribution.

The Snowy Scientific Committee was not established until 2008, notwithstanding that its establishment was part of the 1997 Act. The reappointment of the committee lapsed in 2011, just three years after it was established. This soundly demonstrates that the Snowy Scientific Committee is not the appropriate committee for the job and it is now time for it to be replaced. On an historical note, I remember going to the cinemas in George Street in Sydney with family members when I was a very young boy in the early to mid-1950s to watch movies on the big screen and I particularly remember the newsreels opening with the laughing kookaburra. The Snowy Hydro project featured highly in those newsreels because it was a monumental project in the history of our very young country. I will never forget those newsreels showing the massive machinery and the pouring of the concrete in this amazing undertaking.

On another historical note, many years later I got to know a fabulous fellow, Alfredo Peverini, after I married into his family. Alfredo came to Australia from Italy in 1950 at the age of 20. He would delight in telling stories about the time he worked on the Snowy Hydro irrigation program. He said that not only was it dirty and hard work but at times it was deadly work. Sadly, a number of lives were lost during the construction of this project. Alfredo loved telling stories about he and his fellow countrymen arriving from Italy unable to speak English. He would tell a story about going to a hardware store to buy a colander to drain water from pasta. He and his friends did not know the English word for "colander", so the only way they could get the lady in the hardware store to understand what they wanted was to indicate with their hands and say, "water she go; spaghetti she stay". That was how they got their message across. If they wanted to buy a stamp to send overseas mail they would stamp their hand and make a gesture of an aeroplane taking off. They are just some of the stories I was told by one of the workers on the Snowy Hydro project who I became related to many years later.

The role of the Snowy Scientific Committee was to advise on the adequacy of the environmental releases and on programs for restoration of the catchments, to carry out ongoing monitoring and reporting and to produce a public state of the environment report on the catchments. In 2013 those roles are no longer appropriate for the Snowy Advisory Committee. The size of the environmental releases is determined by the recovery of the entitlements—which is 212 gegalitres, as targeted under the Snowy Initiative—and the amount of allocated water available each year under these entitlements.

Ongoing restoration and management of catchments is the role of the National Parks and Wildlife Service in the national park estate. Elsewhere, catchment management authorities are now part of the government's reformed Local Land Services. Monitoring, modelling, research and reporting on these environmental flow releases is mostly undertaken by the New South Wales Office of Water. In addition, the Snowy Scientific Committee did not produce an annual state of the catchment report in its three years of operation. This work is undertaken as part of the government's state of the environment reporting program.

Therefore, it is timely to refine the role of the committee, ensure that it is not duplicating work already carried out by other agencies, and bring it into line with other such committees across the State. I commend the bill to the House. I thank my colleague the member for Gosford in particular for his great assistance in the preparation of my contribution.

*[Business interrupted.]*

## **BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

### **Order of Business**

**Mr BRAD HAZZARD** (Wakehurst—Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Infrastructure NSW) [5.50 p.m.]: Obviously there is a great degree of interest in the Snowy Hydro Corporatisation Amendment (Snowy Advisory Committee) Bill 2013. However, I am concerned that the House is still to deal with private members' statements and the matter of public importance. I propose that there be one more speech on the bill, and hopefully that will conclude at about six o'clock. At that time, members should be prepared for private members' statements and the matter of public importance.

### **SNOWY HYDRO CORPORATISATION AMENDMENT (SNOWY ADVISORY COMMITTEE) BILL 2013**

#### **Second Reading**

*[Business resumed.]*

**Mr TROY GRANT** (Dubbo—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.51 p.m.]: It is with great pride that I speak on the Snowy Hydro Corporatisation Amendment (Snowy Advisory Committee) Bill 2013. The object of this bill is to amend the Snowy Hydro Corporatisation Act 1997 to establish the Snowy Advisory Committee to advise the Water Administration Ministerial Corporation each year on the timing and pattern for the release of water for environmental reasons under the Snowy Water Licence. The Snowy Advisory Committee replaces the Snowy Scientific Committee, which is to be dissolved by the proposed Act. It was also with great pride that in 2011, on behalf of the Minister for the Environment, I attended the largest-ever environmental release of water from the Snowy Hydro facility into the Snowy River.

I was joined on that auspicious and record-breaking occasion by the outstanding member for Monaro, who not only helped me understand the history of the national icon that is the Snowy Hydro scheme but introduced me to so many community members and community groups, particularly the Aboriginal community groups, chamber of commerce organisations, bodies involved with environmental issues and those focused on the health of the river. The member for Monaro also introduced me to a large number of people who use the river for outstanding recreational purposes.

