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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Tuesday 25 March 2014

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

The Speaker read the Prayer and acknowledgement of country.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Notices of Motions

General Business Notices of Motions (General Notices) given.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

RIVERSIDE GIRLS HIGH SCHOOL

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS (Lane Cove—Minister for Resources and Energy, and Special Minister of State) [12.10 p.m.]: I am immensely proud of the variety and calibre of schools within my electorate of Lane Cove. Not only have they maintained an incredibly high standard of education within New South Wales, they have played a pivotal role in the history of the area and have contributed to many cultural endeavours. Central to this contribution is Riverside Girls High School. Located on Huntley's Point by the shores of the Parramatta River, this magnificent educational facility is celebrating its eightieth anniversary this month. Originally named Riverside Domestic Science School, the facility was opened in 1934 by the Minister for Education, Mr D. H. Drummond. The name Riverside was deliberately chosen so as not to confuse the school with the nearby Gladesville Mental Hospital. Construction began in 1933 after being delayed due to the Great Depression. The school was established to provide a central domestic science school for the growing number of girls from the Drummoyne, Rozelle, Balmain, Gladesville, Ryde and Eastwood districts. The school started from incredibly humble beginnings so it gives me great pleasure to see that it is now a successful educational institution.

The site of Riverside Girls High School was initially part of the Gladesville Hospital and was a rubbish dump, used to run dry cows. It also had some of the Hunters Hill Golf Club greens on it. The location was thought eminently suited for the purpose of a central domestic science school because it was away from congested and noisy areas, yet centrally situated and could be conveniently reached by tram. The Lane Cove electorate boasts some of the best waterfront views in New South Wales and from its very rudimentary beginnings Riverside Girls High School has been renowned for its prime position and landscape. The first headmistress, Miss Camellia Olivia Nielsen, had just turned 60 when she took up her appointment at Riverside. During the intervening 80 years many extensions and improvements have taken place.

A staff member who had been at Riverside Girls for 34 years reminded a packed assembly at his farewell address that Riverside is a school that "enables you to be you". He went on to say that each girl's strengths are recognised at Riverside Girls, that each will see an opportunity come their way to realise their dreams or be challenged, and each will make a difference in their life and the lives of others if they decide to take the opportunity. This is the legacy of this tremendous school. The school's motto "Facta non verba", meaning "Deeds not words", demonstrates the kind of proactive mentality that has made Riverside Girls High School such a success story over the past 80 years and an asset not only to the Lane Cove community but also to New South Wales. It is therefore my pleasure to pay tribute today to the work of so many individuals past and present who have made Riverside Girls High School the great success story that it is. I commend, acknowledge and pay tribute to the leadership of the Principal, Belinda Kelly, and the head of the Parents and Citizens Association, Greg Tunnock, as well as the teachers, staff, students, parents and families of the school who have made sacrifices over the past 80 years. I wish Riverside Girls High School and all its students a bright, healthy and happy future.

LES POWELL SCHOOL

Mr NICK LALICH (Cabramatta) [12.13 p.m.]: Nestled among the homes in Mount Pritchard and next door to Mount Pritchard East Public School is the Les Powell School, named after a former mayor of Fairfield. I have visited this wonderful school many times, which is attended by 80 children who have moderate to severe intellectual and multiple disabilities; many of them are confined to wheelchairs. Even though my heart aches each time I visit the children and think of the challenges they have to overcome every day, they also inspire me because of their positivity and the way in which they deal with and overcome their challenges. The children are supported every day by their loving and devoted families and the hardworking teachers, staff and principal at the Les Powell School. The school provides quality education from kindergarten to year 12 for students aged four to 18 years. The school's motto is "Towards Independence" and it aims to provide quality teaching and learning programs to its students that focus on individual education and transition programs. It offers technological programs and hydrotherapy programs. Most importantly, the school has a highly skilled, educated and dedicated staff who are well-trained in tube feeding and health care in order to teach and care for these students.

Reflecting the rich cultural diversity of my electorate of Cabramatta, approximately 74 per cent of the school's students and families are from non-English speaking backgrounds and represent 17 nationalities. It is a small community comprising 80 children and their families. Sadly, the school and its students have been left defenceless in the face of the O'Farrell Government's merciless funding cuts to the education system. This year, as part of the Premier's crusade to slash 2,000 jobs and \$1.7 billion from the education budget, the Les Powell School is set to lose \$12,000, which may be small fry for this Government but it means everything to the school. Losing \$12,000 means these children will have less equipment and materials, teachers' aides and learning opportunities. These children face a tough battle in life and we should ensure they have the best possible start. The Government should put more funding into this school instead of ripping off the children and their futures.

Luckily the Les Powell School has a lot of community support. Last year the children's charity, Variety, and the Crown donated a school chair swing for the children. A barbecue was held at Masters Hardware to raise money for the school. The buses that transport the kids to and from school are run by Wheels Towards Independence Inc., which is a charity that supports the school. The school and its 80 students should not have to rely on the kindness of the community. The State Government should ensure that every child in New South Wales receives a decent education to prepare them for life. The O'Farrell Government has failed in this. This year schools in my electorate of Cabramatta will lose more than \$360,000 in funding. Cabramatta is a rich and culturally diverse area, but its people are not rich. It is home to mostly working class families, mums and dads who are working hard to give their kids better futures. Premier Barry O'Farrell is making their job harder. For this reason my petition against education cuts is going like gangbusters. Parents line up outside school gates waiting to sign my petition. It is time Barry O'Farrell listened to the people of New South Wales and stopped treating families with contempt. He should invest in children's futures and reverse the funding cuts to education, starting with the Les Powell School.

NORTHERN GATEWAY REGIONAL TRANSPORT HUB

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) [12.18 p.m.]: I inform the House that I support the northern gateway regional transport hub proposal at Taree 100 per cent. The proposal is for a transport hub adjacent to the Pacific Highway at Cundletown, which will become the northern gateway into Taree. The proposal was first raised with me in February last year when I met with representatives from the Manning Valley Business Chamber and then with Greater Taree City Council. The proposal was to apply for \$15 million in Federal funding and to receive \$7.5 million of New South Wales funding. A meeting was organised with the mayor, a staff member of Greater Taree City Council and the Deputy Premier, who is the Minister responsible for that funding. Representatives at the meeting were told that if \$15 million was allocated from Federal funding, then the Government would have to give serious consideration to supporting and making a contribution towards the northern gateway.

As was said at the meeting, this is all about new jobs to regional New South Wales. That meeting was confirmed in writing from the Office of the Deputy Premier advising Greater Taree City Council that it needed to make an application for funding and provide supporting data and evidence. One has to remember that proper standards apply to the Regional Industry Investment Fund from which New South Wales funding would flow. It is taxpayers' money and so proper protocols and procedures must be adhered to. That is the way it should be. In March the department sent two emails to Greater Taree City Council advising that it needed to make an application and outlining what supporting data and evidence on detailed linked projects was required. The council had to stipulate the linked projects and the jobs that the proposal will create. In May the Federal

Government announced \$10 million of funding, which was contingent on New South Wales funding. The Federal Government knows that before it gives any money there must be State funding to which rigorous standards and procedures apply.

In June the Taree Chamber of Commerce said it was disappointed that there was no money in the State budget but on 28 July when I made inquiries into the progress of the proposal I found that Greater Taree City Council and/or the chamber had not applied for funding from the New South Wales Government. I immediately rang the mayor and told him that they must put in an application. From August to December numerous meetings were held with the department as required. The data and detailed evidence needed to support the application was explained to the mayor, staff and the chamber in face-to-face meetings, teleconferences and correspondence.

Government members want regional infrastructure and regional jobs, but we cannot make up the information needed. That information must come from the council and the chamber. As of Friday last week the department was still awaiting receipt of detailed data on the linked projects so that it can progress the project. I fully support the project, but I cannot conjure up the evidence and the data required. I am all for jobs in the Manning Valley and Myall Lakes, but to get this application up we need the data that the council and the chamber have been told they need to provide.

This is a competitive application process. When the council and the chamber provide the data to the department the project will compete with other regional areas that have projects they also want funded. It is now 13 months since the initial meeting with the chamber and Greater Taree City Council and we are still waiting for the information that the department requires as outlined in the Deputy Premier's correspondence and departmental emails. I call on Greater Taree City Council and the chamber to provide detailed data on the linked projects. We support the proposal but we need the data. We will give the proponents of the project all the time they need to compile the necessary data and evidence needed to support the application.

CAMDEN ELECTORATE SENIORS WEEK AWARDS

Mr CHRIS PATTERSON (Camden) [12.23 p.m.]: The seniors in my electorate of Camden are a wonderful group of people. During Seniors Week last week I was privileged to attend a celebration at the Carrington Care Retirement Village in Camden. I presented certificates to our local seniors and seniors groups who have contributed to our community and who were nominated and recognised for their ongoing contribution to the people of Camden. The groups recognised included the Carrington Fair Committee, which comprises 20 members. For the past 30 years staff, residents, family and the community have raised funds for Carrington Village residents at the Carrington Fair. The fair is a must on everyone's calendar. With the assistance of more than 170 volunteers the event continues to be a success.

Carrington Activity Group was also recognised. The group was formed six years ago to enhance friendship and wellbeing and to keep people's minds active. It provides a community network for those at Carrington who do not have family support. The Carrington Computer Club is another group that was recognised. The club was established in 2001 with the objective to assist seniors in the basics of computer use. To date 3,000 training sessions have been completed by almost 800 members as a result of 50,000 volunteer hours. I know this group has been vital in assisting our seniors to become tech savvy.

I now inform the House about the individual seniors who were recognised. Pastor Michael Cini is the pastor of the Macarthur Baptist Church. He provides counselling to poor and needy people in the area and ministers to people's spiritual, emotional and physical needs. He is always willing to listen, comfort and encourage anyone with whom he comes in contact. Eileen Dixon has been a member of the Camden Hospital Auxiliary for the past 10 years. Her dedication and contribution have been outstanding. She has knitted bears and grown plants for sale to raise much-needed money for Camden Hospital.

John Drinnan has always been involved in his local community. He served on Camden Council for many years and on the Narellan Congregational Community Services Management Committee for almost 20 years. In addition, John mentors staff and speaks at every annual planning day. He is also involved in the Camden Town Farm and the Clydesdale Club. In 2007 the President of the Camden Country Women's Association invited Helen Robinson to be part of the mother and baby project for Papua New Guinea, which provides packs to expectant mothers who have little or nothing for themselves or their newborn babies. Helen's efforts and hard work over the past 14 years have seen more than 1,100 mothers benefit. Helen also volunteers for Camden Meals on Wheels and the Camden Hospital Kiosk.

In 2006 David and Christine Crooks began the Camden Stroke Recovery Club. Their dedication and tireless work bring support, encouragement and companionship to people and their families recovering from the effects of stroke. David and Christine also serve the community through their membership of working committees such as the Camden Seniors Program Committee, the Camden District Hospital Focus Group and the Macarthur Community Representative Network. Gordon Stewart, who is 89 years young, has worked for the past 15 years on the *Village Courier*, a monthly paper that reports, tells stories and highlights events at Carrington. Gordon's gift for storytelling has brought so much to the community of Carrington.

Jean Olsen has been a key event leader at Carrington for the past 20 years and has assisted with the organisation of the Carrington Fair. Jean has also served as the chairperson of the Mary MacKillop Hostel Shop and has organised art shows and run weekly art classes. Ellen Cunningham has been a volunteer for Camden Meals on Wheels for more than 40 years. She has provided assistance to the frail, aged and disabled on a monthly basis. Ellie also volunteers for Camden Combined Probus, the Quota club and the Apex club, and approximately 47 years ago she helped set up the Camden preschool. Robyne Meek has volunteered for many local organisations. For the past 20 years she has been involved in weekly meetings with the pre-junior Guides and for the past six years she has volunteered at playtime at Camden Baptist Church. Robyne has also assisted the local primary school, Meals on Wheels and the Macarthur Evening View Club.

Beryce Toovey has been a member of the Camden Hospital Auxiliary for the past 10 years. Her dedication and contribution have been outstanding. Beryce's cooked goods and sewed items are sold at stalls in Narellan, Camden, at the Camden Show and at numerous other events and raise much-needed funds for Camden Hospital. I thank members for allowing me to recognise these outstanding seniors who make our lives so much richer.

WORKERS COMPENSATION SCHEME

Mr ROBERT FUROLO (Lakemba) [12.28 p.m.]: I will detail the impact that the New South Wales Coalition Government's cutting of workers compensation protections has had on injured workers in my electorate. I acknowledge and accept that programs such as the workers compensation scheme need to be amended from time to time to reflect contemporary circumstances. That is fair and reasonable. However, the reforms members opposite have introduced are anything but fair and reasonable. They are regressive, punitive and callous and they unfairly shift the burden onto injured workers and their families while giving insurance companies carte blanche to decide who gets treatment and who does not.

In order to speak in specifics and not generalisations, I will outline the real-life experiences of ordinary men and women in my community whose lives have been turned upside down by members opposite who supported these laws. Mr William Elkins is 85 years old. He lives on a pension after giving the best part of his working life to Sydney Water. In 1989 Bill was involved in a serious work accident that left him severely deaf in both ears. His employer, Sydney Water, accepted liability. Bill returned to work and received an assurance that he would not be out of pocket for treatment or care as a result of his injury, and he took his employer at its word. Late last year Bill received a letter, the contents of which I will share with the House for it comprises only two lines. The letter reads:

In accordance with the recent changes to their Workers Compensation Act 1987—

voted for by those opposite—

(Section 59A), your entitlement to claim medical expenses from Sydney Water in respect of your work injury will cease on 1 January 2014. If you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact the writer.

As an 85-year-old who gave his working life to his employer and who received an assurance that his medical expenses would be covered, Bill should not be living with the fear and anxiety that he now faces. But he is not alone. Janice Shardlow is 77 years of age. She also spent her working life in the public service. She worked in the Department of Education, where she suffered an injury. Her employer accepted liability for that injury and gave an assurance that her ongoing medical expenses would be covered. Like Mr Elkins, Mrs Shardlow returned to work and continued to make a contribution to her workplace. Unfortunately, the pain and discomfort associated with her injury never ceased. Eventually, the constant pain relief and injections she had took their toll on her liver. In 2012 she had an operation on her spinal cord but there were complications. This 77-year-old woman now requires further surgery to alleviate constant pain and mobility issues. But, like so many others in New South Wales, as a result of the havoc wreaked by this Government, her surgery is no longer covered. That is how the New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Coalition Government treats injured workers these days.

So many components of these new laws are unfair. Their impact is severe, victims are unable to seek legal advice and insurance companies review their own decisions if a victim is unhappy. These reforms are scandalous and the fact that these draconian and punitive laws have been retrospectively applied is nothing more than cruel. People who deserve and were promised lifetime care and support are now being left to fend for themselves—people like Bill Elkins and Mrs Shardlow. When those opposite reflect on these laws I hope they will accept that the need for reform does not excuse the devastating impact these changes have inflicted on decent, genuine and innocent victims of workplace accidents. I hope they will accept that they have gone too far and the protections that workers like those in my community and their families rightfully deserve will be returned.

INVERELL TOWN HALL

Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands) [12.32 p.m.]: Town halls hold a special place in local communities. They are more than a grand edifice on the main road. Town halls, particularly those in country areas, draw communities together. They are a place to celebrate, mourn, sing, dance and achieve. They are usually old, many more than a century. They were built during the optimistic genesis of many country towns. Recently it was my great pleasure to join in the celebration marking the rebirth of one such town hall. The spectacular Inverell Town Hall was first opened in 1905. It is a grand Victorian-style building with columns, turrets, pediments and balustrades. Residents had waited decades for their town hall, and I can happily report to the House that they were certainly not disappointed. Inverell has made its grand statement.

Almost 110 years after its construction, the building was in need of some restoration. Inverell Shire Council committed to a \$1.75 million redevelopment. The hall was closed and work began, led by architect Tim Russell. The redevelopment took just 12 months. It was completed on time, on budget and without any State or Federal government funding. The council undertook the project from its own balance sheet. It is a wonderful space. It is full of light, with modern conveniences and a strong nod to history. The art deco foyer has been restored to its glory days. The seating has been reconfigured and is retractable in order to create a space that can accommodate large concerts and smaller conventions. The work undertaken by the contractors was of the highest quality I have seen in country halls, and I congratulate all involved.

On Saturday 15 March, the big reveal came in the form of an extraordinary night of entertainment and celebration that saw a capacity crowd of 400-odd people pack into the town hall. What a night it was. In particular, I commend Inverell Shire Council tourism manager Peter Caddy. Peter was the driving force behind this event and also took part in the entertainment. He joined local Laura King to sing the duet *Music of the Night* from *The Phantom of the Opera*. It was one of the highlights of the evening. I also acknowledge Anka McMahon, Ann Clydsdale and Talia Hill who were instrumental in organising this event.

The Inverell Art Gallery staged an exhibition and cocktail party before the big event, with art gallery supervisor Jo Williams, president Colleen Nancarrow and its members getting the celebrations off to a great start. The exhibition, which was put together by the Inverell District Family History Group, gave a fascinating glimpse into the history of the town hall and its intertwining with the local community. Inverell mayor Paul Harmon represented the council in officially reopening the building. I commend the council for supporting this important project within budget and on time. Indeed, a lot of sweat and love went into this project. It is a terrific testament to council staff, led by general manager Paul Henry and the councillors, that a project of this scale was completed in such a professional and efficient manner. I also praise deputy mayor Di Baker and councillors Barry Johnston, OAM, Phil Gurle, Anthony Michael, David Jones, Harold Castledine and Jacki Watts, who joined the mayor on this special occasion. What a magnificent leadership team for this brilliant Northern Tablelands community.

Entertainment on the evening was provided by local talent, including the Sapphire City Concert band, Craze Dance Academy, the Inverell Male Choir, of which Councillor David Jones is a member and whose rendition of *You'll Never Walk Alone* would put England's Barmy Army to shame, talented young pianist Alex Dimmock, the drama troupe of Ashleigh Campbell, Maggie Thomas, Pip Kelly and Eboni Luxford, who relived the *Wizard of Oz*, and Sally Sanderson, who took us to Broadway. The evening was wrapped up in fine style by the talented and five-time MO Award winning entertainer Wayne Scott Kermond. I also acknowledge the Inverell East Rotary and Inverell Rotary clubs and other volunteers who helped to make the reopening such an unforgettable evening. Inverell's "new" old town hall is off to a flying start. I commend members of the community, who turned out in force, for dressing up in the theme of the night. I again pay tribute to the council for doing such a magnificent job. This building will be a continuing testament to the strength of the Inverell community.