When that magnificent deluge of water was sent down the Snowy, a large number of canoeists awaited the wave to enjoy that recreational aspect of the Snowy. I remember quite clearly Mr Terry Charlton being present at that release. I am not sure the tears in his eyes were from seeing the deluge of water running down the Snowy or an opportunity lost, but he did say to me that this would do a lot of good for the health of the river in the long term and that he was proud that we had arrived at the point of making such a significant release of environmental water down that vital, iconic waterway of New South Wales. It was the largest release in the history of the river.

Some time prior to that, again at the direction of the member for Monaro, I visited the wonderful community of Dalgety, where I spoke to the former Snowy Scientific Committee and many people who engaged in that vital catchment in New South Wales. They told me quite clearly, as I had garnered from the member for Monaro, that there was something missing in the decisions about what would happen with ongoing flows into the river, and that there was an opportunity for this State Government to more broadly reflect the wide range of community interests and concerns regarding the operations and the advice going forward on water administration of the Snowy Hydro. Very importantly, we have heard other members talk about the lack of detail and lack of transparency in some decisions being taken regarding previous releases, and that there was not a clear understanding of what was required from a technical base and what was required from a community base. The legislation being debated achieves that understanding.

Proposed new section 57 clearly says the Snowy Advisory Committee established by this Act has a clear function: to advise the Water Administration Ministerial Corporation each year of the timing and pattern

for the release of water for environmental reasons under the Snowy water licence. That will achieve both the technical outcomes and the community expectation outcomes. This Government has demonstrated, through a raft of reforms that have been undertaken, that we get three triple bottom line outcomes that underpin good decision-making, underpin good transparency and deliver outcomes. These are not decisions like those taken by former governments where it was all about outputs to silence a concern in the community, but genuine attempts and genuine operations of government to get real outcomes based on science, based on good technical advice and based on genuine consultation with the community to meet their expectations and needs.

I am pleased to learn that the New South Wales Office of Water, which I have frequently worked with, recently initiated a cultural water assessment of the Snowy River, along with the local communities who will form this new committee. I do not know whether the local Aboriginal community and all communities of the Monaro have had greater support from their local State member than that delivered by the member for Monaro. He gets his community; he gets the issue. He actually delivers outcomes, as is the aim of this Government. This is a milestone outcome that had been discussed with those opposite in their dying days of government: the need for certainty about how the environmental water would flow and how the health of the Snowy River would be maintained into the future. That certainly is being achieved and that outcome is now being arrived at, because this Act not only gets the balance right between the technical advice that is required to make those decisions and those recommendations for the releases but also makes sure that the community has a real and genuine say.

Obviously there are significant relationships with the States involved in the surrounding area. The member for Monaro again is exemplary in his dealings with his State counterparts and his Federal colleagues. I know he is held in the highest regard by all sides of politics, because the member for Monaro is community- outcome driven and not driven by populist reactions to issues. He is absolutely killing it in terms of the work required in that electorate. The Snowy Hydro Corporatisation Amendment (Snowy Advisory Committee) Bill 2013 will set about ensuring that the future of the Snowy River is secured in future decisions taken about those environmental releases and the impacts of those releases dependent on the size of the releases.

These releases result in a fair volume of water hurtling down the river, as I experienced in about October 2011, if my memory serves me correctly. This measure sets up the Snowy for the future. This is a credit to the Minister for Primary Industries, who looks after water as part of her portfolio. It is a credit to the communities in and around the Snowy, particularly those key stakeholders involved. The member for Albury and the member for Wagga Wagga also have had significant investment in discussions on this measure, as well as the key players and the outcomes of these sorts of decisions. I congratulate the member for Monaro who has steered this debate and has worked closely with the Minister to make sure that we have reached a common sense outcome. I commend the bill to the House.

**Debate adjourned on motion by Mr Glenn Brookes 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**

#### **JANNALI AND COMO TRAIN TIMETABLES**

**Mr BARRY COLLIER** (Miranda) [6.03 p.m.]: I have spoken and written to the Minister for Transport on numerous occasions about the new train timetable, the cuts to services and the adverse impact they are having on my constituents and across the shire. In a letter to me, my constituent Mr Seppo Kallonen stated:

Dear Barry,

I have written many complaints about the new train timetable to the Minister for Transport but have yet to receive a satisfactory reply. Customers from Jannali and Como are being discriminated against under this timetable. No matter how Gladys Berejiklian tries to gloss over and distort the figures, the fact is there were 11 trains stopping at Como during the morning peak between 6.00am and 9.00am under the old timetable. Now there are only 8. It is not hard to calculate that each train during this time will have 37.5 per cent more passengers getting on at Como. However, I have noticed that the trains are already more crowded when they GET to Como, especially between 7.00 and 8.00. The Como trains all come from Cronulla and as there are more trains from there under the new timetable they should be less crowded. However, this is not the case. Let's look at what happens at Jannali & Como [stations] in the period between 7.00 and 8.00, the time when most people including myself board a train to the city. During this time there are 6 trains stopping at Jannali and 3 at Como. Under the old timetable, there were 10 trains stopping at Jannali and 4 at Como. It is obvious that reducing trains at Jannali by 40 per cent causes the number of passengers from Jannali to

increase by 67% per train on average, these people packing into the remaining 6 trains, 3 of which arrive at Como more crowded. To test this theory, I went to Jannali station at 7.15 to see for myself and what I saw shocked me. There were hundreds of people standing on the platform waiting to get on the 7.18 train. No wonder the 7.21 arrives at Como packed like the proverbial sardine can. Add to this the 33% more people per train getting on at Como and the result is a train so full that there are already people standing when it gets to Oatley.

Who thought up this timetable? Obviously they hadn't done their research or are treating the customers of Jannali & Como with utter contempt.

There needs to be 4 more trains stopping at Jannali between 7.00 and 8.00 and at least 1 more at Como.

There are 3 trains from Sutherland between 7.00 and 8.00 that are first stop Oatley, then Hurstville, Wolli Creek, Redfern etc. Why can't these stop at Como as well? Why are people at Oatley getting 14 services during the morning peak and Como only 8?

I want at least 1 more service at Como between 7.00 and 8.00 as well as 4 more at Jannali so we are not overcrowded.

Would you please present my views to the Minister and ask for urgent action on this matter? I don't buy a ticket to stand all the way to the City.

Regards,  
Seppo Kallonen

I agree with everything Mr Kallonen said. As a regular commuter from Jannali between 7.00 a.m. and 8.00 a.m., I could once get a seat at my nearest station. I now have to stand all the way to Martin Place, as I did this morning. Despite all the rhetoric, the promises and the Minister's letters telling me how grateful we should be for the hundreds of extra services on my line, there is no doubt that trains from my part of the world are all overcrowded between 7.00 a.m. and 8.00 a.m. Let us do the simple maths: fewer trains divided by the same number of people equals more people per train and increased crowding. Mr Kallonen asks, "Who thought up this timetable?" Whoever did it did not bother to consult the public.

Recently we found out that the principal of Heathcote High School was given no option but to change the whole school timetable after bureaucrats cut train services for 281 schoolchildren on three days notice. One would have thought that the basic consideration in determining the number of trains that stop at any given station is the number of commuters who want to catch it there—in other words, the demands of commuters. It makes good sense that the larger the number of commuters the more trains and more frequent trains there should be. The stations with larger numbers of passengers should have more trains.

I have asked the Minister to advise me of patronage at these stations via a question on notice, but I have been directed to a website. I have made my own inquiries about train numbers at Jannali, Como and Oatley. The local Bureau of Transport figures show that between 6.30 a.m. and 9.00 a.m. each weekday 2,140 commuters catch the train from Jannali. In the same period only 1,110 commuters do so from Oatley—that is, about half the patronage of Jannali. In that same period, Jannali has lost two services and Oatley services have increased by three between 7.00 a.m. and 8.00 a.m., when most people catch the train. Under the new timetable, Jannali lost four services between 7.00 a.m. and 8.00 a.m. That represents a 40 per cent cut. Under the old timetable, Oatley had three trains between 7.00 a.m. and 8.00 a.m. Now Oatley has six in the same period.

The sleepy little village of Oatley now effectively has double the number of trains between 7.00 a.m. and 8.00 a.m. each weekday, while Jannali, which services five large suburbs, has had its services between 7.00 a.m. and 8.00 a.m. cut by 40 per cent. Why should that be? One commuter asked me, "Is Oatley a Liberal seat?" I said, "Yes, at 0.5 per cent before the redistribution it was the most marginal Liberal seat in the State". No wonder the member for Oatley grins like a Cheshire cat every time I mention the new train timetable. Will the Minister explain why Jannali—and for that matter Como—gets reduced services between 7.00 a.m. and 8.00 a.m. while Oatley gets double the numbers during the same time period?

My constituents and I would like to be assured that the increase in services at Oatley had nothing to do with providing support for the most marginal Liberal seat in the State. The next election is just over 12 months away. If the Minister ignores my constituents and does not introduce a new, fairer and more equitable timetable, based on public consultation, then she does so at her peril.

### **WAGGA WAGGA BASE HOSPITAL**

**Mr DARYL MAGUIRE** (Wagga Wagga—Parliamentary Secretary) [6.08 p.m.]: A lot has happened in the Wagga Wagga electorate since Parliament last sat, in particular, major developments at Wagga Wagga Base Hospital. Last Friday week I, together with members of the community, attended the pouring of the

foundations for the new acute wing which is a part of the \$282.1 million central development. All the acute services will be located in a central location and attached to the recently opened Mental Health Building. This hospital redevelopment was originally forecast to be completed in 2016 and it will now be completed in 2015, 12 months ahead of schedule.