Mr DONALD PAGE (Ballina—Minister for Local Government, and Minister for the North Coast) [12.37 p.m.]: As the Minister for Local Government I join the hardworking member for Northern Tablelands in commending Inverell Shire Council for its investment in the grand Inverell Town Hall. It is a significant contribution for a council to spend \$1.75 million on such a wonderful redevelopment, particularly a smaller regional council. Many of the smaller regional councils are doing it pretty tough at the moment. I felt very envious as I listened to the member for Northern Tablelands inform the House about the reopening celebrations. On behalf of the Government I thank Inverell Shire Council for its investment in the town hall and acknowledge the important role that town halls play in our communities.

SUGARLOAF STATE CONSERVATION AREA MINE SUBSIDENCE

Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie) [12.38 p.m.]: Today I update the House on the progress of the remediation of an ephemeral watercourse in the Sugarloaf State Conservation Area affected by major subsidence that occurred in 2012 above underground workings at West Wallsend Colliery. Members will be aware—from news reports and ministerial responses to questions I have asked in this place—that environmental damage from the subsidence caused by longwall mining was exacerbated when an initial attempt to remediate the land slippage resulted in an approximately 250-metre spillage of 180 tonnes of grout down a watercourse. I visited this site in an unofficial capacity to inspect the grout spill shortly after it was revealed by the *Newcastle Herald* in August and I must say that I was shocked by what I saw. The grout overflow had created what looked like a concrete creek spilling down the side of a hill. The grout had flowed down the slope, filling in all the nooks and crannies on the forest floor and pooling around areas where, in less dry times, rock pools would normally be found. In some places it looked to be a metre thick and several metres wide. At the time I wondered how on earth it could all be removed and the area restored to anything like its natural state.

I am pleased to report that my doubts have been proven to be unfounded—thanks to a concerted effort by the management of West Wallsend Colliery and a team of rehabilitation workers doing what can quite literally be described as the heavy lifting in this remediation project. Since October last year, when the remediation of this area began, I have visited the site four times and I have been sent weekly updates on the project. What I have witnessed is a team undertaking labour-intensive but also very precise and delicate work. No power tools are used on site—all the grout is broken loose with a crowbar then deposited by hand in industrial-size bags and later lifted off site by helicopter. After the grout is removed, other workers come in with small brushes and dustpans to gently remove any residual waste, being careful to cause as little disturbance as possible to the groundcover or surrounding vegetation.

As this is a fairly thickly forested bushland setting, the work comes with some occupational hazards. On my last visit, the workers on site reported frequent confrontations with funnel-web spiders, scorpions, bull ants the size of small dogs and a resident death adder, not to mention the leeches and hordes of mosquitoes that have been enjoying the recent dry and humid conditions. Before team members can move on to a new section, their work has to be checked by an inspector from the Office of Environment and Heritage. I am told he is a suitably strict taskmaster, who ensures as much as possible of the foreign material has been collected and removed before signing off on the job.

The remediation team is now working on the last 30 or 40 metres of grout spill, having already removed more than 200 metres of material from the site using the methods referred to earlier. Despite the challenges, they are about 40 days ahead of schedule and hope to have the work completed soon. On my last inspection of the site earlier this month, I was pleased to see signs of bushland regeneration at the foot of the spill, which was the first area to be remediated. The return of life is now evident, with invertebrates in the soil and leaf litter, and with new green shoots sprouting through the rocks. The only real sign of the event is a faint line visible on some of the rocks indicating how high the grout spill reached.

The subsidence in the Sugarloaf State Conservation Area and the subsequent grout spill were very regrettable incidents that should never have happened—and the mine management is the first to admit this. However, I believe credit is due for the commitment it has since shown to remediating this area. It has not been without considerable expense but I have heard no complaint about that. Further, mine management has now committed to shortening two longwall sections previously approved for mining in order to minimise the risk of further damage to the conservation area as a result of subsidence. It is estimated this decision will sterilise about two million tonnes of coal at a potential cost of more than \$100 million to the company—and more to the State, as we know.

I mention in particular West Wallsend Operations Manager Charlie Allan, who has overseen the remediation and hosted me on a number of visits to the site. He is a local person and I know that he, along with

other mine employees, took the matter very seriously. Apart from the physical damage that resulted from the subsidence and grout spill, this incident has been clouded by allegations of an initial cover-up and lack of public accountability. I trust any shortcomings in this regard, including the response of government agencies, will be dealt with by the review instigated by the Premier, which the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure told the House last week is due to report in the near future. Credit should be given where credit is due, but let us hope that this review reduces the likelihood of such an event happening again anywhere in New South Wales.

EAST HILLS SENIORS LUNCHEON

Mr GLENN BROOKES (East Hills) [12.43 p.m.]: I bring to the attention of the House the successful seniors luncheon hosted in my electorate office on Friday 14 March. The event successfully brought our seniors together and gave them an opportunity to socialise in a safe and fun environment. Furthermore, it gave me an opportunity to thank them for the work that they do for the East Hills community. As I have said before, the seniors of the East Hills electorate are not the average seniors group—they are active and diverse. Present for the first time at one of my seniors events were members of the George Bass Trefoil Guild. Previously unknown to me, I was invited to one of their functions last month. The George Bass Trefoil Guild comprises an active group of seniors who were and still are affiliated with the Girl Guides.

I hold this event every year as it is one that means so much, especially to the East Hills electorate, where I believe the seniors are the mortar that holds the community together. The seniors in my electorate contribute countless hours to volunteering, to the care and wellbeing of others and to the overall sustainability of the community. I mention also the Sir Joseph Banks High School hospitality class that catered for the event and provided our seniors with wonderful food and great service. A special thankyou goes to the newly elected member for Banks, David Coleman, who attended the morning tea and helped me to present awards on the day. To all those who attended the morning tea in my office I say thank you. To all the other seniors in the East Hills electorate I ask that they continue to contribute to our community for as long as they can. Our society is a well-functioning community because of the time and effort that our seniors invest in keeping it that way.

HURSTVILLE ROTARY CLUB

BIRTH OF JAMES ANTHONY COURE

Mr MARK COURE (Oatley) [12.47 p.m.]: I inform the House of some of the outstanding work being accomplished by the Rotary Club of Hurstville and Rotary District 9675, along with the influence Rotary has had on young leaders in my electorate of Oatley. One such inspiring young constituent is Mr Tim Millar of Connells Point. He recently shared with me his experiences at the January 2014 Rotary Youth Leadership Award [RYLA] for District 9675, which took place at The Tops Conference Centre in Stanwell Park. Tim described the event as "one of the best experiences in [his] life". The challenging activities and insightful guest speakers—such as Ron Lee, a motivational speaker globally known as the "Corporate Ninja", and Shivani Gupta of the *Sydney Morning Herald*—taught Tim and his fellow young Rotarians many professional and personal lessons that foster growth and development for such a pivotal time in their lives.

The week-long conference provided Tim and his peers with many great takeaway lessons to guide them in life, including that teamwork is critical. As Tim said, any team is only as strong as its weakest member. Members have to work together, help other members of the group share their goals and work towards common goals. Other lessons Tim took away were that individuals have different learning and leadership styles; individuals should focus on the solutions and not on the problems that they face; and individuals should foster an environment in which people feel comfortable to speak, to share their views and know that they have a part to play.

The encouragement that Tim was given and the knowledge that he gained from the Rotary Youth Leadership Award conference gave him confidence and inspired him to play a greater role in his community. He recently joined a local Rotary Club and since January has started the ball rolling with the new University of Technology Sydney Rotaract Club—where I will speak over the next 12 months—with the goal of providing Rotary services to older people but more specifically to those of university age. As the chair of the Committee on Children and Young People I am especially excited to hear about the benefits of programs such as the Rotary Youth Leadership Award conference and the knowledge Tim gained from the conference. Tim is an outstanding example of the great work Rotary is doing to develop our youth and prepare them for successful futures.

Rotary has played an important role in my electorate. I acknowledge the great work of the Rotary Club of Hurstville over many years. Recently this club hosted the nineteenth annual Antiques and Collectibles Fair.

I opened the fair and was honoured to speak at that event. Next year will be the twentieth anniversary of the fair. I acknowledge Dorothy Dixon, who has hosted every annual fair and who has done a great job in our community. I pay tribute to Dorothy Dixon and to the Rotary Club of Hurstville for hosting the Antiques and Collectibles Fair and I thank the Premier of New South Wales, who provided much-needed funding. All the money that was raised by the fair will be returned to the community.

I also pay special tribute to people like Barry Boyce, Barry Dunn and James Forester for the work they have done with the Rotary Club bookshop, one of only two bookshops in the St George area. I am a great supporter of this second-hand bookshop in Oatley West which recently received much-needed funding from the Community Building Partnership grants announced at the end of last year. In May we are having an official opening for the bookshop in my electorate, in which I will play a part. As I mentioned, the second-hand bookshop is one of only a couple of bookshops in our local community. The community really got behind this bookshop and donated much-needed books. The Rotary Club, in selling these books, is raising money that goes not only into paying expenses but also back into the community, for many great causes. My wife is part of the Rotary Club of Hurstville, which is a great club. Finally, I inform the House of the birth last Saturday at 7.30 p.m. of James Anthony Coure.

Mr David Elliott: Name and branch!

Mr MARK COURE: Not yet. I thank all those who phoned my office or spoke to my wife or to me to wish us well and to congratulate us on his birth.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Ms Melanie Gibbons): I know that all members of the House will join me in congratulating the member for Oatley and his wife, Adla, on the birth of their son, James. I wish them many happy years ahead.

CENTENARY OF ANZAC

Mr LEE EVANS (Heathcote) [12.52 p.m.]: I also congratulate the member for Oatley and his wife on the birth of their son, James—or Jimmy. This year is the centenary of the beginning of World War I. I take this opportunity before Anzac Day this year to mention this momentous occasion in our history. Our Anzac spirit evolved in every community across our nation, from villages to cities. We celebrate the sacrifice that was made on our behalf so long ago. This Anzac spirit defines who we are as Australians.

Recently I had the great honour of visiting the battlefields of the Western Front and helped to place a wreath at the Menin Gate, Ypres, on behalf of the people of New South Wales. It is not until one visits the battlefields that one feels the complete impact of the sacrifice that these men made. They fought for King and country. On the day we visited it was two degrees. This bought home how hard the conditions were. I imagined the troops being exposed to this weather—wet, cold and under constant barrage. The trenches were full of mud and disease. Huge mole rats scavenged anything that was available. Snow and icy winds cut through the clothing that they wore. Tens of thousands of men lost their lives. Backwards and forwards the front swayed, going our way and then their way, with heavy casualties being sustained every minute.

A story was told of the first time mustard gas was released. This terrible weapon was first used just outside Ypres, on the Western Front. Never seen before, the impact of mustard gas being released across the trenches was devastatingly effective—hundreds if not thousands of men were almost instantaneously taken out of action. There are personal stories about the war that resonate in every community across New South Wales and our nation. I would like to pass on just a couple of those today from my electorate of Heathcote. A young soldier from Bulli who was killed in the trenches at Gallipoli claimed a small yet interesting place in history. Private William Keith Rixon was almost 24 years of age when he signed up on 25 August 1914 to do his duty just as Europe was plunged into the horror of World War I. Private Rixon was a telegraphist before joining the army and so his skills were employed in the 3rd battalion signal corps, which was subject to some of the heaviest fighting on the Turkish peninsula.

Records show that Private Rixon was killed sometime between 6 June and 13 June 1915. He is listed as being buried at Death Trap Valley and his name appears on the Lone Pine Memorial. Private Rixon was the grandson of Benjamin Rixon, who was born in 1806. His birth made the front page of the 19 January edition of the *Sydney Gazette*. Benjamin Rixon was one of two surviving triplets born to English settlers James Rixon and Amelia Goodwin on 5 January 1806—the first recorded multiple birth to a European woman in Australia. Benjamin died 80 years later, having fathered 12 children with his wife, Margaret. Benjamin's descendants, 38 in number and most of them grandsons, died in the Great War. Private William Rixon was one of them.

Another story from my electorate is that of Private William Barrie, a resident of Helensburgh and hardworking 37-year-old miner who signed up to do his duty in December 1915. William was small in stature—5 feet 5½ inches tall—but big in personality. It was perhaps the saddest day in the life of this middle-aged man when he kissed his wife, Eliza, and his six children farewell. He embarked on the SS *Makarini* in April 1916 but, alas, would never return. Just 18 months later Eliza learned that her beloved William was killed in action on 4 October 1917 while attacking a pillbox at Broodseinde, Belgium.

The Helensburgh and District Historical Society sent me the story of Francis Hunt, who has been described as a larrikin. Private Francis Joseph Hunt lived in Helensburgh and desperately wanted to join his two older brothers who were overseas and entrenched in the battles of World War I. He signed up and sailed for the front on 10 May 1917. He was a bit of a larrikin and on the way to the front was confined three times. On 1 June 1918 Francis was poisoned by a gas attack at the Somme. He died from his wounds 11 days later. I hope everyone commemorates Anzac Day this year. Lest we forget.

ATTUNGA DOWN UNDER RODEO

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON (Tamworth) [12.57 p.m.]: Today I will highlight how a small regional community in New South Wales can achieve great things. I am fortunate to have many progressive villages, towns and a city in the Tamworth electorate that all do wonderful things. Today I will focus on the village of Attunga, which is located approximately 20 kilometres from Tamworth and has a population of about 600 people. However, on Saturday 22 March that population swelled to well over 1,000 people who gathered to celebrate the Attunga Down Under Rodeo proudly hosted by the Attunga Rodeo Association and sponsored by Sibelco Australia.

The success of the Attunga Rodeo Association clearly highlights what can happen when a progressive organisation decides to improve facilities in its region. I quote from a wonderful letter written to me by Cameron Glass, president of the Attunga Rodeo Association, which outlines what the association was able to achieve. When he was asked to be president of the Attunga Rodeo Association, he said, "If you want to get serious about this then what we have to do is apply for funds and build our own yards so that we can reduce the cost of hiring equipment each time we hold a rodeo event." That letter states in part:

The facilities that we have built would not be possible without receiving two grants that were applied for through the NSW Government Community Building Partnership. The first grant of \$10,000 from the 2012-13 scheme was to complete a basic arena to a stage where it was useful but not for the range of activities that we had in mind. The second grant from 2014-2015 of an amazing \$20,000 from the scheme enabled us to complete the bucking chutes, timed event area and associated back yards. What we have here now cost in the vicinity of \$45,000 for the supply and manufacture of the structure alone, something that the committee never envisaged at the start of the dream that we had.

Along with the grants, many hours of volunteer labour, blood, sweat and tears have gone into the construction of this complex, along with donations of products needed to complete the project, what we have is what we believe is second to none in the Tamworth district. The arena has been built with the welfare and safety of both stock and competitors as a primary objective.

The benefits to the Attunga community will be that the two main local businesses will experience extra trade along with local associations as we will be able to support them financially and repay them for their help in running our annual rodeo.

I pay tribute to the committee of the Attunga Rodeo Association—Cameron and Janette Glass; the treasurer, Diane Norris, and her husband, Steve; and the secretary, Zoe Fox, and her husband, Neil—along with Adrian and Fiona Telfer and others who put countless hours into organising the Attunga rodeo on Saturday night. Together with Tamworth mayor Col Murray, I had the pleasure of opening the Attunga rodeo. Tamworth Regional Council has been instrumental in assisting the village of Attunga to host this rodeo. It is great to see that regional rodeos are alive and well in New South Wales. People in the green movement and animal liberationists want to shut down some rodeo events. No-one treats their animals better than stock contractors, carriers, owners and the competitors of regional rodeos.

Rodeos are family events involving the youngest to the oldest members. It is exciting to experience the culture, atmosphere and colour of a regional rodeo. These exciting events play a crucial role in regional New South Wales. My family and I enjoy the rodeos that are held in the Tamworth electorate, such as the Australian Professional Rodeo Association National Finals Rodeo which is held annually at the Australian Equine Livestock and Entertainment Centre. I sincerely hope that rodeos not only continue to be held but grow. I congratulate the Attunga Rodeo Association and I look forward to attending the next event staged by this organisation.

NORTH WEST RAIL LINK

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT (Baulkham Hills) [1.02 p.m.]: Yesterday I was pleased to don a hard hat, boots and high-visibility clothing and, together with the Premier, the Minister for Transport, my colleague the

member for Londonderry, and the mayor of The Hills, Councillor Michelle Byrne, launch the tunnelling of the North West Rail Link. It is a refreshing sight for my electorate to finally see construction of the rail link commence. The Premier was in a fantastic mood, but I suspect that may have had more to do with the weekend's football results. Nevertheless, it was great to see the Premier there sharing in this wonderful celebration.

The Labor Government continually broke promises on the delivery of new infrastructure, particularly the north-west rail. In an article written in 1996, the former mayor of Baulkham Hills, Councillor Larry Bolitho, said that the area was still waiting for the rail link promised in 1985 by former Premier Bob Carr when he was the planning Minister. My community waited for a train line for two decades, but Labor failed to deliver on its promises. That is why yesterday it was so refreshing to be joined by the Premier and the Minister for Transport to announce that not only were we delivering the project on time but we were going to have the first boring machine in the ground by the end of October, ahead of schedule.

As a former chief executive officer of the Civil Contractors Federation, I was pleased to see members of the federation with their big toys: tunnel boring machines 120 metres long and weighing 900 tonnes, which will cut through about 120 metres of Sydney sandstone a week. The project also represents the Government's commitment to listen to the people. Last week the North West Rail Link won the Planning Institute of Australia's Public Engagement and Community Planning Award. Improvements to the project that resulted from community feedback include two additional railway stations, 3,000 additional parking spaces, and a bridge over Windsor Road at Rouse Hill, which will lessen construction impacts on motorists.