Last year with the Minister for Health I attended the opening of the Mental Health Building, which has increased bed numbers from 20 to 50 and is finally delivering the intended services. I am informed that staffing is at capacity, which has been brought about by this major investment. The acute wing will be the central hub of the hospital, with a heliport on top. Upon its completion, we will be able to demolish the old section of the Wagga Wagga Base Hospital, that is, the tower built in 1961. The demolition will be a laborious process. The tower has a steel frame and contains asbestos and will need to be demolished brick by brick.

The development has placed pressure on the area around the health precinct. The health precinct is experiencing an enormous boom in investment by private providers, as well as government. The good news is that doctors are now providing day surgery and other services that previously were not provided or were inadequate. This is putting pressure on car parking availability and on residents in the area. We understand the difficulties they are facing from the largest redevelopment in regional and rural New South Wales. The \$300 million being spent by the Government and the millions of dollars being poured in by the private sector will result in the delivery of increased public and private services.

A major development at the University of Notre Dame Australia in conjunction with Calvary Health Care is almost complete. The community has partnered with Calvary Health Care to deliver palliative care, which has been a long time coming. The State Government has provided money to deliver eight specialty beds under a public-private partnership with Calvary. The community will embark upon a fundraising drive to build 10 slow-stream beds, in partnership with the Federal Government and the Forrest Centre. That addition will put more pressure on the precinct, but I assure the community that the Government is working as fast as it can to alleviate those pressures. With the completion of the new acute hospital and private investment, Wagga Wagga will retain a nucleus of specialist services.

It is a regional referral centre and, unlike some regional cities, we have managed to maintain the nucleus of specialists and necessary services. But there will be more. Accommodation will be built around the precinct—Ronald McDonald House, Lilier Lodge, the cancer centre, which is a public-private partnership. Indeed, the medical precinct is experiencing unprecedented growth through long-awaited investment in this hospital by the Liberal-Nationals Government. For 30 years the community has campaigned for this investment and finally this Government is delivering under the Minister for Health, Jillian Skinner, who saw the need and responded. Indeed, the Minister is continuing to invest and she has allocated \$400,000 for the final phase of planning. That is currently under way and will cause some pressures in the region. However, I ask the public to work with the Government and thank them for understanding. We will get the job done as quickly as we can.

**Mr CRAIG BAUMANN** (Port Stephens—Parliamentary Secretary) [6.13 p.m.]: I thank the member for Wagga Wagga and Parliamentary Secretary to the Premier for Rural and Regional Affairs for providing an update on the progress of Wagga Wagga Base Hospital. I know he has fought hard and I congratulate him on achieving that good result. I join him in thanking the O'Farrell-Stoner Government and the Minister for Health for making this much-needed facility a reality.

### **PHILIPPINES TYPHOON DISASTER**

**Mr JOHN BARILARO** (Monaro) [6.14 p.m.]: Tonight I speak about super Typhoon Yolanda that devastated the Philippines last December, a disaster that wreaked havoc and destruction, causing 6,000 lives to be lost and about 14 million people to be displaced from their communities. It was a disaster of a magnitude never seen in the Philippines and the world has responded strongly in support of the large clean-up job there. The Australian Government has played a role and tonight I want to talk about the Australian Government's commitment of a grant of \$1 million to a group called Gawad Kalinga, an organisation in the Philippines that has been helping to rebuild very poor villages using donations and volunteers from all over the world, whilst including those communities in their work.

The organisation is building homes, schools and community centres and giving those community members opportunities to get ahead. It is fantastic what can be achieved with just a small amount of money. Gawad Kalinga is a Filipino phrase that means "to give care". Gawad Kalinga is recognised as Asia's leading model for building sustainable communities in highly impoverished areas. Originating in the Philippines, its

success can be attributed to the holistic approach to community development including a program of values formation within affected communities. This particular model has been used not just in the Philippines but also in Papua New Guinea and Cambodia.

Since 2003, when Gawad Kalinga was officially launched, the organisation has established about 2,000 villages in varying stages and about 60,000 homes right across the Philippines, using organisations, individuals, groups, corporations and government. With the way the organisation is structured in the Philippines, many of the mayors and governors have been partners with Gawad Kalinga, especially around the release of land. They have allowed villages to be built in areas that are very poor and it should be noted that this is in both Christian and Muslim areas where there is no discrimination. It is all about helping those at the bottom end of the poverty line and is a template that has been used throughout the world.

I refer now to the Australian arm of Gawad Kalinga. A friend of mine, Mr George Lemon, was invited to join the board of Gawad Kalinga Australia and it was his job to advocate for the appeal and to ensure that government partnered with Gawad Kalinga in rebuilding the villages. An announcement was made by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the Australian Embassy in Manila to grant Gawad Kalinga \$1 million to help support the reconstruction of Palo in Leyte, which was devastated by Typhoon Yolanda last year. The aim is to build 250 homes and support 250 families, who will then soon have a home. George is passionate about the Gawad Kalinga movement and has been able to engage with many members and bring us along on the journey. I am proud to say that I have supported him with fundraising and provided general support to the Gawad Kalinga movement. There have been many others. Mr Alistair Coe, MLA, and Mr Steve Doszpot, MLA, from the Australian Capital Territory Legislative Assembly have ensured that the Gawad Kalinga movement and the journey continue.

So many individuals have been extremely generous and I know that George is very humbled by that generosity—people such as Jim and Phyl Edwards, Sandy Venn-Brown and Steve, Sally Barber, Brian, Jim and family and Pinoy Football Aid, which have ensured that the Gawad Kalinga success continues. The Gawad Kalinga Canberra arm was pivotal in obtaining the \$1 million grant. Its volunteers were vital in lobbying for the grant through emails and submissions and in meeting with a number of Federal members of Parliament. Earlier this year the inspirational leader of Gawad Kalinga, Mr Tony Meloto, was in Australia to attend a meeting that was organised by Senator John Williams. The purpose of the meeting was to meet and talk with the Hon. Julie Bishop about the Gawad Kalinga program. The Minister showed considerable interest and has now delivered this fantastic \$1 million grant. I applaud the Abbott Government for its response and its contribution.

Of course, the New South Wales Government has also responded to this disaster resulting in 6,000 deaths and 14 million people being displaced. How one recovers from such a disaster is mind-boggling but so many people have played a role in the Gawad Kalinga movement and I look forward to seeing what Gawad Kalinga does with the \$1 million. However, that is only part of it. George tells me that although he will not be asking most of us for further donations and help, he is launching Operation Carabaaroo, which seeks to match the \$1 million through sweat equity, that is, voluntarism and donations. I am happy to take the details of anyone who is interested. Gawad Kalinga Australia and the Gawad Kalinga movement worldwide is a fantastic organisation and I congratulate Mr George Lemon.

### **MOUNT DRUITT AWARD RECIPIENTS**

**Mr RICHARD AMERY** (Mount Druitt) [6.18 p.m.]: Members would be aware of the process of awarding State representative certificates to people who represent New South Wales in any national events. I am pleased to say that my electorate of Mount Druitt has had many recipients of these awards, too many to acknowledge in this Parliament. However, there is one case I wish to place on the parliamentary record, that is, the awarding of a certificate to Olivia Steele of Glendenning who, along with her mother, Lisa Steele, attended my office just before Christmas to receive the certificate. Olivia had participated in the New South Wales Primary Schools Sports Association track and field championships, winning many medals. What makes this young lady special is that as a baby Olivia received a liver transplant.

The issues here are substantial. This is the story of a young person who overcame a major health disability at a young age to achieve impressive results on the sporting field. In addition, it is a fantastic example of the outcome of the organ donor program, recognising the difficulties of the family who made the donation. I could not tell the story better than Olivia and her mother, Lisa, who made various comments to me in writing. Lisa Steele stated:

Olivia was born with a rare liver disease called PFIC Type 3. Within a week of being born she was admitted to hospital for numerous tests. At five weeks old we were advised that she would need a liver transplant. Within weeks she was on the transplant waiting list.

When I found out that Olivia was sick I used to cry all the time and wonder why this was happening to us. What had we done wrong to deserve this? Olivia was so small, yellow and sick. I felt so helpless and inadequate. After weeks of feeling desperate I realised that I needed to change my outlook and be positive because feeling useless was not going to help our little girl.

She went on to say that Olivia had a transplant on her first birthday. She stated:

Olivia's recovery was slow and she had a few complications. She stayed in hospital for three months after the transplant but slowly started to recover, talk and walk.

Ten years on we have a very beautiful happy, healthy daughter.

Olivia made some comments in a booklet called *The Gift*, which will be given to families waiting for organ transplants and also donor families. Olivia states:

I competed in the Australian Transplant Games in Canberra during 2010 and won six gold and two silver medals. I also competed in the 2012 Newcastle games where I won 12 gold and one silver medal. The whole family had a great time at both games and it was fantastic to meet other families in our situation.

Over the years since my transplant I have been very outgoing and have been involved in netball, oztag, athletics and swimming. I currently attend dancing and cheerleading four nights a week and compete in these sports on weekends.

A lot of people don't even realise how sick I was or that I had a transplant because of how active and healthy I am now. Sometimes I am embarrassed by my scar but once people know about it I don't mind.

I would like to say a big thank you to my wonderful donor family because, without their generosity, I would not be here today living such a fantastic life. Also, to all the doctors and nurses at the Westmead Children's Hospital for taking such wonderful care of me before, during and after my transplant. I love you.

It is a touching story of a young lady aged 11 years who is representing her community, family and school at many national events, and for children who have received organ donations from families who have experienced tragedy. I conclude by referring to an email sent to me by Olivia's mother, Lisa Steele:

Hope you can use some of the information from this passage to discuss during Parliament.