The project will help commuters by giving Sydney a world-class metro system similar to metro systems in London, Paris, and Singapore. I note also that the Opal card will be available at all Sydney stations by Friday, and it will include the North West Rail Link when it is completed and operating. The North West Rail Link will link with the North Shore Line, the Northern Line, hopefully—if I get my way—the Richmond Line, and possibly a future airport at Badgerys Creek or, for commercial uses, Richmond airport. The project provides 900 jobs in the community. In addition to the direct benefit of 900 extra people being employed in The Hills district, it has a multiplier effect on many other industries, from fuel distribution to the Gloria Jean's outlet at Market Town, where workers can get a morning coffee.

The project also provides an educational opportunity for many people in my electorate. I launched the North West Rail Link Fast Tracking the Future program, which provides students with many hands-on activities to learn about the North West Rail Link. This vital piece of public infrastructure enables students to learn about planning for the future, particularly Australian transport, the future of Sydney's north-west region and the role of engineering in improving our lives. Many members opposite also need lessons in those subjects, as they failed to deliver on any of them.

The North West Rail Link will be completed and operational by 2019, with trains arriving every five minutes during the peak hours. The use of high-frequency transport eschews the need for a timetable and emulates the London Tube and the Singapore Metro, both of which are sensational, world-leading metro people movers. The rail link, quite sensibly, will use driverless, single-deck trains. Double-decker trains provide only 20 to 30 per cent more capacity than single-deck trains and it has been shown in other cities that single-deck, metro-style trains will be able to move more passengers per hour than would be achieved by Sydney's double-decker trains. Single-deck trains are more than able to cater for commuters in London, which has one of the world's iconic transport systems.

Although the single-deck trains have received criticism, it is important to note that they are safer, airier and lighter. Their quick movement of passengers has proved to be popular in London, Paris and Singapore, and I look forward to their emulating that success in my electorate. The North West Rail Link is a key piece of infrastructure that has been a long time coming. I commend the O'Farrell Government for listening to the people of The Hills and for deciding to complete this vital project in a way that minimises disruption to residents—and ahead of schedule. The end of the wait is in sight.

CAMPBELLTOWN HARLEQUIN RUGBY CLUB FIXING IT FOR FREDDY PROJECT

Mr BRYAN DOYLE (Campbelltown) [1.07 p.m.]: I share with the House the great work of the Campbelltown Harlequin Rugby Club in its Fixing it for Freddy project. Harlequin is a great family rugby club in Campbelltown—that opal of the south-west, the very best part of Macarthur—and I am very proud to be the club's patron. One of the club's members, Fady—more commonly known as Freddy—Taiba was felled by a

coward's punch in the city. He is loved by his Harlequin rugby family and on Sunday 23 March we came together to pull off what I believe is one of the best home renovations that could ever be achieved within 10 hours.

Led and marshalled by Glen Packer, we excavated 20 cubic metres of dirt and grass and replaced it with a similar amount of soil for the base of new turf. We laid 160 square metres of turf—watered and edges done—spread new garden mulch and tidied up the plants. A six-by-four metre pergola with peaked roof and screen was stained and the flashings painted. New pool capping was made from timber sleepers, which had to be cut perfectly, edges bevelled and hand sanded. These all got a lick of paint and the pool got the best of cleans. Sixteen pot plants were used to decorate the area. Due to the pressure cleaning being done, the pots had to be filled with dirt out the front of the house. Some of the pots needed three burly rugby forwards to carry them into the backyard.

Two hundred square metres of concrete was pressure cleaned. The downlights installed by the sparkies took the pergola and pool to another level and the icing on top was the new outdoor furniture that was provided by sponsors. Inside the house much more than painting was carried out. The whole house received four coats of paint. We removed every piece of furniture and clothing from all five rooms, and this entailed dismantling all the beds and carrying them and the chests of drawers to be stored in the garages of neighbours. At one stage furniture had to be passed through windows. We ripped up the carpet in five rooms and approximately 20 lineal metres, or 53 square metres, of new carpet and underlay were laid.

A brand-new alarm system, which is simple to use and operates via remote control, was installed. A brand-new 2½ horsepower Toshiba air-conditioning system was installed in Freddy's room. The sparkies installed a new electrical system; a new television was mounted, with new aerial points; and new blinds were installed at every window. Deadlocks were installed on the windows and new door handles were added in all the rooms. At the end of the day a team of ladies and gentlemen grabbed mops and buckets and cleaned the house from top to tail. It was stifling hot, but the work was finished well.

The event was made possible with the support of many people, including guards from Prime Security who stood on the street all day directing traffic and managing difficult inquiries, and the Camden Police Highway Patrol assisted with traffic control. Some lads had the barbecue going throughout the day and kept all the workers fed. A jumping castle was provided to occupy the kids. Photographers recorded the event, and Coates Hire provided the barbecue, the toilet, the barricades and the dingo digger. A media crew from *The Project* filmed the event. The segment will be shown this Thursday night.

Perhaps most touchingly, world champion boxer Aussie Joe Bugner made an appearance and presented Freddy with a personally signed photo of Aussie Joe and the great Muhammad Ali. There was not a dry eye in the house when all the Harlequin rugby family gathered together with Freddy and gave a rousing rendition of the club song, *You Are My Sunshine*. Clubs like the Harlequin Rugby Club of Campbelltown are some of the best of the opals of the south-west, that mighty part of the Macarthur region. I commend their efforts to the House.

SWANSEA HIGH SCHOOL AND LAKE MUNMORAH HIGH SCHOOL ACHIEVEMENTS

Mr GARRY EDWARDS (Swansea) [1.12 p.m.]: Today I speak of the wonderful achievements of Swansea High School and Lake Munmorah High School students, who respectively have taken part in, inter alia, various leadership and development initiatives. It is always a pleasure, and indeed gratifying, to witness young members of our community who, by their actions, demonstrate such ability and advanced leadership skills. One such initiative is the Lions Youth of the Year Competition. This competition takes entrants from amongst students who have made outstanding contributions through sporting, academic, leadership, cultural and citizenship activities. They are judged on their interview responses and public speaking skills. As part of the competition, participants are asked to answer impromptu questions about issues affecting young people in society today. As well as delivering a prepared address on a topic of their choice, candidates undergo a series of interviews before a panel of judges. They then move on to a public forum where they present their prepared speeches as well as being subjected to questions without notice.

Two of my staffers, Gerald Cowan and Nick Jones, were appointed as judges for the Swansea Lions Youth of the Year competition. As the name suggests, that part of the competition was sponsored by the Lions Club of Swansea. Two of the participants were Swansea High School captains Jessica Graham and Josh Wheatley. Jessica was nominated and accepted into the competition for her involvement in a number of

community activities, including the development and implementation of a youth mentoring program and a blood donation awareness program. Not only did her presentation and public speaking skills see Jessica take out the local Youth of the Year event but two weeks ago she won the regional Youth of the Year event, beating some very talented students from around the region.

Jessica now will go on to the district Youth of the Year competition at Lemon Tree Passage. Should she prevail at that stage of the competition, Jessica will go on to the New South Wales Youth of the Year final. Glenda McNaught, the president of Jessica's sponsoring club, Swansea Lions, has advised that never before in the history of the competition has a local student progressed so far. I congratulate Jessica on her outstanding achievements in the competition and wish her good fortune in her upcoming Youth of the Year competition activities. I commend all of the Swansea High School students who took part in the 2014 Youth of the Year competition in addition to Jessica and Josh. They are Daniel Heise, Peter Wilson and Savannah Pilgrim. I also congratulate school principal Mrs Robyn Leggatt, a former Australian Olympian, and senior English teacher Mrs Lidija Nenad.

Last year a team of students from Lake Munmorah High School took part in the Write-a-Book-in-a-Day competition, a national program that raises funds for research into childhood cancer. The competition required that students write and illustrate a 4,000-word story within 12 hours, then submit their book for judging. The Lake Munmorah High School team won the State final for best book in the middle school category. It went on to conquer all by winning the national final for best book, beating 300 other entries from schools across Australia. Since its amazing achievement, the Lake Munmorah High School team has travelled to Sydney, where it presented its award-winning book to the Westmead Children's Hospital library.

I congratulate the Lake Munmorah High School book team of Tia Fisher, Ruby Dixon, Brendan Tange, Kara Bailey, Kayleigh Northcott, Molly Clarke, Caitlin McAllister, Myra Andrews, Aliesha Sutton and Jess McShane. I thank principal Mr Lindsay West and head teacher English and library Wendy Scarce for allowing the children the opportunity to compete in this prestigious literary competition. Leadership, citizenship, mentoring and volunteering development programs such as the two I have referred to are wonderful opportunities for young people to contribute to their school communities and to develop their skills. I commend those students I have mentioned today for demonstrating their outstanding initiative and talent.

AL ZAHRA COLLEGE, ARNCLIFFE

Mr JOHN FLOWERS (Rockdale) [1.17 p.m.]: I bring to the attention of the House the appointment of Mr Bruce Handley in his new role as Principal of Al Zahra College on 15 January 2014. The former principal, Sayed Zawar Shah, is now concentrating on establishing Muslim Care Australia, which provides aged-care facilities for the growing community. Mr Handley has recently returned from the United Arab Emirates, and his experience as Principal of the Australian School of Abu Dhabi will be of benefit to him and the college in his new position. He looks forward to embarking on this rewarding and motivating journey at Al Zahra College, Arncliffe, which caters for all denominations.

Al Zahra College provides a learning environment in which students are able to develop an understanding of and respect for their own cultural background and take pride in who they are. The ability for students to respect other cultures is strengthened. Mr Handley's former school in Abu Dhabi and Al Zahra College have in common the International Baccalaureate diploma. The International Baccalaureate offers a broad curriculum where students study subjects that include two languages and philosophy and complete a tertiary-style research paper. The International Baccalaureate Diploma Program at Al Zahra College is a two-year educational program primarily aimed at students aged 16 to 19 years. It provides an internationally accepted qualification for entry into higher education and is accepted by all universities worldwide. This year, 2014, is the first year in which the coeducational Al Zahra College has accepted year 11 students. In Mr Handley's former school, boys and girls were segregated from year 6.

Mr Handley holds the view that the International Baccalaureate is less teacher-centred, allowing students to take control of their learning. He believes that the International Baccalaureate is not more difficult but is just a different style of teaching that gives students an opportunity to demonstrate their special abilities and to achieve the mark they deserve. Mr Handley said that although it is more difficult to achieve top marks, if there are 20 brilliant students in a school each of them will receive the top mark rather than being limited by a scaled result. According to Mr Handley, Australia's International Baccalaureate results exceed the results in other Southern Hemisphere nations. He added that although Australian schools have the challenge of competing with Asian schools which have a higher education system ranking, Australian school students obtain very good results.

At Al Zahra College, teachers and parents have a desire to see students develop both academically and personally. Teachers and students of Al Zahra College represent a close school community, bonded together in friendship and culture. Mr Handley brings with him experience and motivation which complement Al Zahra's vision of providing students with a foundation for lifelong learning. His experience as principal of the Australian School at Abu Dhabi for 2½ years will hold him in good stead to continue the excellent reputation of the Al Zahra College and its students at Arncliffe. I wish Mr Handley every success in that endeavour.

HAWKESBURY TO HUNTER HISTORY AND HERITAGE RESEARCH

Mr CHRIS HOLSTEIN (Gosford) [1.22 p.m.]: Over the past few months I have met regularly with Mr Peter Rea, Secretary of the Hawkesbury to Hunter History and Heritage Research group. Mr Rea has kept me well informed of his investigations into the wartime history of the Central Coast area. Many significant, unique and historic wartime sites are located around Pittwater, the Hawkesbury River and in other parts of the Central Coast. During World War II the Central Coast had one of the first radar installations in Australia and other defence systems installed to protect the strategically essential Hawkesbury River rail bridge and the Woy Woy rail tunnel. The Hawkesbury River contains two wrecks of the first vessels of the Royal Australian Navy.

From Marie Byles Lookout at Killcare one can see for 38 kilometres. To the south one looks across Broken Bay to Barrenjoey where two waterways can be seen. One is the beautiful Pittwater; the other is the mouth of one of Australia's greatest and most historic rivers, the Hawkesbury. Between those two rivers, in the Ku-ring-gai National Park, stands West Head where below the cliffs of Commodore Heights lies an old World War II defence complex, which has become known as West Head Fort. The fort had a couple of unique features: it was the only dual 4.7 inch gun battery in Australia, and it was also the only defence system in Australia with an incline railway. The incline railway ran 150 metres down to the water where it joined a horizontal railway line. The fort was unique and had two gun features.

A further seven kilometres up the river from West Head Fort, on the northern side at Juno Point, is another World War II defence site. On this point were two 18 pound gun defence batteries overlooking the river, which was mined. The gun installations consisted of concrete bases with pivot bolts and contained concrete ammunition storage bays. The National Parks and Wildlife Service holds regular tours to some of these historic sites and I recommend the tours to members who are interested in Australia's war history. I congratulate the National Parks and Wildlife Service on opening the sites to the general community.

I note another significant aspect to the Hawkesbury. Last year Australia celebrated the Royal Australian Navy's centenary. The Royal Australian Navy began with six ships and two of those ships lie in the Hawkesbury: HMAS *Parramatta* and HMAS *Swan*. They were two of six Australian River Class torpedo boat destroyers built between 1909 and 1915. The HMAS *Parramatta* was completed in 1910 in Scotland and was the first new ship built for the Royal Australian Navy, having been commissioned in March 1911. The HMAS *Swan* was one of three River Class torpedo boat destroyers and was one of the first boats built in Australia at Cockatoo Dock in Sydney. The HMAS *Swan* was launched on 22 January 1915. The HMAS *Parramatta* served in the early stages of World War I, operating in the South Pacific region. Following the surrender of German forces in October 1918, the HMAS *Parramatta* accepted the surrender of the German admiral assigned to the area. The HMAS *Swan*, during the early stages of World War I, patrolled waters around present-day Malaysia and the Philippines and, together with two other vessels, assisted Japanese destroyers in conveying troops to Europe. In World War I, the Japanese were an ally of Australia.

In 1934, prior to them being taken to Sydney for final breaking up, a sudden gale caused both ships to break free as they were being towed down river. The HMAS *Parramatta* ran aground at Milson Island, four kilometres from the western side of the Hawkesbury River road bridge. Its bow and stern were removed and mounted at Garden Island and in Parramatta Park. The HMAS *Swan* was carried further down the river. Its hull filled with rainwater and it sank off Juno Point under 20 metres of water. The two ships were all but forgotten. However, a scale model of the HMAS *Swan* has been designed and an exhibition on the two ships will be held during the 2015 Anzac Centenary commemoration celebrations. We hope to mount a public exhibition at libraries, service clubs and schools on the Central Coast and in Pittwater and Hornsby. With Anzac Day fast approaching, I felt it appropriate to reflect on some of the wartime history of the Central Coast and particularly the birth of the Royal Australian Navy, as the area is now the resting place of two of the first ships for that fine service.

[Acting-Speaker (Mr Lee Evans) left the chair at 1.27 p.m. The House resumed at 2.15 p.m.]

BIRTH OF JAMES ANTHONY COURE

The SPEAKER: On behalf of the House, I express a warm welcome to the world to James Anthony Coure, who was born on Saturday 22 March 2014 to parents Adla and Mark Coure, the member for Oatley. Congratulations, Mark and Adla.

MARINE ENVIRONMENT BRIEFING

The SPEAKER: I remind members of the briefing tomorrow in the Macquarie Room by the Australian Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering on the new vision for the New South Wales marine environment. The keynote speaker will be Dr Wendy Craik, Chair of the NSW Marine Estate Management Authority. The briefing will commence at 1.00 p.m. I encourage all members to attend.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Notices of Motions

Government Business Notices of Motions (for Bills) given.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Routine of Business

[During the giving of notices of motions to be accorded priority.]

The SPEAKER: Order! Members who continue to interject will be placed on calls to order. I call the member for Kiama to order for the first time. Members will come to order.

QUESTION TIME

[Question time commenced at 2.21 p.m.]

AUSTRALIAN WATER HOLDINGS

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: My question is directed to the Premier. On 26 February the Premier told the House, "I had never met with Mr Sinodinos in his capacity as chair of Australian Water Holdings." Documents tabled at the Independent Commission Against Corruption show the Premier met with Arthur Sinodinos as Chairman of Australian Water Holdings on 12 August 2010. How can the people of New South Wales trust the Premier when he continues to mislead the Parliament about his dealings with Nick Di Girolamo and Arthur Sinodinos?

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will come to order.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: From memory, the question was: Had I met with Arthur Sinodinos as Premier in relation to Australian Water Holdings matters? The answer remains no. The Leader of the Opposition has probably forgotten what I said last week. I want to remind him of what occurred Monday of last week down at the Independent Commission Against Corruption where not a political figure rose and commented on these matters, but counsel assisting the Independent Commission Against Corruption did. What did counsel assisting the Independent Commission Against Corruption say? He said:

Commissioner, we have looked carefully at the activities of Mr O'Farrell and Mr Pearce and we have found no evidence to implicate either in any corruption.

He went on and said in that opening address:

It is an established fact that despite the political pressure which was brought to bear by Australian Water Holdings the bureaucrats and politicians did not give way.

That sums up the facts. That is the way in which the Independent Commission Against Corruption's inquiry opened last week. That is from someone who is outside of this place and not interested in playing politics but interested in getting to the facts. That is why I remain a very strong supporter of the Independent Commission

Against Corruption. It is why this Government has given the Independent Commission Against Corruption record funding. It is why we have increased the commission's powers, contrary to the actions of those opposite, whether it was their inadequate resourcing of the commission—a matter of fact if one goes back through the transcripts of the parliamentary oversight committee on the Independent Commission Against Corruption; commissioner after commissioner came to the committee and argued that they did not have the resources to do their jobs—or their practices, which have been unveiled by the commission over the past three years. We wanted to put those matters behind us. We gave the Independent Commission Against Corruption and other watchdogs record funding. They are getting on with their jobs. We will allow them to be the arbiters of what corrupt practice went on because it is clear from the record of those opposite that they have no nose when it comes to corruption.

Mr John Robertson: Point of order: My point of order is relevance under Standing Order 129. The question asked whether the Premier was going to correct the record because he said he had never met with Arthur Sinodinos.

The SPEAKER: Order! That was not the question in its entirety. The Premier is being relevant to the question asked.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: Opposition members have no nose for corruption given what was going on whilst they were in office. Apparently none of them smelt that whiff of corruption that was the commentary of the media, including the front page of the *Daily Telegraph*.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: We know they had a blind eye to corruption because not even the Leader of the Opposition when he sat in Cabinet lifted a finger when it came to those corrupt practices.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I am reminded by the Minister for Education that the Leader of the Opposition did not even pick up the phone to the State's authorities when offered a bribe by a developer.

Dr Andrew McDonald: Point of order: My point of order is relevance under Standing Order 129. It is a specific comment from the Premier that he had never met Mr Sinodinos.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Premier remains relevant to the question. The standing orders do not permit me to direct Ministers how to answer questions. There is no point of order.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I know they do not like it, but in a sense that is my point: Do not listen to those opposite, who ignored corruption for 16 long years; do not listen to those opposite, who are simply trying to score political points. Listen to counsel assisting the Independent Commission Against Corruption and read what he said last week when he talked about having carefully examined the activities and the established facts. He shows there is nothing in the Opposition's case.

STATE ECONOMY

Mr ANDREW FRASER: My question is addressed to the Premier. How has the New South Wales Government turned the New South Wales economy around from being the worst in the nation to the best in the nation?

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I thank the member for Coffs Harbour for his question and for his strong and long-term interest in ensuring jobs and economic growth not only on the mid North Coast but also right across New South Wales. The member for Coffs Harbour has long been an advocate in this place of the understanding that if we want to protect people's standards of living we must ensure that they have a job. The best way that governments can ensure people have jobs is to try to guarantee and to put in place an environment that delivers a strong economy. When the Coalition came to office New South Wales had the worst performing economy of the nation—as was mentioned earlier by the member for Pittwater during the giving of notices of motions; he could have gone to St Paul's Catholic College but regrettably was set back in life by not doing so. That is one of the reasons why our first commitment as a Liberal-Nationals Government was to restore economic growth to New South Wales and make us number one again.

I am delighted that under the stewardship of Australia's greatest Treasurer New South Wales now has the best performing economy of any State in the nation. Since we came to office 109,000 jobs have been created in New South Wales and we have the lowest unemployment rate in the nation. That is not something that those opposite could ever boast about because when they left office employment growth was the slowest of all the States across the country.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: Our economic growth is the strongest of all the States on both a quarterly and annual basis. Again that is not something that members opposite could have said because when Labor left office New South Wales had the slowest economic growth of any State over the previous decade. But, as they say in the classics, there is more. Under the Liberal-Nationals Government business confidence has been positive for seven consecutive months, in stark contrast to business confidence under those opposite. It was the lowest anywhere in Australia for most of the last five years they were in office.

We all know that housing approvals are an indicator of economic growth. The number of private dwelling approvals in New South Wales last year was at its highest level since 2002. That is important, I say to the year 10 students from St Paul's Catholic College, because the more housing supply there is the better the housing affordability. Labor delivered the lowest number of new dwelling starts per capita over its last five years in government. These results did not just happen; they did not just materialise. They have been built on a lot of hard work, through the development of sound policies, and making tough decisions and implementing them. It is the result of a great team performance led in this field by a Treasurer who continues to make a great person like Daly Cherry-Evans look ordinary. The Treasurer is the Daly Cherry-Evans of the scheme and, if that is the case, somewhere on the front bench is the Pat Richards equivalent. In fact, the Deputy Premier would be Pat Richards if he were not a Queensland supporter.

The Treasurer has helped transform an economy that was only winning wooden spoons under Labor but is now the standard-bearer across the nation. The Government has turned the economy around by investing in those key levers of economic growth: a \$60 billion infrastructure program, not only to deliver the infrastructure needed to supply services but also to deliver jobs across the State. That infrastructure program covers heavy and light rail, road projects, hospital rebuilds and upgrades, Bridges for the Bush and an upgrade to the Pacific Highway, which is important to the member for Coffs Harbour. It does not take mega-projects to deliver mega-value to the State. A small critical project such as the Erskine Park Link Road is helping to unlock employment lands in Western Sydney to deliver jobs for people closer to where they live. That was another project promised by Labor and another project not delivered by Labor. Every job created in Western Sydney as a result of that road is a vote of confidence in the New South Wales Liberal-Nationals Government and its commitment to deliver economic infrastructure and jobs that go with it.

The Coalition Government has undertaken the State's biggest housing supply program, complete with supporting infrastructure. I thank the Minister for Planning and Infrastructure for his work towards that project. The Government backs small business by cutting red tape and reducing overheads through reduced payroll tax, WorkCover premiums and electricity costs. It all assists to make it easier for small business to grow and take on more employees. This Government has invested in major events to drive tourism across the State. [*Extension of time granted.*]

It is not a coincidence that the member for Coffs Harbour asks about tourism and major events because Coffs Harbour will be painted blue later this year when it becomes the home base for the State of Origin team prior to each of the State of Origin battles. Only last weekend one of the biggest events since the Olympics was staged in Sydney, with major league baseball—not St George going to the top of the National Rugby League ladder—the Los Angeles Dodgers versus the Arizona Diamond Backs. As the Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Hospitality and Racing knows, 100,000 people over four days attended the Sydney Cricket Ground to watch baseball. There were 80,000 spectators at the two games on Saturday and Sunday, and one-quarter of those visitors came from interstate and overseas. Why is that important? That is important because it injects \$18.4 million into the State's economy, thereby supporting and creating jobs.

I have been informed by the Minister that since coming to office the State has secured 89 major events, which has boosted the visitor economy by \$1.3 billion. That is well over \$1 billion spent in cafes, restaurants, bars, hotels and, of course, shops, supporting the jobs of 150,000 people directly employed in the State's visitor economy. This Government has started the process of turning the State's economy around and does not take anything for granted. That progress has been achieved by a team that has produced sound

policies, implemented them and made tough decisions. This team understands the importance of jobs to people across the State. It will not take its focus off the need to deliver those jobs or the critical infrastructure and services.

AUSTRALIAN WATER HOLDINGS

Ms LINDA BURNEY: I direct my question to the Premier. Former Sydney Water Chief Executive Officer Kerry Schott has told the Independent Commission Against Corruption about ongoing concerns around the conduct of Australian Water Holdings and its representatives. Will the Premier inform the House what advice or information was provided to him or his Ministers about inappropriate or dishonest behaviour by Australian Water Holdings prior to it being awarded a \$100 million contract by the Government?

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I remind the Deputy Leader of the Opposition of statements made by counsel assisting the Independent Commission Against Corruption. As I have said previously, my activities and those of the then Minister responsible for water have been closely examined, and there is no evidence of any corrupt activities. In addition, I refer the member to pages 46T and 47T of counsel's address, where counsel assisting looks at the contract and states:

... contrary to what might be the public perception the arrangement was not particularly favourable to Australian Water Holdings nor particularly disadvantaged to Sydney Water.

Further:

... the current agreement with Australian Water Holdings is fair and proper and that it was the result of an appropriate compromise made in the context of inherently risky litigation.

Importantly, the agreement was entered into by the board of Sydney Water, of whom a majority of members were appointed by the Labor Party, including the chairman.

Ms Linda Burney: Point of order: The Premier can repeat that answer—

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

Ms Linda Burney: The point of order is under Standing Order 129.

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

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I am and remain an admirer of Dr Schott. When the Coalition Government came to office Dr Schott was appointed chair of the Commission of Audit, she serves on the Central Business District and South East Light Rail Advisory Board, has been a director of New South Wales Treasury Corporation since December 2001 and has assisted with two of the State's biggest transactions, the lease of the desalination plant and the sale of the electricity generators. So impressed was I by Dr Schott that I nominated her to Prime Minister Rudd to join the board of the Council of Australian Governments Reform Council.

STATE ECONOMY

Mr LEE EVANS: I direct my question to the Deputy Premier. Will the Deputy Premier inform the House how the Government is working with industry to fuel economic growth in New South Wales?

Mr ANDREW STONER: The Premier has advised the House how in three short years New South Wales has moved from being the laggard State on a number of economic metrics, which was achieved under the 16 long years of the then Labor Government, to being at the forefront of metrics such as the economic and employment growth.

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

Mr ANDREW STONER: I advise the House that the future looks equally bright. Just yesterday Deloitte released a report which confirms that the nation's largest and most diversified economy, New South Wales, is well positioned to cash in on the next boom in our national economy. That report identifies growth

sectors of agribusiness, gas, tourism, international education and wealth management. Coincidentally, that aligns very nicely with a number of industry action plans initiated by this Government in conjunction with those industries in a process that commenced back in 2011.

The report also identified 19 smaller growth sectors that could contribute a further \$150 billion to Australian incomes as the national economy pivots away from being resource based to being a provider of key services, particularly in those rapidly growing Asian markets to our north. One of these growth sectors is information and communications technology, another area of industry action plans in the digital economy. The report identifies that this area will be a critical catalyst for other major growth sectors of the national economy. The report identifies the potential of agribusiness in respect of technology, such as water-saving sensor systems and new methods of protecting crops from disease. The resources sector of information and communications technology will affect everything from robotics and systems automation to more sophisticated engineering systems and safety technologies.

Mr Clayton Barr: What are your thoughts on the National Broadband Network?

The SPEAKER: Order! I call the member for Cessnock to order for the third time. The member will cease his constant interjections, conversations and chatter in the Chamber. I direct the member for Cessnock to remove himself from the Chamber for a period of two hours.

[Pursuant to sessional order the member for Cessnock left the Chamber at 2.39 p.m.]

Mr ANDREW STONER: The New South Wales managing partner of Deloitte, John Meacock, said in relation to the report:

Not only are global markets shifting, but so too is the nature of the Australian economy, and both these big drivers of future prosperity are changing in ways that play to NSW's strengths.

As I said, through this industry action plan process and a raft of other strong economic policy measures the Liberal-Nationals Government is driving growth in priority sectors. One way it is doing that is through the strategic skilled and business migration program. I have previously advised the House that the Significant Investor visa has resulted in nearly \$180 million being invested into Waratah bonds. The proceeds of those bonds are being invested in critical infrastructure that is important to our economic growth such as the WestConnex motorway, the Bells Line of Road upgrades and the Pacific Highway upgrade, which the Premier mentioned, as well as other infrastructure across regional and metropolitan New South Wales. The proceeds are also helping to fund programs such as Resources for Regions and Water Security for Regions. The Centre for International Economics found that migrants will make a \$12.2 billion contribution to the New South Wales economy between 2012-13 and 2016-17.

Dr Andrew McDonald: Just as well it's okay to be bigoted then, Andy.

Mr ANDREW STONER: They do not like migrants in the Labor Party.

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

Mr ANDREW STONER: They do not like migrants because they dance to the unions' tune, opposing 457 visas and the skilled migration that is good for our economy.

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

Mr ANDREW STONER: Members on this side of the House value highly skilled migrants who strengthen our economy. As I was saying, that migration would equal 2.3 per cent of our gross State product, which is significant.

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

Mr ANDREW STONER: Two years on from the release of our New South Wales migration strategy we are seeing strong results. *[Extension of time granted.]*

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

Mr ANDREW STONER: There is so much good news I need more time to share it.

The SPEAKER: Order! I call the member for Canterbury to order for the second time. I call the member for Toongabbie to order for the first time. Members will cease interjecting.

Mr ANDREW STONER: The number of New South Wales nominated skilled migrant visas issued has grown from 400 in 2010-11 under Labor to 4,000 under the Liberal-Nationals Government. That is a tenfold increase in the number of skilled migrants. Secondly, the Government is investing in critical infrastructure across the State. Our agriculture and food sector is worth more than \$30 billion and provides more than 175,000 jobs.

The SPEAKER: Order! I call the member for Macquarie Fields to order for the second time. He will cease interjecting.

Mr ANDREW STONER: Road improvement projects such as the Bells Line of Road upgrade, building WestConnex and investing in country rail lines is helping our agricultural producers and exporters to get their products from paddock to plate and paddock to port so that we can cash in on the big demand, particularly from Asia, for our food exports. Last week the Premier announced the NorthConnex motorway project. He pointed out that NorthConnex will make it faster and cheaper to move freight through Sydney by taking some 5,000 trucks off Pennant Hills Road each day and allowing people who currently travel on that road to bypass 21 sets of traffic lights.

[Interruption]

Members opposite do not like hearing good news but Government members love it, because our economy is growing as a result of this strong policy. Our mining sector is worth nearly \$25 billion and provides 90,000 jobs. The \$130 million we have invested so far in the Resources for Regions program is supporting critical infrastructure in mining-affected communities. Our convention, entertainment and exhibitions industry is currently worth \$100 million to this State each year. We are partnering with the private sector to deliver Australia's largest integrated convention— [Time expired.]

SYDNEY WATER AND MR NICK DI GIROLAMO

Mr PAUL LYNCH: My question is directed to the Premier. On 27 May 2011 the Premier held a meeting with Nick Di Girolamo at which he raised concerns that Sydney Water was commencing a tender process that affected his business. Will the Premier confirm that he said "that can't happen" and told his former Minister for Finance and Services to stop the tender and start a new process, insisting it "must be fixed next week"?

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: I again refer to the statement that counsel assisting the Independent Commission Against Corruption made last Monday that:

We have looked carefully at the activities of Mr O'Farrell and Mr Pearce and we have found no evidence to implicate either in any corruption.

He went on to say:

It is an established fact that despite the political pressure which was brought to bear by Australian Water Holdings, the bureaucrats and the politicians did not give way.

That puts that to rest. I return to question one of today, which was asked by the member for Liverpool earlier this year and in which he said, "What contact did the Premier or his office have?" I answered that. I said that, as Premier, I have never met with Arthur Sinodinos.

Dr Andrew McDonald: You never said "as Premier".

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Macquarie Fields will cease arguing across the Chamber. I call the member for Macquarie Fields to order for the third time.

Mr BARRY O'FARRELL: But the question did and I responded to the question. But let us stop that nonsense and celebrate because in New South Wales we not only have the number one economy but also have won the Sheffield Shield.

STATE BUDGET

Mr JAI ROWELL: My question is addressed to the Treasurer, and Minister for Industrial Relations. How is the Government working to deliver another responsible budget?

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I thank the member for his question. Last week I joined the fine member for Wollondilly to meet with local businesses, many of whom are buoyed by the strength of the New South Wales economy and the hard work of the local member. He might not be the opal of the west but he may be the sapphire of the west.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will come to order.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Many members will not be surprised to hear that when we came to government there was a bit of a mess. There was a bit of a mess because members opposite had 16 years in government.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: It does not take long to run through the fiscal issues. The triple-A credit rating was under threat and expenses were out of control, at more than 7 per cent. Those opposite could not even complete the simple task of sticking to their budget. They had 16 chances to stick to their budget but how many times did they do so? A great big zero.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Labor has a perfect record of blowing the budget. Members opposite produced 16 budgets in a row. They had \$20 billion that they could have invested in infrastructure in this State and they blew it. They know it and they are ashamed of it. They also left behind a huge infrastructure backlog.

Mr John Robertson: Point of order: My point of order is relevance under Standing Order 129. The question asked what the Treasurer is doing—

The SPEAKER: Order! I cannot hear the Leader of the Opposition. The member for Oatley will come to order. The member for Kiama will come to order. I call the member for Oatley to order for the first time. What is the point of order?

Mr John Robertson: My point of order is taken under Standing Order 129, relevance. The question related to what the Treasurer is doing in preparation for the budget; it did not ask for a history of the past 16 years based on a fairytale.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: The \$30 billion infrastructure backlog is an example of the mess those opposite left behind. Captain Solar is very familiar with one of the messes that he left behind. The O'Farrell-Stoner Government has got on with the job of fixing the messes and providing solutions. We have done that in the three budgets that it has been our privilege to deliver in this State. The good news is that another budget is coming. Today I am pleased to announce that the budget will be delivered on Tuesday 17 June. That is another opportunity for us to outline our positive economic plan for the State and to continue the good work that we are doing.

Mr Paul Lynch: Point of order: My point of order is taken under Standing Order 103 and Standing Order 104. The last comment makes clear that this is a ministerial statement. This is not appropriate for question time. There is another time in the order of business for that to occur.

The SPEAKER: Order! It is not a ministerial statement. The Treasurer is being relevant to the question asked. There is no point of order.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: One day the member for Liverpool will smile and it is going to blow the House away. Members opposite do not want to talk about fiscal responsibility and the actions we have taken but we are

happy to outline what we have done. In the upcoming budget we will do everything possible to maintain our triple-A credit rating and continue to control expenses. We will continue to live within our means and put downward pressure on the debt that we inherited from members opposite. We will also continue our record infrastructure spend. Whether it be the Minister for Transport undertaking the largest ever public transport project in the country, the Minister for Roads and Ports undertaking the largest roads project in the country, the Minister for Health delivering a record spend on infrastructure in health or record spending on services by the Minister for Education, at every turn we are acting responsibly to take this State forward. The problem we have in relation to this is quite simply those opposite. We know the Leader of the Opposition has his Robbometer running at about \$4 billion a year.

Mr Ron Hoenig: Point of order: This is a long way away from the leave of the question asked of the Treasurer.

The SPEAKER: Order! I have not heard enough of the Treasurer's answer to discern whether it is a long way from the leave of the question.

Mr Ron Hoenig: The question was about what the Treasurer was doing in preparation for the budget.

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

Mr Ron Hoenig: He is talking about a "Robbometer".

The SPEAKER: Order! The Treasurer has only just strayed from the leave of the question. I will listen further to his answer.

[Extension of time granted.]

Mr MIKE BAIRD: The member Heffron is embarrassed, as members of the shadow Cabinet have started—

Mr Ron Hoenig: Point of order: Again, this has nothing whatsoever to do with the question that was asked. It is even further away.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: They can play games and interject, but at some point the people of New South Wales want them to come out of their fiscal hidey-hole. That is what you need to do: Start telling the people of New South Wales where the \$4 billion is coming from.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Let me be clear: Your budget in relation to ours is \$4 billion a year—

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: You need to come out of your fiscal hidey-hole and start to tell the people of New South Wales where that money is coming from.