If not and you require further clarification please do not hesitate to contact myself.

Thanks again for meeting with us and also trying to help to raise donor awareness.

If ever there was an example of the need to raise donor awareness in the community it is the case of Olivia Steele and her family, who have met many challenges over the past 11 years. As a Parliament and as parliamentarians we should all be proud of the success of this young lady and the challenges that she and her family have had to overcome.

## ERASE RACISM

**Mr ANDREW ROHAN** (Smithfield) [6.23 p.m.]: On Sunday 2 March I was honoured to attend the Hyundai A-League match between the Western Sydney Wanderers and the Newcastle Jets on behalf of the Hon. Victor Dominello, Minister for Citizenship and Communities, at an invitation from the University of Western Sydney. This event was special in that it included two of my greatest passions, football and combatting racism, to achieve racial equality. The racism prevention non-government organisation All Together Now and the Football Federation of Australia joined forces to hold an Erase Racism football round in the lead-up to Harmony Day in March.

The match was held at the Western Sydney Wanderers home ground Pirtek Stadium in Parramatta. I was joined by Professor Peter Shergold, AC, Chancellor of the University of Western Sydney, Professor Kevin Dunn, Dean and Professor of Geography and Urban Studies at the University of Western Sydney, and Dr Sev Ozdowski, OAM, Director of Equity and Diversity at the University of Western Sydney, among other distinguished academic members of the university. What a fitting venue to raise awareness of the Erase Racism campaign. More than 12,000 fans attended the Western Sydney Wanderers home ground and cheered their favourite sport without incident.

Western Sydney is the home of football and home to more than 150 culturally diverse groups characterising the multicultural fabric of our State and nation. At this event, the issue of racism was raised and the great work the university has put into researching, addressing and finding solutions to eradicate racism in

Australia was highlighted. The University of Western Sydney created the Challenging Racism Project in 1998 to gauge and map the geography of racism in Australia. Since then, it has expanded from just a research project to a project that seeks proactive initiatives to combat racism.

As the elected member of one of the most culturally diverse electorates in New South Wales it saddens me to say that racism is an inherent part of any multicultural society, and Australia is no different. According to research conducted by the Challenging Racism Project, while most Australians are happy living in a multicultural society, 41 per cent of them have a narrow view of who belongs in Australia. Startling statistics such as those make me extremely grateful for the work the Challenging Racism Project has put into this issue. Furthermore, the project has been joining forces with various anti-racism groups such as the previously mentioned All Together Now and the Australian Human Rights Commission to take a proactive stance against racism.

Recently, the Challenging Racism Project and All Together Now collaborated to create an Everyday Racism app, which puts the user into the perspective of a person from a diverse background. This is a fantastic way to engage with the younger more tech-savvy population and address the issue of internet cyber-racism. Current projects include investigating the very new form of cyber-racism and how racism manifests online, bystander racism and how people witness racism in their everyday lives, such as ethnic discrimination in the rental housing market. I am sincerely grateful to the University of Western Sydney for the Challenging Racism Project, All Together Now and the Football Federation of Australia for their stance and proactivity in fighting racism. Although we lost the match by 0-2 goals it was fantastic entertainment that served a higher purpose, that is, to raise the issue of racism and promote living in a harmonious and diverse community. I look forward to the day that we can proudly say we can live in a racism free society, on and off the field.

**Private members' statements concluded.**

**INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY**

**Matter of Public Importance**

**Mrs ROZA SAGE** (Blue Mountains) [6.28 p.m.]: It gives me great pleasure to be able to speak in this matter of public importance about International Women's Day. It is an important time for women around the world to affirm themselves and to see where they have come from and where they are going. The first International Women's Day was run in 1911. This was the time when suffragettes fought for the right to vote. International Women's Day honours the work of the suffragettes, the most famous being Emily Pankhurst, and celebrates women's successes while reminding us all of the inequities still to be addressed. A lot has been done but there is still more to be done.

I am grateful that I live in this wonderful country Australia. There are so many places in the world where the lot of women is not nearly as good. International Women's Day is recognised on 8 March. It is a global day celebrating the economic, political and social achievements of women past, present and future. One of the subjects that I feel strongly about is women in the workplace. The New South Wales Government, through Women NSW, is committed to supporting and promoting women in trades and non-traditional jobs. As a working woman for the majority of my life I certainly have experienced many interesting situations, which demonstrates to me that in many ways there is still a lot to do before women are accepted as equals in the workplace.