Mr Richard Amery: Point of order: Pursuant to standing orders and in line with rulings by previous Speakers, the Treasurer should address his comments through the Chair.

The SPEAKER: Order! I remind all members to address their remarks through the Chair. I ask the Treasurer also to be cognisant of the standing orders.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Whatever way they cut it, they do not like to answer that question. But they will have to; the entire shadow Cabinet will have to answer that question. The people in the gallery want to know where the \$4 billion is going to come from. Labor members cannot live in their fiscal hidey-hole forever.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will cease interjecting.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: The O'Farrell-Stoner Government will continue to take responsible decisions that put downward pressure on expenditure and debt, and increase infrastructure spending to get this economy moving while we have the privilege of being in government.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the House will contain his excitement and come to order.

ELECTRICITY ASSETS SALE

Mr MICHAEL DALEY: My question is directed to the Treasurer. On 6 February this year the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission raised concerns about the sale of Macquarie Generation to AGL, saying that it could substantially lessen competition and increase electricity prices. Why did the Government proceed publicly to sign a contract for the sale of Macquarie Generation to AGL prior to the final decision and despite concerns raised by AGL about everyone in New South Wales paying more for electricity?

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: That is a very good question from the shadow Treasurer, because what we on this side have done is very different from what those opposite did. The shadow Treasurer asks, "By the way, what about this or that transaction?" But everyone remembers that he was the guy who signed off on the gentrader contracts. We have set two clear parameters for Macquarie Generation: It must be cleared from competition and it must be sold for more than it is worth. We make no apologies in relation to—

Mr John Robertson: For driving up prices!

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

Mr John Robertson: They are driving up prices.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I will come to prices, but first let me say this: This State is under very different management now to what we saw from those opposite. We make no apologies for saying that, in the long-term interests of this State, if the reserve price is not met we will not sell those assets.

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order: The question was not about the reserve price; it was about competition.

The SPEAKER: Order! I heard the question and the Treasurer is being relevant to it. There is no point of order.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Those opposite talk about electricity prices. We on this side have done everything possible to drive down electricity prices—a cost-of-living decision. We have taken action in that regard. How much did electricity prices rise during the last five years under those opposite? By 60 per cent with a bullet—up and up and up they went. What did Labor do about it? Absolutely nothing. And that is not all. The State was desperate for some leadership so finally the *Daily Telegraph* asked all Ministers, "What are you going to do about electricity price rises; how can you take pressure off?" They responded, and what did they say about electricity prices? The response from the member for Canterbury was, "Take a hot water bottle to bed."

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order: I refer to Standing Order 129, relevance. The question was very simple: Why did the Treasurer sign the contract one month before the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission handed down its decision?

The SPEAKER: Order! The question may be simple but the Treasurer is being relevant to it. The member for Maroubra will resume his seat.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Responding to what Labor was going to do about electricity prices—remember that electricity prices are equal to the consumer price index or lower under us, and they were up 60 per cent under those opposite the former member for Maitland said that he worked in the dark as much as possible. That

is a cracker, a little ripper. He is an absolute genius! The people of New South Wales were in safe hands under Labor! The member for Liverpool was the Minister for Energy. Under us, electricity prices are in line with the consumer price index or going down.

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order: By no stretch of the imagination is this relevant to the sale of Macquarie Generation.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Electricity prices are coming down under us; we have taken action. Those opposite have slurred people along the way. What was the energy Minister's response when the people of New South Wales were looking for leadership?

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will come to order.

Mr Paul Lynch: Point of order: My point of order is in two parts. First, I refer first to Standing Order 73. The Treasurer has for some time been making adverse personal reflections upon people on this side of the House, which is clearly in breach of the standing orders. He has also demonstrated an utter inability to answer the question, which is Standing Order 129.

[Time expired.]

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will come to order.

WESTERN SYDNEY JOBS GROWTH

Mrs TANYA DAVIES: My question is directed to the Minister for Finance and Services. What is the Government doing to boost jobs and the economy in Western Sydney?

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: I thank the member for Mulgoa for her question—an important question, given what was announced last Friday by the Premier in relation to the relocation of public sector jobs to Western Sydney and the consolidation of a number of leases throughout Western Sydney. We make no secret of the fact that we want to get public servants out of the ivory towers in the centre of the central business district and into the community they serve.

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

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: We want to ensure the devolution of decision-making—

The SPEAKER: Order! I call the member for Shellharbour to order for the second time. She will cease interjecting.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: —by ensuring that we have our public servants working within communities, in rural New South Wales and throughout metropolitan Sydney. Very pleasingly, as part of the package announced last week we have been able to consolidate a number of leases. We have also been able to relocate public sector jobs out of the centre of town. In particular, it is pleasing to see that Penrith, Parramatta and Liverpool will be the first cities to be part of the Government's Decade of Decentralisation announcements in this regard. We are moving divisions of Family and Community Services—some 200-odd jobs—to Liverpool. We are also moving the Community Relations Commission to Liverpool, involving some 70 jobs. We are relocating Sport and Recreation to Penrith, involving some 263 jobs; 1,330 jobs in the NSW Office of State Revenue will be consolidated into new premises at Parramatta; 1,120 jobs in the Office of Environment and Heritage will be relocated from the Sydney central business district to Parramatta; and the Environment Protection Authority will be relocated to Parramatta.

We will also relocate the headquarters of Service NSW, involving some 40 jobs, to Parramatta, and we will relocate the Ambulance Service of NSW, involving some 250 jobs, to North Parramatta. In all, some 3,000 jobs are either being consolidated under new lease arrangements or being relocated from the centre of the city. We have more to come in this regard because as leases expire we will be seeking to decentralise government from the Sydney central business district. I assure the House that all communities across the State will benefit from these relocations. We are going to put out lease proposals for expressions of interest. We want

to work with the private sector to deliver these premises. There is no point in valuable taxpayer dollars being tied up in buildings when we can utilise that capital for the provision of terrific services right across the State. We look forward to releasing within two months expressions of interest for 5,000 square metres in Liverpool, Parramatta and Penrith. Most pleasingly, local government has made a number of clear statements about our plan. The Urban Taskforce said:

The State Government's relocation of 3,000 public servants to Parramatta, Penrith and Liverpool will help rebalance the city.

Liverpool City Council said:

Liverpool is a great start and reverses the trend of neglecting Liverpool by previous state governments.

But I love these words the best:

This is a great move. It will boost the local economies of the regional river cities of Liverpool, Parramatta and Penrith. I commend the Premier on his decision to use the government's employing power to be the cornerstone for jobs growth in our regional cities.

Mr Bryan Doyle: Who said that?

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: It is not a terrific Liberal—it was not one of the many Liberals who have been running to my office, banging on the door and seeking jobs for Western Sydney. It happens to be David Borger, the former Labor member for Granville. I commend the member for Granville, the member for Parramatta, the member for Penrith, the member for Menai, and many other members. [*Extension of time granted.*]

What is particularly interesting is that whilst we on this side of the House are busily seeking to create jobs in Western Sydney, those opposite are trying to drive down the employment rate. The branch-stacking bandit from Bankstown is trying to take out the member for Auburn, the member for Maroubra is trying to take out the member for Blacktown, and everybody is trying to take out the member for Toongabbie.

Mr John Robertson: Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 129, relevance. It would be more relevant for the Minister to speak about what the Liberal Mayor of Blacktown has had to say.

The SPEAKER: Order! I uphold the point of order. The Minister will return to the leave of the question.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: David Cameron in the United Kingdom has a great line that applies to the Leader of the Opposition: "It does not have to be Christmas to prove you are sitting next to a turkey". How true is that in New South Wales?

Ms Sonia Hornery: Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 129. I believe that comment was inappropriate.

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

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: There was he member for Blacktown on Channel 9 on Friday night.

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order: Standing Order 73 gives the Minister ample provision to move a substantive motion. If he wants to do so, we are ready to go.

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

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: I was somewhat intrigued that the Leader of the Opposition was on television on Friday night telling us that we had to move the Department of Transport to Western Sydney. When he was transport Minister in the former Labor Government he did not move one job to Western Sydney. I have not had the Leader of the Opposition, the member for Blacktown, at my door seeking jobs for Western Sydney. It says a lot about the Leader of the Opposition. We are the party that is looking after the people of Western Sydney.

ELECTRICITY ASSETS SALE

Mr MICHAEL DALEY: My question is directed to the Treasurer. Given that a senior adviser of the Minister for six years left the Minister's office in January to work as head of government affairs at AGL, right in the middle of the Macquarie Generation sale process, will the Minister give an ironclad guarantee to the people of New South Wales as to the integrity of the sale process?

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Yes, absolutely.

COURT BROADCASTING

Mr GARRY EDWARDS: My question is addressed to the Attorney General, and Minister for Justice. What is the Government doing to ensure that courts are open and accountable?

Mr GREG SMITH: I thank the member for Swansea for his question and for his interest in this issue. The Government will be introducing legislation to encourage the courts to allow the media more opportunities to broadcast sentencing proceedings in criminal trials. In this State in 2014 the filming and broadcasting of sentencing proceedings should be the norm and no longer the exception. Already a member of the public can sit in a courtroom and watch a judge give his or her sentencing remarks and in most cases that footage should be available to be beamed into lounge rooms and onto smart phones across the State.

We will create a presumption in favour of allowing the filming and broadcasting of verdicts and sentencing in judge-alone cases. Social media such as Twitter have already helped to demystify the court process and, as Attorney General, I want to take the next step. Last year we saw the very informative, and frankly captivating, way in which Twitter covered the considered verdict being delivered by Justice Lucy McCallum in a prominent murder trial. It is time we made better use of the available technology and allowed greater access for cameras to our courtrooms. Initially this will apply to the Supreme Court, with the current pool camera arrangement, but we will examine its success and consider extending the policy to other courts and civil cases.

We are also examining the possibility of web streaming for selected proceedings in the future. Broadcasting sentencing will enable the public to better understand what courts do, what goes on in sentencing and how the criminal justice system works. This is one step towards that, together with other education initiatives being undertaken by my department in schools and in the wider community. The Department of Attorney General and Justice has a YouTube upload called "JusticeNSW", which features information videos about courts. Justice should be seen to be done, and this is one step towards making it easier for proceedings to be broadcast.

South African High Court Judge Dunstan Mlambo recently gave conditional approval for parts of the Oscar Pistorius trial to be broadcast. In doing so, he stated that court proceedings are public and this objective must be recognised. An incident during his trial has demonstrated the importance of media outlets complying with clear directions regarding what can and cannot be broadcast. Proceedings were adjourned when a television station broadcast an image of a witness who was entitled to privacy. The judge warned the station in question to ensure it complied with the broadcast conditions.

We will consult with the media and other stakeholders before passing the legislation to ensure that the appropriate balance is struck between the principle of open justice and other principles, such as privacy, safety and natural justice. Some definite exemptions will be required. For example, broadcasting would be inappropriate when filming would reveal the identity of jurors, protected witnesses or victims; when proceedings would contain significant material subject to suppression orders or material which would prejudice other trials or police investigations, or reveal police methodology; or when filming would put someone's safety and security at risk. This reform will allow courts to be more open and accountable and will help the public to better understand the court process while, at the same time, preserving the integrity of the criminal justice system.

Question time concluded at 3.11 p.m.

LEGISLATION REVIEW COMMITTEE

Report

Mr Stephen Bromhead, as Chair, tabled the report entitled "Legislation Review Digest No. 53/55", dated 25 March 2014, together with minutes of the committee meeting regarding Legislation Review Digest No. 52/55.

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

PETITIONS

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

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**.

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

Old Bar Beach

Petition calling for a positive, constructive and efficient solution to protect Old Bar Beach, New South Wales, received from **Mr Stephen Bromhead**.

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

The Hon. Don Page—Lachlan Shire Amalgamation—lodged 25 February 2014 (Mr Adrian Piccoli)

CONSIDERATION OF MOTIONS TO BE ACCORDED PRIORITY

State Economy and Jobs Growth

Mr ROB STOKES (Pittwater—Parliamentary Secretary) [3.13 p.m.]: The motion for which I seek priority states:

That this House:

- (1) Notes the Opposition's failed economic management left New South Wales with the slowest economic growth and slowest jobs growth of all States over a decade.
- (2) Notes the latest figures show that under the Government New South Wales now has the strongest economic growth and the lowest unemployment rate in the nation.
- (3) Congratulates the Government on getting on with the job of making New South Wales number one again.

This motion deserves to be accorded priority because there is no business more important for government than building a strong economy. A strong economy is the key to unlocking opportunity and equality. A strong economy creates chances for people to make their own future, rather than live in fear and uncertainty. A strong economy gives people the right to live boldly.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will not interject during the three-minute speeches to establish priority.

Mr ROB STOKES: This motion deserves priority because it is right for this House to debate the things that matter in New South Wales. The fact is that this State is no longer the economic sick man of Australia. After three years of sober and responsible government the New South Wales Liberals and Nationals have turned the economic fortunes of our State around from being derided as the worst-performing old economy rust belt province, when the Labor regime was toppled, to being the nation's leader.

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

Mr ROB STOKES: New South Wales was praised at the recent G20 meeting as being the model for all subnational economies to emulate. The economic performance of State Labor and the New South Wales Liberal-Nationals could not be more different. State Labor's annual budget speech was like reading a fairytale and each year the tale got more fanciful. The sad fact is that if Labor had delivered the budget results that were promised over 16 long years, the people of New South Wales would be \$20 billion better off. Instead, Labor saw the budget as just another glossy work of fiction, full of empty promises. The Liberal-Nationals have moved the budget into the non-fiction category because we have committed to a set of numbers and we have delivered. We have controlled expenses and are living within our means while at the same time delivering improved front-line services, more rail, more roads and more public transport.

This motion deserves priority because—in a shocking and cowardly display—I saw the shadow Minister for Finance holding aloft my printed motion and looking around the Opposition benches, searching for someone prepared to fight me. I ask those opposite: Where is their David to our Goliath? Where is he? This motion deserves priority for the reasons I have outlined.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will come to order. I remind members not to interject during the three-minute speeches to establish priority.

Racial Discrimination

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) [3.16 p.m.]: This motion deserves to be accorded priority because section 18C of the Racial Discrimination Act 1975 has been put in place to provide legislative protection to the people of New South Wales from a circumstance which is reasonably likely to offend, insult, humiliate or intimidate another person or group of people because of their race, colour, or national or ethnic origin. Section 18D of the Act is in place to ensure that there is a balance for the objectives of section 18C. Section 18D sets out to ensure that any code of conduct that has been made reasonably and in good faith for the particular specified purposes will not impede an individual's right to justifiable freedoms of expression.

On the Q&A program, Senator George Brandis said the Abbott Government is determined to repeal section 18C of the Racial Discrimination Act. Senator Brandis also gave a speech in July 2012 to the Australian Liberal Students' Federation stating, "If we win the next election, one of my first priorities will be to remove from the Racial Discrimination Act the provisions under which Andrew Bolt was dragged before the courts." Andrew Bolt was dragged before the courts under section 18C for writings which were considered to breach this Act. This was echoed yesterday in Federal Parliament where Senator Brandis said, "Never again in Australia will we have a situation in which a person may be taken to court for expressing a political opinion."

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Monaro will cease interjecting.

Mr GUY ZANGARI: He said, "People do have a right to be bigots, you know ... people do have rights to say things that other people find offensive or insulting or bigoted." I would like to know how any member of this House can possibly support the view of Senator Brandis and also fail to stand up for the preservation of such important protections for the people of New South Wales. How can the member for Smithfield, the member for Granville and the member for Oatley explain it to their electorates? More importantly, how can the Minister for Citizenship and Communities explain his inaction and failure to stand up to the revocation of section 18C to all community groups throughout this State? The Abbott Government may not be in touch with Indigenous and multicultural communities and understand their grave fears and concerns for the revocation of section 18C but we do on this side of the Chamber. The Labor Party unequivocally rejects the revocation of section 18C from the Racial Discrimination Act 1975.

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

Mr GUY ZANGARI: Members of the Government should explain to their constituencies why they are standing up for racist comments.

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

The House divided.

Ayes, 66

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

Noes, 23

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

Question resolved in the affirmative.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**Suspension of Standing and Sessional Orders: Order of Business**

Mr BRAD HAZZARD (Wakehurst—Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Infrastructure NSW) [3.29 p.m.]: I move:

That standing and sessional orders be suspended at this sitting to:

- (1) Provide that from 5.30 p.m. until the rising of the House, no divisions be conducted or quorums be called.
- (2) Permit the taking of community recognition statements for a period of up to 20 minutes following the conclusion of the matter of public importance, and prior to the adjournment of the House.
- (3) Extend the sitting of the House accordingly.

I indicate to members that at the conclusion of debate on the Fair Trading Amendment (Ticket Reselling) Bill 2013, which I anticipate will be before 5.30 p.m., the House will deal with the Child Protection Legislation Amendment Bill 2013 on which the member for Canterbury will speak at length. The House will deal with both those bills and, following discussion with the Opposition, it is appropriate that there be no divisions and no quorums. Members have indicated also that last week's trial of the additional community recognition statements was successful so I will continue that trial this afternoon by agreement. Therefore, at the end of Government

Business, which I expect will be either at 6.00 p.m. or when the member for Canterbury has concluded her contribution, the House will deal with the matter of public importance and private members' statements followed by up to 20 minutes of community recognition statements.

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

Motion agreed to.

STATE ECONOMY AND JOBS GROWTH

Motion Accorded Priority

Mr ROB STOKES (Pittwater—Parliamentary Secretary) [3.32 p.m.]: I move:

That this House:

- (1) Notes the Opposition's failed economic management left New South Wales with the slowest economic growth and slowest jobs growth of all States over a decade.
- (2) Notes the latest figures show that under the Government New South Wales now has the strongest economic growth and lowest unemployment rate in the nation.
- (3) Congratulates the Government on getting on with the job of making New South Wales number one again.

I am delighted to speak on this motion because turning our State's finances around has been central to the economic success, the *Wirtschaftswunder* that is New South Wales, and the prosperity of our State. Responsible economic management should be at the heart of every government's focus as its driver for opportunities, the creator of confidence and the path forward for our State's future. Our State's economy should also be something that every member of this House is keen to talk about and debate; they should not have to be dragged and coerced into doing so. I was fascinated that members opposite voted against my motion having priority because this is the critical issue facing our State and its future.

Unlike members opposite, Government members have a clear understanding that the success of the State's economy has flow-on effects for every small business, every school, every piece of infrastructure and every resident in every community across the length and breadth of New South Wales. Despite this, members opposite do not want to talk about it and now we know exactly why. We know they would much rather their economic credentials were hidden down a mineshaft, as the Treasurer alluded to earlier today, where no-one can see them. But they cannot escape their past or the damage they did to New South Wales. The reality is that Labor ignored the State's economy; it wasted money, rejected advice and squandered opportunities for job creation, investment and growth.

The Coalition came to government with the clear task of cleaning up the mess that Labor created over 16 long years, to restore order to our State's finances, to rein in unnecessary spending and to reposition New South Wales so we can deliver the changes and improved infrastructure that our State needs. Had members opposite kept their eye on the ball, stayed focused on the best interests of the State and lived within their means, New South Wales—and each and every resident of this State collectively— would be more than \$20 billion better off. I do not have time to run through the enormous list of major infrastructure projects or essential programs that could have been delivered with these funds and frankly it is a little too sad to consider. However, the positive news is that under the astute and diligent leadership of the Premier, the Treasurer and the Minister for Finance and Services—the triple-A team of New South Wales—our State is now firmly on the road to economic recovery, which the people of New South Wales have been calling for and which both small- and large-scale businesses throughout our State are relying on.

A good way to measure and plot the Government's financial management is to compare where we were under those opposite and where we are today. We know that when Labor left office jobs and economic growth were the slowest of any State for the past decade. However, today New South Wales has the highest jobs growth of any Australian State and it proudly possesses the strongest economic growth figures on both a quarterly and an annual basis. We also know that New South Wales recorded the lowest business confidence of any State among small to medium businesses and the lowest number of new housing starts per capita for most of the last five years of the Labor regime.

However, if we fast-forward to today we see our State's business confidence has been positive for the past seven consecutive months and the number of private dwelling approvals in New South Wales is the highest in a dozen years. Importantly for small businesses throughout the State such as Haydenshapes surfboards based in my

electorate of Pittwater, which produces the perfectly shaped Hypto Krypto surfboard that is used and preferred by both the Treasurer and the Minister for Finance and Services, our State's retail trade figures have moved from having the lowest average annual rate of any State under Labor to being the strongest of all States. Furthermore, in the short period since our coming to government, 109,000 jobs have been created in New South Wales and New South Wales now has the lowest unemployment rate in the country. We also know that while all Labor-controlled States throughout our country have had their credit ratings downgraded, New South Wales has kept the highest triple-A credit rating, a financial position that saves our State around \$3.75 billion in interest costs over 10 years.

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): Order! The member for Miranda will cease interjecting.

Mr ROB STOKES: As Government members are aware, this shift in fortunes and our positive economic position has not just happened. It has involved careful economic management, targeted business incentives and the creation of an attractive environment for businesses to establish, expand and create jobs. Unlike members opposite, who took a completely ignorant approach to our State's economy and did not become interested in the disaster they were steering us towards until it was too late, we now have an economic leadership team in New South Wales that is not afraid of a challenge, is not afraid to make decisions and is determined to continue leading our State away from the gloomy path that the economic geniuses opposite elected to follow.

Mr MICHAEL DALEY (Maroubra) [3.37 p.m.]: I do not know what economic history the member for Pittwater had in mind but he could not possibly have been talking about the economic history of New South Wales in the past 20 years. He certainly was not talking about the tremendous job that Labor did in government as great economic managers. When Labor left office in 2011 the State's credit rating was a solid triple-A, one of very few in Australia.

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): Order! The member for Maroubra will be heard in silence.

Mr MICHAEL DALEY: Labor left the State's budget in a very healthy surplus position of \$1.3 billion—one of 12 surpluses that Labor delivered in 16 years. There was very strong economic growth and we created almost 200,000 new jobs in our last two years—and all this in spite of the global economic meltdown in 2008-09. We restored the budget to surplus one year after that event without having to sack a single public servant—not one. Under Labor the economy was not a bucking bronco like some of the other State economies. There was steady growth and the long-term trend in employment and economic growth was sound. After Labor left government things went a little bit wrong, with the Treasurer demoted by his Premier to eleventh in the batting order and, according to the Auditor-General, he lost \$1 billion. In the same budget he got the capital expenditure figures wrong by \$3.2 billion.

According to last year's mid-year review there will be a \$2.5 billion deficit. The same mid-year review concluded that despite all of the rhetoric and the stated aims of the Treasurer, the Premier and the Government, expenses in last year's budget outstripped revenues. This is a failure that is built on 15,000 public service sackings. True to its DNA, the first thing this Liberal Government did—and we hear this rhetoric repeated in Canberra—was to blame people, individuals, for economic circumstances that in this case did not exist.

It is similar to the story of the \$5.2 billion black hole, which was completely debunked shortly after this Government came to office. Inherent in this motion is the issue of unemployment. The member stated that New South Wales has the lowest unemployment rate in the nation. This State, unlike other States, thankfully does not have an economy built on a mining boom. When demand from China reduces, New South Wales does not suffer as other States do. Since Barry O'Farrell and Mike Baird took control of the State's finances unemployment has risen from 4.9 per cent to 5.8 per cent. The trend in New South Wales has been a slow but steady increase in unemployment. That means that more people are unemployed now than there were prior to Barry O'Farrell and Mike Baird taking over the running of the State.

When the member for Manly and the member for Pittwater say that New South Wales is doing better than other States, what they are really saying is that New South Wales is not doing well with the unemployment rate rising 1 per cent but it is not as bad as the other States. How could anyone brag about that situation? Queensland and Western Australia are coming off significant mining booms and so their unemployment rate is rising faster, but the unemployment rate in New South Wales has increased by 1 per cent since the Coalition came to office. It is hard to see how the Government can brag that unemployment is not an issue when the unemployment rate is increasing and people are losing their jobs. Of enormous concern to me is that for youth aged 15 to 19 years the unemployment rate has increased to 16.5 per cent and in the Central West it is almost

20 per cent. That is nothing to brag about. I ask the member for Pittwater to inform the House and the people of New South Wales what the Government will do for the one in five kids in the Central West who are unemployed.

Mr JOHN BARILARO (Monaro) [3.42 p.m.]: I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this motion. The member for Maroubra has criticised the member for Pittwater in relation to statistics and facts. I remind the member that when he was police Minister in 2009-10 he blew the budget by \$244 million and when he was the roads Minister in 2008-09 he blew that budget by \$316 million. The member has no ability for fiscal management and he has proved that by mismanaging those two ministries. When the member became finance Minister he oversaw workers compensation for the State and delivered a \$5 billion black hole. The member for Maroubra placed the report he received demanding urgent attention in the bottom drawer, closed his eyes and buried his head in the sand.

Mr McCarthy spoke disparagingly of the former finance Minister. The member for Maroubra has no credibility when he speaks about the finances of this State. Just like the Hon. Steve Whan, the member for Maroubra manipulates statistics and speaks out of context when comparing unemployment figures across the nation. Presently there is no resource boom. When Labor was governing the State employment growth rates were the slowest in the nation. Presently, this Government is producing the fastest growth of any State. For the last decade of the Labor Government economic growth was the slowest in the nation. Again, this Government is producing the fastest growth of any State and business confidence has been positive for seven consecutive months. The former Labor Government allowed business confidence to reach its lowest level.

The dollars-for-decisions culture of the previous Government reduced the housing supply to the lowest number of new dwellings per capita across the country. Under the Liberal-Nationals Government the number of dwelling approvals in New South Wales has reached a high. Retail trade in New South Wales is presently the strongest in Australia, whereas previously under Labor it had the lowest average annual rate of any State. When referring to statistics, he should compare apples with apples. The Hon. Steve Whan has misrepresented statistics in the Monaro electorate and claimed job losses. I will make it absolutely clear to the House that 10,309 additional people have found work in the three years since the Coalition came to Government.

If members opposite want to support employment they should support the member for Shellharbour. I will champion the member for Shellharbour. The member for Wollongong wants the member for Shellharbour's job. Why have members opposite not stood tall for the good, hardworking member for Shellharbour? Instead, they have knifed her in the back and played games with preselection branch stacking. I call on members opposite to stand tall for all the jobs in this region and State, including that of the member for Shellharbour, a good member for the Labor Party.

Ms ANNA WATSON (Shellharbour) [3.45 p.m.]: Government members are hypocrites. They speak of making New South Wales number one again but do not tell the people of New South Wales that Labor left them with a triple-A credit rating. This Government ditched the Parliamentary Budget Office. It did not like the independent reports which exposed the O'Farrell Government, so they shut it down. This Government has gilded the lily. In my electorate of Shellharbour we have one of the highest unemployment rates in the State, while this Government makes promises with no intention of delivering. The Government set itself a target to relocate 1,500 public sector jobs to regional New South Wales by 2021, but in the Illawarra we have seen just 31 jobs in Nowra and seven jobs in Wollongong. That is pathetic.

This conservative Government big-notes itself on economic management, but that is a joke. Members opposite mistake slashing jobs in the public sector, cutting funds to schools and hospitals, imposing bed taxes on vulnerable housing tenants, privatising the community services sector, stripping workers compensation for injured workers and their families and closing fire stations for good economic management. I have news for them: the people of New South Wales want services. The people of New South Wales want a truthful, caring and honest government, not the razor gang opposite that they have had for the past three years.

This Government has an appalling record and the faceless Minister for the Illawarra, the Hon. John Ajaka, should be explaining himself to the region that he supposedly represents in Cabinet. When Labor was in government it relocated over 1,000 public service jobs to the Illawarra. It based Pillar Administration in Wollongong, creating 600 jobs, and based the Department of Local Government in Nowra, creating a further 300 jobs. That is fact. Maybe we can fix this problem. We can ask the member for Kiama to start a petition to request the 1,500 jobs that were promised to the Illawarra by 2021—to date, we have 38.

Mr ROB STOKES (Pittwater—Parliamentary Secretary) [3.48 p.m.], in reply: I thank the member for Monaro for his excellent, eloquent and factual contribution to the debate and I acknowledge the contributions of

members opposite. The member for Shellharbour was unable to use the entire time allowed her for debate. The Opposition is so embarrassed by its economic record that she had time left on the clock. What is even more shocking and what I find to be a fascinating and salient point is that the member for Miranda did not speak in debate on this motion. He is a noted economics teacher and the author of a famous economics textbook that has been well read by me and other members on this side of the House. It is instructive that he did not speak in this debate. It tells us that the one financially literate person on the opposite side of the House is not prepared to stand up and defend Labor's record. The silence from the member for Miranda speaks volumes.

Mr Barry Collier: Point of order: While I appreciate the favourable comments by the member for Pittwater, my economic credentials have nothing to do with this debate.

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): Order! There is no point of order.

Mr ROB STOKES: Once again, the silence speaks volumes. We would have been happy to hear from the member for Miranda but he was too embarrassed. How could he not be embarrassed by these figures? We heard a lot of rhetoric from the shadow Minister for Finance but let us end on some facts. The fact is that the New South Wales unemployment rate is the lowest of all States and has been at or below the national rate for 20 of the past 24 months. That follows a decade under Labor in which New South Wales had the lowest employment growth in the nation. It is also a fact that the Government has created 109,000 jobs since coming to office, which is the highest job creation rate of all States. We will continue to support businesses to create jobs through measures such as reducing the payroll tax burden. Reforms we have made mean that an additional 1,300 businesses will not pay any payroll tax. That is great news for young job seekers and people in areas such as Western Sydney.

Mr Troy Grant: And in regional New South Wales.

Mr ROB STOKES: As the member for Dubbo says, it is also important for regional New South Wales. Calling New South Wales the premier State was an ironic, sick joke by the time the members opposite left office. But today New South Wales is back at number one and truly is the premier State in the Commonwealth.

Question—That the motion be agreed to—put.

The House divided.

Ayes, 66

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

Noes, 22

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

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Motion agreed to.

Pursuant to sessional orders Government business proceeded with.

FAIR TRADING AMENDMENT (TICKET RESELLING) BILL 2013

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 20 March 2014.

Mr STUART AYRES (Penrith—Minister for Fair Trading, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Western Sydney) [4.00 p.m.], on behalf of Mr Anthony Roberts, in reply: As members have heard throughout this debate, this bill is about reforming the secondary ticket marketplace. Consumers who buy tickets from online scalpers face the risk of counterfeit tickets and unfortunately bear the cost of price gouging, a scourge on society. Even if a purchased ticket from a scalper is genuine, the ticket may still be worthless if the event promoter cancels the ticket for being resold in breach of terms and conditions. The reforms that we have proposed have a lighter touch, as we consulted well, and will not involve the imposition of costly red tape. However, they will have the dual effect of protecting and informing consumers while enabling event organisers to enforce their own ticket terms and conditions.

I want to address some issues raised by members throughout the debate. I will make a number of references to the speech by the member for Bankstown. A report prepared by the Commonwealth Consumer Affairs Advisory Council provided a snapshot of ticket scalping as an issue during the dark days of the former Labor Government. However, if we fast forward to 2014 we find the O'Farrell-Stoner Government is focused on pre-emptively dealing with scalping issues in New South Wales, particularly at major events. Major events that are coming up include the 2015 Cricket World Cup, the Netball World Cup, the AMC Asian Cup, the National Rugby League grand final and State of Origin, and the Western Sydney Wanderers and Sydney Football Club derby matches, and we must not forget musicals such as *Annie* and *The Lion King* and a suite of other events in the redeveloped Sydney Convention Centre. In anticipation of an increasing number of sellout events in New South Wales, the Government is acting pre-emptively to address the scourge of ticket scalping.

The member for Bankstown asked why the Government has not simply transplanted ticket-scalping legislation from Queensland or Victoria. The member for Londonderry did a wonderful job in replying to this question, but for the benefit of the member for Bankstown I will outline some of the responses. Both States introduced ineffective legislation under previous Labor Governments addressing the broad issue of ticket scalping. In Victoria in 2009, the Labor Government, under Premier John Brumby, passed the Major Sporting Events Bill, which allows relevant Ministers to create a declared event in an attempt to address ticket scalping. If the relevant Minister makes an event a declared event, the event organiser must submit a ticketing scheme to the Minister for approval.

Once a ticketing scheme has been approved by the Minister, it is an offence not to comply with this scheme and to onsell tickets other than if approved under the scheme. The cost to government of administering the scheme is high and the feedback from sporting codes is that the requirements imposed on the event organiser are onerous. I highlight that the Victorian legislation has been applied to only a very limited number of events. I understand the Australian Football League grand final is usually the only declared event each year. The reforms in this bill will be less onerous and will apply to all events in New South Wales where tickets carry a resale restriction.

In 2006 in Queensland, this time under a Labor Government led by Peter Beattie, the Major Sports Facilities Amendment Act 2001 was amended in an attempt to address ticket scalping. The Queensland legislation adopts a heavy-handed approach, which allows a person to sell tickets with a mark-up of up to 10 per cent of the face value of the ticket. When asked why this Government is not supporting the Queensland regime, which effectively accepts ticket scalping by setting a cap on the profit margin to 10 per cent, the Government's response is simple. The O'Farrell Government scheme will leave no imposition on the ticket conditions to event owners, who are accountable to their fans.

The member for Bankstown did not mention that the South Australian Labor Government also has passed legislation addressing ticket scalping which prohibits the reselling of tickets at a mark-up of more than 10 per cent for declared events. As my learned colleague the member for Londonderry stated in his view of this legislation, the model adopted by South Australia, a hybrid of the Victorian and Queensland legislation, is also undesirable in comparison to this Government's reform, for a combination of the reasons I have just given. The O'Farrell-Stoner Government does not consider that the Government should be telling consumers the price at which they can sell or buy a ticket or to what extent the scalper can profit at the expense of the consumer.

Transplanting ineffective legislation is not the answer. Rather, the New South Wales Government scheme will provide more information to the consumer and leave the imposition of the ticket conditions to the event owners, who are accountable to their fans. Event owners are entitled to ensure that the terms and conditions of their own events are respected. This bill is less onerous and will apply only where the resale restrictions apply, as per the event owners' wish. I note that the member for Camden mentioned an *ABC News* article about postponing the Rolling Stones tour and the availability of refunds to consumers. The article quoted consumer group Choice spokesman Tom Godfrey, who said:

If you bought your tickets through a third party, such as through eBay or a ticket scalper, this may be difficult to get.

Furthermore, the member for Camden quoted an article in which Susan Daley, the director of policy and programs of Live Performance Australia, which represents concert promoters, venues and primary ticket companies, said that consumers are "throwing away their rights" when they buy tickets through scalpers. She told *ABC News Online*:

We always warn people against buying from second-hand ticket providers for these reasons.

For postponed shows at this stage only the principal purchasers are entitled to replacement tickets or refunds. That is a demonstration of why we have taken a lighter touch in this bill. As noted, the effect of this reform is to increase consumers' knowledge of the secondary ticketing market and empower the event owner. We are not in the business of turbocharging unregulated scalping industries by providing a refund safety net for tickets they fail to sell at a profit to consumers. We are equally not attempting to provide an option to attend an event where anyone can ask for a refund for a ticket should they choose not to attend for any reason.

The member for Bankstown acknowledged the secondary market companies, including eBay and viagogo. I note that in her speech she recognised the assistance of Jacqueline Wilcox, a lobbyist employed by Ticketmaster, and thanked Ms Wilcox for her consultation on the reforms. I would advise the member that recognising the lobbyist she is working with is not in the interest of the lobbyist's clients. We make a strong habit of saying that lobbyists do not have any impact on the New South Wales Government's actions. Perhaps the member for Bankstown should consider the same principle. I thank the member for Hawkesbury and the member for Cronulla for drawing the attention of the House to Ticketmaster's own terms and conditions restricting the unlawful resale of tickets. Clearly, Ticketmaster forgot to inform the member for Bankstown that its own terms and conditions restricting the unlawful resale of tickets is enforceable without a refund or compensation. It states:

Resale or attempted resale of tickets is prohibited unless authorised by Ticketmaster or the Presenter. Unlawful resale of tickets or unauthorised resale is grounds for seizure or cancellation without a refund or compensation.