My own experience started with my schooling. I had aspirations of being a health professional from an early age. This was a time when women were told to be either nurses or teachers and I wanted to be a doctor. I was educated in Queensland in the public school system and to achieve my goal I needed to do academic subjects, but not just ordinary academic subjects such as history and geography; I had to do physics, chemistry, biology and a high level of maths—all subjects which few girls studied and which were looked upon as the domain of boys. It just got better after that: The career guidance officer suggested that medicine was not "family friendly" and that I should look at other career paths. I have friends from the same era who were not allowed by their parents to study beyond year 10 level, even though they wished to do so.

I feel strongly that there should be the same opportunity for females to take up the jobs and occupations to which they aspire. Many women do not wish to do such jobs, but there are also many who are not encouraged to try or even given the opportunity. Improving the number of women in trades in particular can only have a positive outcome for the economy and industry, and for women. Increasing women's labour options also increases financial security and promotes independence.

The quest for equality begins with education. I am pleased that girls today are allowed to study non-traditional subjects such as woodwork, metal work and the higher levels of physics, chemistry and maths like I did. Participation rates in the workforce for women are only slightly higher than 10 years ago. The rate of employment for women is about 56.9 per cent as against about 70 per cent for men. Leaders from traditionally male-dominated industries including electrical, construction and automotive industries have been working closely with Women NSW to increase the level of female workforce participation.

The Investing in Women Funding Program was introduced as a platform for community stakeholders to develop solutions to support women's participation in trade occupations. The program challenges many of the stereotypical ideas of what women supposedly can and cannot do. It has opened up trade apprenticeship opportunities that may otherwise have gone unrecognised. Local councils, peak organisations, not-for-profit agencies and industry bodies are eligible to apply for funding under the program.

In the past 18 months the New South Wales Government has partnered with stakeholders to roll out more than 20 successful women in trades projects and initiatives. Projects have supported women in their pursuits of careers as butchers, painters, builders, boilermakers, carpenters, mechanics and horticulturalists. It is about time that women were given the opportunity to try these trades. It is important for the economy and for the self-esteem of women. Women must be able to do the things they want to do and choose their paths in life instead of being dictated to.

**Ms LINDA BURNEY** (Canterbury) [6.33 p.m.]: This Saturday is International Women's Day, a celebration for women and girls across the world. Female inequality remains a real issue in Australia and is more pronounced in many other countries. This debate caused me to look at the history of International Woman's Day. It was first held in 1911. It came about through militancy and women saying that enough was enough. It also came about through a great deal of sacrifice made by many women in those early days.

In 1908 some 15,000 women marched in New York demanding shorter hours, better pay and voting rights. In 1901, in accordance with the declaration by the Socialist Party of America, the first National Women's Day was observed across the United States on 28 February. Women continued to celebrate National Women's Day on the last Sunday of February until 1913. The global movement really began in 1910 at an international conference of working women held in Copenhagen. A woman named Clara Zetkin, who was a leader of the Women's Office of the Socialist Democratic Party in Germany, moved a motion that there should be recognition of women internationally. One hundred women from 17 countries who were representing unions, socialist parties, working women's clubs as well as the first three women elected to the Finnish Parliament greeted Zetkin's suggestion with unanimous approval and thus International Women's Day was born.

In 1911 a shocking tragedy occurred in New York. In what is known as the Triangle Fire, 140 women who were mostly Italian and Jewish immigrants were burnt to death. The event drew significant attention to the position of women in the workforce and the Bread and Roses campaign was born. In 1913 International Women's Day was transferred to 8 March and this date remains today. In 1917 on the last Sunday in February Russian women began to strike for bread and peace in response to the deaths of more than two million Russian soldiers in war. It caused the downfall of the tsar, and the day is still remembered in Russia.

Since its birth as a socialist movement, from 1918 to 1999, International Women's Day has grown to become a global day of recognition. I endorse the comments of the member for Blue Mountains. For decades International Women's Day has grown from strength to strength. Finally, the United Nations declared 1975 as International Women's Year. I did not know until I researched the topic that in countries including Afghanistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Cambodia, China, Cuba, Eritrea, Montenegro, Mongolia, Vietnam and Zambia International Women's Day is celebrated in a manner equivalent to an Australian Mother's Day. The way we celebrate International Women's Day in this country is important, but in the countries I have mentioned gifts are given and mothers and grandmothers are celebrated. That is a wonderful thing for us to think about.

This year the theme of International Women's Day is "Inspiring Change". Previous important themes have included "Women and HIV/AIDS: Advocacy, Prevention and Empowerment" and "Afghan women today: realities and opportunities" in 2002. The one that strikes me most is "Women Uniting for Peace" in 2000. Those issues are not particular to Australia; women are intimately involved with them throughout the world. I join with the Government in celebrating International Women's Day. I recognise that women still face inequality in this country, particularly in their pay, but in other countries the clock has gone backwards. We must remind ourselves of their plight on International Women's Day.

**Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS** (Port Macquarie) [6.38 p.m.]: I am pleased to join the member for Blue Mountains and the member for Canterbury to talk about this significant day, International Women's Day. The member for Blue Mountains shared with us her personal triumphs and the member for Canterbury provided us with an excellent history of this important day. International Women's Day is a time when we come together to celebrate the achievements of women as well as the challenges they have faced across past decades around the world. Many activities to commemorate the day will take place across the State, nation and world. They will all culminate on International Women's Day, which we celebrate on 8 March.

The theme for International Women's Day varies each year and is determined by the United Nations. We have heard about some of the themes. Others include last year's theme of "A promise is a promise: Time for action to end violence against women." In 2012 the theme was "Empower Rural Women—End Hunger and Poverty" and in 2011 the theme focused on equal access to education, training, science and technology. This year's theme is "Inspiring Change" and it is certainly being embraced and broadcast in the Port Macquarie electorate. It is great to see local communities joining together to celebrate the occasion.

I am looking forward to attending the Zonta breakfast in Port Macquarie on Friday morning to celebrate the day. Leah Wright from the National Stroke Foundation will be the guest speaker. I have no doubt that her presentation will be inspiring and thought provoking. The big event in Port Macquarie, however, will be held on Friday night at the Country Women's Association function rooms at Town Green. It is a fantastic venue and I thank the members of the Country Women's Association for accommodating us. It is the most appropriate place to hold an International Women's Day function.

Each year I co-host the event with the Hastings Business Women's Network. I acknowledge the organising committee, which has been working tirelessly during the past few months to ensure that the night will be nothing short of spectacular. I thank Helen Ross, Louise Beaumont, Michelle Newman, Sandra Magann, Kelly King, Jane Hillsdon, Caron Dyball, Tery Sarra and the chair of the network, Kelly Lamb. It has been a privilege working with the team. I know that the event will once again be successful and demonstrate why it is the highlight of the local calendar.

This event raises much needed funds for the Port Macquarie Hastings Domestic and Family Violence Specialist Service, formerly known as the Hastings Women and Children's Refuge. Last year we raised more than \$6,000 to renovate their kitchen. As mentioned, the theme is "Inspiring Change" and we have three wonderful women speaking at our event, women who have been paving the way in non-traditional roles by showing that anything can be achieved regardless of one's gender. The speakers will be the Assistant Commissioner of Police, Carlene York; Belinda Carey, a young woman who trained as a large-machinery mechanic and who now works in sales for Expressway Spares; and Tamara Campbell, who works for Forests New South Wales in Roads and Fire Management on the North Coast. We will also be honouring our Hastings Heroines, and a number of fantastic nominations have been received. I am on the judging panel so cannot let out any secrets about the winners. I congratulate each of the nominees and particularly congratulate the winners who will be announced on Friday.

**Mrs ROZA SAGE** (Blue Mountains) [6.41 p.m.], in reply: What wonderful contributions we have had from their members for Canterbury and Port Macquarie. The member for Canterbury gave us the history of International Women's Day, showing the difference between the plight of women then and now. In those days, and to a lesser degree today in Western civilisations, women have had to fight for their lives. It was not until such tragedies as the fire in New York that people realised things had to change. Women in 1910 called for international recognition of women and since then many wonderful things have been accomplished. I was interested to learn about other countries that do not recognise International Women's Day the way we do but more as a Mother's Day event, a lovely gesture showing the nurturing side of females, which is also part of making a well-rounded woman. I love this year's theme, "Inspiring Change".

It is important that we get the chance to do the work we want to do. I was interested to hear from the member for Port Macquarie about the exciting things happening in her electorate, which is holding many different functions. I congratulate her on hosting the Hastings Business Women's Network and the local Country Women's Association. The Country Women's Association does a fantastic job of advocacy for women, especially those in rural and regional areas. My electorate has a few branches of the Country Women's Association. I have been to many of events and dinners and I always find these women inspirational because they are not burning-their-bras types but women who go about things quietly. They are strong women who are determined to get things done and have things changed.

These comments bring me to the function we will be having in Parliament House for Women of the Year. I look forward to the Minister for Women and Minister for Family and Community Services, the Hon. Pru Goward, hosting that function. Mrs Colleen Kime, who is from my electorate, will be coming to Parliament House. She is a wonderful woman who does many things for the community. She has fostered children and worked with Sister Cities Australia. She is a wonderful mother and grandmother and an inspiring person. I wish everyone a good International Women's Day and ask them to think of all the things women do that are important to our lives.

**ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr Gareth Ward):** Order! I thank the member for Blue Mountains for moving this motion. Tomorrow I am hosting an International Women's Day event in Parliament. One of the finalists from the Kiama electorate, Annette Holmes, who is a foster-carer, will also be coming to Parliament House for this event.

**Discussion concluded.**

**The House adjourned, pursuant to standing and sessional orders, at 6.44 p.m. until  
Wednesday 5 March 2014 at 10.00 a.m.**

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