No refund or exchange on any ticket except as required by law and as otherwise specified by the seller. If a refund is made, Ticketmaster may, to the extent permitted by law, retain any fee it has charged.

It seems odd that the company lobbying to enshrine the ability of the scalpers would do so in spite of its own terms and conditions. I hold in my hand a good example of a reason that this bill should pass. It is an 11-page printout of just one ticket scalper's advertisements on eBay. This document obtains an obscene amount of tickets advertised for sale, often at unreasonably high costs. All costs are intended to be borne by the good consumers

of New South Wales. Tickets sold on eBay by this seller include more than 100 tickets to the Australian Open at vastly inflated prices. This is a clear example of a third-party seller skimming money from the pockets of fans and event owners in New South Wales and around the country.

I also note the support of Ticketek, another big player in the ticketing market, which publicly supported the passage of this bill, along with other major organisations, including the Coalition of Major Professional and Participation Sports. I invite the member for Bankstown to err on the side of caution when listening to lobbyists and to consult the whole industry, as we have done, in order to hear what other significant players say in support. The member for Bankstown mentioned the idea of removing the requirement for a photograph. Why does the member want to reduce consumer information? Consumers in New South Wales deserve more information in order to make more informed decisions. Despite the Opposition's cynicism, the reality is that the majority of scalpers do not have the technical knowledge to doctor hundreds of tickets that are presented as photos to a passable standard through professional design programs such as Photoshop. This is simply a recycled rant from major players in the secondary market.

The Labor Opposition revealed its thinking about how to get around the legislation and how to take shortcuts, just like it did when it was in government. It is a good insight into how Labor would run the State if it were in government. The suggested action of doctoring tickets is fraudulent and any suggestion not to include a photograph of a ticket would be playing into the hands of scalpers. It is not mums and dads who will doctor tickets if they cannot go to an event, but the scalpers who will doctor hundreds of tickets in search of a quick buck. The member for Miranda mentioned the old days and the man standing with a handful of tickets outside the Sydney Cricket Ground—

Mr Barry Collier: It was a nice analogy, I thought.

Mr STUART AYRES: It was—selling tickets outside the Sydney Cricket Ground to the event of the day. The member for Miranda noted correctly that modern-day tickets are sold online. However, I point out to the member that selling tickets outside the Sydney Cricket Ground and ANZ Stadium is illegal, but under this legislation if any person did purchase a ticket from one of those people standing outside the venue they would be able to see the ticket as a photo and they would be able to see the ticket number and the location of the seat; they would be able to see what seat they were purchasing. We have the old and the new of Labor. On one hand, members opposite say we should go back to a bygone era and ticket scalping out the front of a venue—

Mr Barry Collier: Point of order: The Minister is misleading the House. I did not say that at all.

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): Order! There is no point of order. The Minister is simply referring to what could happen under the suggestions put by Opposition members.

Mr Barry Collier: He was making reference to what I said. Check the *Hansard*.

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): Order! If the member for Miranda continues to canvass my ruling he will be removed from the Chamber.

Mr STUART AYRES: I would never—or maybe I would—accuse members opposite of playing into the hands of scalpers. I was simply making the point that in days gone by when the member for Miranda may have bought a scalped ticket outside the Sydney Cricket Ground he would not have seen what seat he was buying.

Mr Barry Collier: Point of order: Personal reflections on members are not appropriate.

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): Order! This is not an argument. The Minister is replying to the debate. There is no point of order.

Mr STUART AYRES: At least we young guys—and perhaps a few other members who have discovered the internet—recognise that we can purchase tickets online. Surely we should at least be entitled to the same information that the member for Miranda had when he turned up for the centenary test in 1977.

Mr Barry Collier: You were too young.

Mr STUART AYRES: You are damn right I was. In response to the call from the member for Bankstown for an appeal mechanism should a ticket be cancelled under our amendments, reasonable notification

would be given by law. This would obviously be complicated when ticket scalpers distort the line of communication when reselling a ticket, but ultimately there would need to be a discussion between the fan and the event owner. If people were not being ripped off by scalpers in the first place we would not be debating this issue. I thank members for their contributions to this debate. I particularly mention the Minister for Sport and Recreation, the member for Vaucluse, who did a fine job standing up for her stakeholders and calling for unity on this reform. Other members who have participated in the debate include the member for Miranda and the member for Bankstown, who is the shadow Minister. I thank members representing the electorates of Albury, Baulkham Hills, Camden, Cabramatta, Canterbury, Charlestown, Cronulla, East Hills, Fairfield, Granville, Hawkesbury, Heathcote, Heffron, Keira, Menai, Mount Druitt, Myall Lakes, Northern Tablelands, Orange, Smithfield and Tamworth.

New South Wales is attracting an increasing number of high-profile events and international acts, and the number of sold-out events in this State is growing. That is testament to the fantastic work of this Government, particularly that of the Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Hospitality and Racing, Minister for the Arts, and Minister for the Hunter, and of Destination NSW. The Government should support this work. These reforms will ensure that the ability of New South Wales to attract major events and international acts is not negatively affected by lack of means to address ticket scalping. The new legislation will bring openness, transparency and honesty to secondary ticket marketing and will ensure that consumers can purchase tickets with confidence. I commend the bill to the House.

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

Bill read a second time.

Consideration in detail requested by Mr Stuart Ayres and Ms Tania Mihailuk.

Consideration in Detail

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): By leave, I will propose the bill in groups of clauses and schedules.

Clauses 1 and 2 agreed to.

Mr STUART AYRES (Penrith—Minister for Fair Trading, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Western Sydney) [4.16 p.m.]: I move Government amendment No. 1 on sheet C2014-001A:

No. 1 Page 3, schedule I [1], proposed section 58 (1), lines 6 and 7. Omit all words on those lines. Insert instead:

- (1) This Division applies to a ticket to a sporting or entertainment event held in New South Wales if:
 - (a) the ticket is subject to a resale restriction, and
 - (b) the ticket contains a term or condition that provides that the organiser of the event will take all reasonable steps to give the ticketholder notice of the organiser's intention to cancel the ticket or render it invalid under the resale restriction, within a reasonable time before cancelling it or rendering it invalid.

This amendment will apply only to tickets where the event owner has agreed to take all reasonable steps to give a ticketholder notice in the event that an organiser intends to cancel or render a ticket invalid for being sold in breach of resale restriction. The amendment will address concerns about the potential for the wrong ticket to be cancelled or for an innocent consumer to be refused entry. If organisations are unaware of, or are not able to be told through that secondary market, to whom the ticket has been sold, it would significantly restrict the organisation taking reasonable steps to give the ticketholder notice.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) [4.17 p.m.]: During the second reading debate I foreshadowed that the Opposition would move a series of amendments to correct some of the inherent flaws and weaknesses in the bill to ensure that consumers are protected from ticket scalping, price gouging and fraud. New section 58 does not place an obligation on an event organiser to take reasonable steps to notify a consumer that their ticket has been cancelled or rendered invalid. I am delighted that the Minister has conceded that inherent fraud. As I noted also during the second reading debate, amendment No. 1 will ensure that tickets subject to a resale restriction contain a term and a condition obliging the event organiser to take reasonable steps to give a ticketholder notice of the organiser's intent to cancel or render a ticket invalid within a reasonable time. I foreshadow that common-sense measure to ensure consumers know for certain whether their ticket will give them access to an event.

Question—That Government amendment No. 1 [C2014-001A] be agreed to—put and resolved in the affirmative.

Government amendment No. 1 [C2014-001A] agreed to.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) [4.18 p.m.]: I move Opposition amendment No. 1 on sheet C2014-021E:

No. 1 Page 3, schedule 1 [1], proposed section 59 (2), line 2 I. Insert "been issued and includes" after "the ticket has".

The amendment seeks to amend new section 59 (2) by adding the words "been issued and includes" after "the ticket has" so that the section will read:

An advertisement must specify the ticket number, row number and seat number of the ticket if the ticket has been issued and includes such numbers.

This is a common-sense amendment that will allow consumers to comply with the requirements of new section 59 (2). A consumer will not be able to specify their ticket number, row number or seat number if they have not been issued with either a physical or electronic version of their ticket. Without this amendment, event organisers may also prevent consumers from reselling their unwanted tickets by simply waiting until the last moment to issue their ticket. In this instance, because a consumer would be unaware of the specific details of the ticket, they would be unable to satisfy the requirement of new section 59 (2). Consumers would run the risk of ticket cancellation if they attempted to resell their unwanted ticket. The consumer ultimately would be left out of pocket if they could not attend the event in question.

Mr STUART AYRES (Penrith—Minister for Fair Trading, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Western Sydney) [4.20 p.m.]: In the spirit of making sure this bill works for the people of New South Wales, the Government has no objection to the amendment.

Question—That Opposition amendment No. 1 [C2014-021E] be agreed to—put and resolved in the affirmative.

Opposition amendment No. 1 [C2014-021E] agreed to.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) [4.20 p.m.]: I move Opposition amendment No. 2 on sheet C2014-021E:

No. 2 Page 3, schedule 1 [1], proposed section 59 (5), lines 26-28. Omit all words on those lines.

The amendment seeks to omit new section 59 (5)—the requirement for an advertisement to contain a photograph of the ticket that displays the ticket number, row number and seat number. It will not protect fans from ticket scalpers or stop fraud. A photograph will do little to combat sophisticated fraudsters and scalpers. An image of a ticket can be easily manipulated to make it appear genuine. There are grounds to suggest that the requirement for a photograph will only serve to increase ticket fraud. For instance, a ticket scalper may simply augment the photograph to change a seat number or row number. An innocent consumer would then have their ticket either cancelled or rendered invalid but the ticket seller would still profit while the consumer was hung out to dry.

The process of uploading a photograph is onerous and does not benefit the consumer. Consumers may not understand the requirements relating to what should be included in a photograph. For example, if a ticket seller incorrectly posts an image of a ticket including the barcode in the photograph, they will have breached the provisions of the bill and will have their ticket cancelled. There is also concern that uploading a photograph of a ticket to a website may lead to identity theft or breaches of privacy as the ticket may carry the personal details of the original purchaser, such as their name, address or payment details. In my speech during the second reading debate I asked the Minister to clarify the reasoning behind the need for a photograph of the ticket, but I was not convinced by his argument. I still hold the view that new section 59 (5) is cumbersome and restrictive. If this amendment is not passed the bill may inadvertently lead to fraud. Consumers may resort to selling their tickets on websites that are not within the New South Wales jurisdiction and consequently have limited consumer protection.

Mr STUART AYRES (Penrith—Minister for Fair Trading, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Western Sydney) [4.23 p.m.]: The Government does not agree with Opposition amendment No. 2 for the

reasons that I outlined in my speech in reply. The inclusion of a photograph is intended to provide transparency for the consumer. The claim that it will promote fraud is spurious. The suggestion that mums and dads who are unable to attend a ticketed event for some reason will then open up Photoshop in order to change the ticket number, change the seat number or lift the price is preposterous. The Labor view of the world is such that it expects others to act as it does: always looking for the short cut and for ways around legislation. This amendment will allow scalpers to thrive. If the photograph is removed it will make it easier for scalpers to sell tickets.

I return to the point I made during my speech in reply and to the example of the gentleman on eBay with the 11 pages of tickets he purchased. Is that person really going to go through 11 pages of tickets to all those events and photoshop each one so that he can sell them fraudulently? Members opposite should join the real world. This Opposition amendment is about removing transparency and denying information to the customer. The Government wants to make sure that a person who purchases tickets on the secondary market—particularly online—gets the same information they would have if they were able to see the ticket. The provision of a photograph of the ticket purchased gives a purchaser that information. We oppose the Opposition's amendment.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) [4.25 p.m.]: I make it clear that the Opposition does support the concept that a consumer would have to provide information such as the ticket number, the row number and the bay number. That information would have to be provided in the event that a consumer wants to advertise a ticket for resale. That will effectively address the issue of giving consumers the information they require in deciding whether to purchase the ticket. To suggest that we are denying consumers information is incorrect. We support the concept of providing consumers with information in relation to the tickets they may be able to purchase on the secondary market in the event that other consumers are given the opportunity to resell tickets they no longer need.

I remind the House that the Minister has not offered enough information to convince the Opposition—and perhaps members in the other place—that a photograph of a ticket should be provided when an individual intends to advertise a ticket for resale. It is not the consumer who will be photoshopping tickets but the ticket scalpers, who are becoming more sophisticated in the manner they copy tickets. They will be even more sophisticated in the future in their attempts to commit ticketing fraud. This amendment should be supported by the Government. The Government has not convinced the Opposition, those in the industry or parties in the other place that a photograph of the ticket should be provided.

Mr STUART AYRES (Penrith—Minister for Fair Trading, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Western Sydney) [4.27 p.m.]: The member for Bankstown cannot have it both ways: She cannot accuse all ticket scalpers of being scurrilous and underhanded and then open the gate for them by saying that all sellers need do is type in the seat number, the bay and the location in the stadium that they want to put on the listing. The easiest way to provide information to the public is to supply a photograph. It is simple. The member for Bankstown argues that, if we allow a listing such as the one to which I drew the attention of the House on eBay, the person can make up a number, a ticket bay and a seat number and that will be fine. She wants to open the doors to ticket scalpers.

All we are asking in this new and sophisticated world is to have one more safeguard for mums and dads who want to go to an event. The member for Bankstown has it the wrong way around. She would have been better supporting the requirement for a photograph and removing the ticket details on the listing. She would then be able to achieve her aims. The simple fact of the matter is that if we are asking people to list the ticket number, the seat number and the bay number without providing any guarantee of what has been listed, all we are doing is reducing the information available to the consumer. The Government's approach is supported by the major ticketing bodies. The only person lobbying for this change is the member opposite.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) [4.30 p.m.]: I make it clear that this bill is being debated because I believe unusual discussions took place between the former Minister for Sport and Recreation and the former Minister for Fair Trading. Ironically, documents obtained under the Government Information (Public Access) Act revealed that the Commissioner for Fair Trading, Mr Stowe, did not believe there was any justifiable reason to regulate the industry. At the time, contrary to what the Minister may be suggesting, there were no complaints consistent with the concept that there was an outbreak of ticket scalping. In fact, there was one complaint about ticketing in 2012 and about 120 in 2013. To put that into perspective, there were about 4,000 to 5,000 complaints about electronic and white goods, and virtually none about ticket scalping in 2013. We have no evidence to suggest that there is a huge problem with ticket scalping in New South Wales.

However, Labor members do not support ticket scalping, and I suspect nor would any Government member. It is absolutely incorrect to suggest that by moving this amendment to exclude the need to photograph a ticket that the Opposition supports ticket scalping. Quite the contrary. The Minister should withdraw that statement.

Mr STUART AYRES (Penrith—Minister for Fair Trading, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Western Sydney) [4.31 p.m.]: For the benefit of the member for Bankstown, who is unconvinced about the outbreak of ticket scalping in New South Wales, I lay upon the table a copy of the 11 pages of tickets sold on eBay by one person.

Question—That Opposition amendment No. 2 [C2014-021E] be agreed to—put.

The House divided.

Ayes, 20

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

Noes, 66

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

Question resolved in the negative.

Opposition amendment No. 2 [C2014-021E] negatived.

Mr STUART AYRES (Penrith—Minister for Fair Trading, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Western Sydney) [4.42 p.m.], by leave: I move Government amendments Nos 2 to 5 on sheet C2014-001A in globo:

No. 2 Page 3, schedule 1, proposed section 59 (2) line 20: Insert words "bay number" after the words, "the ticket number".

No. 3 Page 3, schedule 1 [1], proposed section 59 (6). Insert after line 31:

- (b) an advertisement offering a ticket for sale at or below the price (not including any booking fee or other transaction cost) at which the ticket was offered for sale by, or on behalf of, the organiser of the event to which the ticket relates, or

No. 4 Page 4, schedule 1 [I], proposed section 60 (3), line 6. Omit "any person". Insert instead "a person referred to in subsection (4)".

No. 5 Page 4, schedule 1 [I], proposed section 60. Insert after line 12:

- (4) Notification under subsection (3) can only be made by the organiser of the event to which the advertised ticket relates or a person nominated by the organiser.

Government amendment No. 2 is a simple administrative amendment, which inserts in new section 59 (2) the words "bay number" after the words "the ticket number". The section will read, "An advertisement must specify the ticket number, bay number, row number and seat number of the ticket if the ticket has such numbers." Government amendment No. 3 will provide that the requirements of the bill do not apply to tickets that are being offered for sale at or below the face value of the ticket, that is, the price at which the ticket was originally sold by the event owner. This amendment will address concerns about imposing the bill's requirements on consumers who simply wish to resell a ticket when they can no longer attend an event due to changed circumstances.

Throughout my consultation on the bill with the shadow Minister, it became apparent that the real focus of the bill was tackling ticket scalpers. The bill should not have the unintended consequence of placing an onerous burden on people who are unable to attend an event for legitimate reasons and they should not have to suffer consequences that extend significantly beyond the terms and conditions. In an effort to ensure that people are not captured by an onerous regulatory environment and reflecting the light-touch approach of this legislation and the fact that the focus of the bill is ticket scalpers—the scourge of society, those we love to hate because they seek to rip money from the people of New South Wales—this amendment ensures scalpers are the focus, not those who cannot attend an event for whatever reason and who wish appropriately to offload their ticket.

Government amendments Nos 4 and 5 will provide that the obligation on a forum that hosts ticket resale advertisements to remove or amend a non-compliant advertisement will be triggered only by a notification from an event organiser or their nominee rather than a notification by any person. This amendment will mean that advertising forums will not need to establish administrative processes to screen out potentially vexatious or mischievous claims. If we were to ask all the ticket resale organisations that the member for Bankstown consulted through the strong lobbyist network, we would create unnecessary regulatory burden for all those who seek to activate a suitable secondary ticketing market, which is something this legislation encourages. It will leave them open to vexatious claims. The amendments seek to ensure that only those who own or organise, those who understand the terms and conditions, can notify one of the resellers that a ticket is being illegally sold. This is a good outcome for business and ensures the legislation maintains its focus on tackling scalpers. It ensures that business once again has a light-touch model that does not create unnecessary red tape.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) [4.47 p.m.]: The Opposition supports Government amendment No. 2, which inserts the words "bay number". Government amendment No. 3 excludes from the scope of new section 59 advertisements offering a ticket for sale at or below the price, excluding booking or transaction fees, of the original ticket offered by the event organiser. During my contribution to the second reading debate I raised strong concerns that consumers would be unable to return or resell unwanted or unusable tickets. Consumers are often forced to resell tickets when their circumstances suddenly change due to sickness, a work commitment or for family reasons. In these circumstances consumers will usually resell their tickets at or below the original price of the ticket, including the transaction and booking fees. Priority for the consumer is simply to recoup some of the original cost, if not all of it.

Whilst Government amendment No. 3 does not provide impetus for event organisers to offer a full refund or exchange, as I sought in my contribution, it will exclude resale advertisements if the ticket is offered at or below the price of the ticket only. Consumers will have the benefit of being able to recoup some of their loss in the event that the ticket becomes unwanted or unusable. Following my contribution and my providing the Opposition's proposed Legislative Council amendments to the Minister, he has moved the amendment to ameliorate a significant weakness in the bill and I applaud him for doing so.

By excluding booking and transaction fees, the Government amendment will not allow the consumer to recoup the full cost of their ticket, including booking fees, which can be up to \$10 per ticket online. Consumers must be entitled to recoup this loss, especially if they purchased multiple tickets to a sporting or entertainment event. I will propose an amendment to this specific amendment. In my contribution to the second reading debate

I highlighted the concern of many stakeholders within the secondary ticketing industry relating to "any person having the ability to request a person conducting the business or undertaking or forum to remove or change an unauthorised advertisement". This amendment will assist consumers.

Amendment No. 4 will remove the ability for any person to notify a forum host to remove an advertisement. I foreshadowed this amendment in my contribution to the second reading debate and I am delighted that the Government has conceded that allowing any person to make a notification may open the way for frivolous notifications. Amendment No. 5 proposes what I foreshadowed, that only an event organiser or a person nominated by the organiser can make a notification in relation to unauthorised advertisements. This will save forum hosts time and resources which may be wasted through vexatious or frivolous notifications. I move Opposition amendment No. 1 on sheet C2014-027:

In Government Amendment No. 3 omit "the price (not including any booking fee or other transaction cost) at which the ticket was offered for sale". Insert instead the words "the price (including any associated fees such as a booking fee or a credit card fee) at which the ticket was sold",

The Opposition has said that it supports a ticketing industry that protects consumers from ticket scalping, fraud and price gouging. A consumer must have the right to resell a ticket to an event which they can no longer attend. I am delighted the Minister has conceded this crucial point as consumers are often forced to resell tickets for personal reasons, family illness or a work commitment.

Consumers should have the right to recoup their loss if they cannot attend an event. This is the key issue at hand. In the majority of circumstances the loss includes the extra fees charged by event organisers during the initial purchase of the ticket, including booking fees, handling and processing, transaction or other associated fees. Consumers have the right to recoup the full loss. This amendment is in the best interests of consumers and in the interests of protecting consumer rights. This is about the consumer and I urge the Government to support this amendment.

Mr STUART AYRES (Penrith—Minister for Fair Trading, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Western Sydney) [4.52 p.m.]: This amendment proposes to extend the definition of "face value" to include booking fees and other transaction costs incurred when the ticket was purchased. This Opposition amendment targets everyone but the scalper: It targets the business and people providing the tickets. It denies the event owner an opportunity to recoup any booking fee or reasonable cost they may have paid to a third party. For example, they may have passed on a credit card surcharge they paid to a banking institution. The Opposition is now asking the business to repay that cost to a person reselling a ticket. It completely misses the mark. Practically speaking the secondary market has to pass on all of those additional costs.

The Government will provide an opportunity for people who are unable to attend an event to sell their ticket in an appropriate secondary market. The Government has amended the legislation at the request of the member for Bankstown to include "at or below cost price", which makes sure we are targeting the right person. To now ask those businesses that are participating in the primary market, such as sporting organisations, promotion companies and ticketing companies, to refund costs that have already been incurred shows that the Opposition is completely out of touch with the way business operates. There are a series of costs that businesses rightly charge to ensure that they are not disadvantaged by providing that ticketing arrangement.

If, for example, the member for Bankstown and her Labor Party mates were taking their kids to the One Direction concert but there was a late call-up branch meeting in Bankstown where the numbers are required, this bill would allow the member to sell her tickets and recoup that cost. But the Opposition wants to recoup the booking fee as well: Is that seriously what is being proposed?

Ms Linda Burney: You are not funny.

Mr STUART AYRES: That is what is being proposed. The Opposition is proposing that under any circumstances, real or not, a cost incurred by the business can be recouped. The focus of this bill is light-touch legislation. The bill is about making sure those people who have incurred a cost to attend the event are able to recoup that cost minus the cost of the process to the business. If the additional costs are included we will open the floodgates to the ticket scalpers.

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) [4.55 p.m.]: The Minister is a foolish man. I thought he would receive better advice from his staff about what this amendment specifically means. To suggest that the event organiser would lose their transaction or booking fee as a result of this amendment is absolutely incorrect. Ordinarily Minister Ayres is on top of legislation, and particularly when it is in his own domain. This amendment is not about denying the event organiser an opportunity to keep the transaction or booking fees. It has nothing to do with the event organiser.

This is about the consumer who can no longer attend an event. I will explain it as clearly as I can. It is about a consumer who is no longer able to attend an event wanting to recoup their loss on the secondary market. It will have no impact whatsoever on the event organiser's initial transactional booking fees. They will still profit from those fees. This is about the consumer wanting to recoup their full loss as they attempt to resell a ticket. I should have made the amendment simpler for the Minister. I feel that perhaps his staff have not accurately explained the amendment to him. It is about the consumer recouping the full cost of the ticket. It will have no impact on the initial business or the event organiser whatsoever.

Mr STUART AYRES (Penrith—Minister for Fair Trading, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Western Sydney) [4.57 p.m.]: The amendment that the Opposition proposes does not outline —

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): Order! The member for Bankstown will come to order. She has had an opportunity to make a contribution.

Mr STUART AYRES: This is about creating legislation that works, not the way the Opposition thinks it should work. The amendment that the Opposition proposes exposes businesses and will not encourage an authorised secondary market. Once again I come back to the key points: The bill targets ticket scalping and encourages organisations to set up appropriate and authorised secondary markets. This amendment would increase costs. I recognise that the member is attempting to ensure that people can receive above face value, but that contradicts the amendment previously supported by Labor. What the member has proposed does not achieve that outcome and therefore the Government will not be supporting the amendment.

Question—That Opposition amendment of Government amendment No. 3 be agreed to—put.

The House divided.

Ayes, 22

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

Noes, 62

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

Question resolved in the negative.

Opposition amendment of Government amendment No. 3 negatived.

Question—That Government amendments Nos 2 to 5 [C2014-001A] be agreed to—put and resolved in the affirmative.

Government amendments Nos 2 to 5 [C2014-001A] agreed to.

Schedule 1 as amended agreed to.

Consideration in detail concluded.

Third Reading

Motion by Mr Stuart Ayres, on behalf of Mr Anthony Roberts, agreed to:

That this bill be now read a third time.

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

CHILD PROTECTION LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2013

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 21 November 2013.

Ms LINDA BURNEY (Canterbury) [5.09 p.m.]: I am pleased to be able to debate the Child Protection Legislative Amendment Bill 2013. At the outset I indicate that Labor will be seeking amendments to the bill in the other place. We will seek amendments to ensure access to services for parents of children at risk when entering parental responsibility contracts or parental capacity orders, to ensure a proper place for adoption in the system of out-of-home care, and to maintain flexibility and judicial independence in relation to time frames for consideration of a child's best interests. We also will seek amendments to establish real accountability and transparency, to prevent the slashing of financial support for children in out-of-home care, and to protect victims of domestic violence for being penalised by the behaviour of their spouse or partner.

The children known to the Department of Family and Community Services are the most vulnerable in our community. They do not have the ability to protect themselves. They often lack the ability to ask for the help they most desperately need. Without the intervention of the State, without the intervention of Community Services, their future is bleak. Those opposite have a problem with teachers who take thematic approaches to dealing with lessons of history, but sometimes the big picture is a little clearer when we introduce themes.

The objects of this bill at least provide good thematic structure for debate. The four themes are: good parenting; permanency for children; a more responsive and child-focused system; and improved transparency and accountability. Let us start with parenting. Not everyone has the privilege of being a parent. Those of us who have raised children know it is a difficult job and the most important thing we will do in our lifetime. The pay is poor but the benefits are innumerable. All parents know it is difficult; there are nappies, homework, sport. It is a hard workday, day in and day out. Nobody sets out to be a bad parent. All parents try to do their best to be good parents, to be responsible, and to provide as much love and nurturing as they can.

We have a society and community built around supporting and protecting families and the children within them. Some families have a great deal to be thankful for: good health; large, supportive, extensive families; a safe neighbourhood; and an abundance of patience, resources and opportunities to match. We know these things give children the best start in life. That good start, the best start possible, is primarily the responsibility of parents, but not only parents have the responsibility. Everybody in this place has a part to play, and everybody in the community plays a part in raising children. There is an old saying that it takes a village to raise a child, but it takes a village with leadership and a government committed to giving every child the best start in life.

I was part of a government that recognised the importance of maternal wellbeing and that the best early intervention and prevention strategies are a healthy birth weight and a non-smoking mother. I was proud to serve in a government that included amongst its priorities universal home visiting for newborns, which meant that somebody checked on parents so they knew where to find support and they had someone to talk to about being parents. I was part of a government that saw the benefits of investing in early intervention and prevention services on a significant scale.

In 1999 Labor introduced Families NSW in response to mounting international research and evidence that demonstrated that universal prevention and targeted early intervention programs have a range of positive benefits for families. Families NSW promoted better functioning families and children who are better prepared to start school. Families NSW improved early intervention for postnatal depression and other mental health problems through initiatives such as the Safe Start program, provided by NSW Health as part of Families NSW. Safe Start, which was a Labor initiative, commenced in 2007-08. The program assisted women expecting or caring for an infant and assisted in identifying and supporting women who may have experienced or were at risk of mental health problems, including postnatal depression.

Families NSW sought to reduce child abuse and neglect, as well as juvenile offending. It was a considered, planned effort to reduce the demand for child protection services. We backed the program with more than \$100 million for the first four years. Families NSW was a strategic investment in the future safety of children. We did not fund the program from savings made elsewhere in the child protection budget. Brighter Futures is another Labor initiative. A major component of the 2002 reform package was the expansion of early intervention services, through the creation of the Brighter Futures early intervention program, funded on announcement to the tune of \$260 million. Brighter Futures is a targeted, evidence-based program introduced to improve the level of support available to vulnerable families by providing access to a range of services, such as quality child care, case management, parenting programs and home visiting. These services are aimed at improving children's abilities at school and their skills at managing problems they encounter as they grow up.

In government, Labor introduced the Triple P—Positive Parenting Program and the Schools as Community Centres project. In government, we had the New South Wales Preschool Investment and Reform Plan. In government, we worked cooperatively with the Commonwealth to improve the quality of child care. In government, we consistently built and developed the capacity of the child protection system. We invested in universal services and early intervention models that tackled future demand. Most importantly, we took a positive approach. I know from my time as Minister and in talking with parents from all over the State we have to be of assistance, we have to add value and we have to be positive. Punitive measures do not work. We cannot rely solely on contracts, orders and regulations; we have to take a strengths-based approach. We have to provide tangible support and access to real services in the city and the bush. Braithwaite, in pondering the ongoing regulatory burden in the child protection sphere, observed:

Risk adverse and highly bureaucratised practice can be challenged. Engagement based on respect and trust can triumph over directives and threats, unequivocally shown to be counter-productive to the long term interest of children.

I will move on to permanency, specifically the theme of permanency for children in out-of-home care. Sometimes following a tragedy or the intervention of Community Services and decisions of the Children's Court, children find themselves in search of a new home. Thankfully, many of the children, more than 5,500 a year at last published count, find themselves with grandparents, aunts and uncles—in many cases in the Aboriginal community, of which I am a part.

We often forget that these arrangements are the most common out-of-home care placements. When I was Minister, we recognised the particular needs of grandparents who are carers. As a community we owe a great deal to family members who step up and look after their grandchildren, nieces and nephews. Adoptions from out-of-home care, however, are very few. They make up less than half of 1 per cent of the 20,000 placements required each year. We know from the Minister's recent response to questions on notice that adoption numbers are reported annually by the department. Whilst the Minister in her answer would not advise the Parliament how many adoptions are under assessment, I noted that the *Daily Telegraph* said 717 applications are currently under assessment. Actual adoptions are between 60 and 70 annually. The recent trend has shown growth in adoption rates is well down nationally since the peaks in the 1960s. The *Guardian* recently published an exploration of adoption practice in the United Kingdom which showed:

In a survey of Adoption UK members two-thirds of the 455 respondents said their child needed greater support services.

Research by Family Rights Group, found that 44% of carers surveyed had received no practical help and 95% said they needed more support.

They were "being left to fend for themselves and suffer significant levels of hardship".

Most adoptions are successful, but when families don't get the support they need and cannot cope, children do return to care.

There are no official figures for how many adopted children do go back into care, but the British Association for Adoption & Fostering estimates that 10% of children adopted at age three and 23% of children adopted between the ages of five and 11 go back into care.

"It is absolutely essential that adopted children and their families get the support they need".

The Parliamentary Library recently undertook a more considered examination of the issue of permanency planning and adoption of children in out-of-home care. In his "International perspectives on foster care", Thoburn states:

There are no data sets or recent large scale longitudinal studies for children placed from care for adoption or with the intention of permanence in foster family care.

He goes on:

... there is therefore no robust way of comparing outcomes for children adopted from care with similar children who join "permanent" foster families or leave care through guardianship orders.

No ifs or buts; he says there is "no robust way of comparing outcomes". Another study entitled "Long Term Fostering or Adoption: The Evidence Examined" found "a dearth of studies", but found an evening of the outcomes. Interestingly, the study found differences in breakdown rates are diminishing and gave a cautionary note in observing:

Adoption is not the answer for every child. Furthermore a significant number [of fostered children] whose placements last, find a family for life.

So there is cautious support but not overwhelming evidence. The University of York published a study titled "Characteristics, outcomes and meanings of three types of permanent placement—adoption by strangers, adoption by carers and long-term foster care." This was a longitudinal comparative study between foster care and adoption. It was not a huge study. It involved 196 children from foster care in 1988 who were followed up three years later either still in the same placement or adopted. Only 37 children were interviewed and data were compared for 90 children. They found disruption rates of 28 per cent for foster children compared with disruption rates of 13 per cent for adoption. They also found children are older when they enter foster care compared with younger children being adopted. For foster children with stable placements they found no significant difference in emotional or behavioural difficulty. Children in stable foster care were participating in school at the same rate as the adopted children and performing in school in equal measure.

I will move on to a study by Barth and Lloyd. Their study was titled "Developmental outcomes after five years for foster children returned home, remaining in care or adopted." It involved 353 children, all younger than 13 months at commencement. The study compared developmental outcomes after five years. The key findings in returning to the home of origin and adoption were associated with the most similar and generally positive outcomes. They describe foster care as a hazard to children, but they make a crucial point:

Preservation and other intensive family services that avoid foster care would seem well advised.

So we have two significantly sized longitudinal studies with conflicting results. That is the evidence. What is the local evidence? Studies by Barnardos provide an insight into adoptions occurring within the existing legislative framework in New South Wales. The Minister has gone to great pains, as have others, to give the impression that adoption and foster care in New South Wales is not possible. It is possible and it has been possible for a long time within the existing legislative framework. I know that because I had much to do with the current legislative framework. I might add that Barnardos was adopting children from out-of-home care when I was the Minister. None of this is new and it is nonsense to say that it is

There are some positive signs that Barnardos is able to find a family for traditionally hard-to-place children. I have read Barnardos' analysis titled "Ten Years Finding Permanency For Children Through 'Open Adoption' In New South Wales." Barnardos followed 65 children through the study—that is fewer than seven children for each year of the 10-year study. They are promising results but not the overwhelming evidence base one expects ahead of such radical changes to adoption practice. We should wait to see stronger, more robust evidence of success. We should wait to see the full impact of the Government's changes to post-adoption support. We should wait to see the impact of those heartless cuts upon those interested in adopting children from

out-of-home care. We should be taking a cautious approach to changes to adoption policy. The existing hierarchy has struck a balance between restoration and adoption. As yet, we do not have the evidence base to justify changing that balance. I fear that the race to adoption will be a cost-saving exercise in place of restoration.

We should acknowledge that currently the system makes provision for adoptions from out-of-home care. We also know that young people have views on adoption. As always, I support the work of the Create Foundation in giving a voice to children whose experience of family is a little different. But I am perplexed that in her framework document "A Home for Life" the Minister quotes a paper seeking the views of children in care on adoption. They supported adoption, but none of the children in the focus group were adopted. Surely the new-found passion for adoption has a basis in fact. Surely the new champion of adoption must have a basis for such a prominent campaign. Perhaps somebody stumbled over the "New Action Plan for Adoption." Fresh from an election victory, the British Conservative-Liberal Coalition championed its New Action Plan for Adoption. The British Prime Minister, David Cameron, stated:

Every child deserves the love of a stable family—and that is why I have made sorting out and speeding up adoption in this country a priority.

That sounds familiar, as does the name of the plan. The British Prime Minister went on:

There's no more urgent task for Government than this. Young lives are being wasted while the process takes its toll—and the victims are some of the most vulnerable young people in our society. You cannot put children's futures on hold while the system gets round to dealing with their case.

In conclusion, he stated:

So this Government is going to tear down the barriers that stop good, caring potential adoptive parents from giving a home to children who so desperately need one.

That is hardly evidence, but I suppose it is a good script. It is not really an evidence base but a platform for crude populism that ignores the reality of children who cannot grow up with their parents. During Adoption Week in November 2009 I said:

An adoptive family brings a whole new level of stability and certainty to a child who has had a difficult start to life.

We know that children in foster care need extra support. That is why on the same day I recommitted to allowing long-term foster carers to keep their foster care allowances after adoption. I recognised that financial constraints should not hinder carers wanting to make foster children a permanent part of their family. Compare that with the action of the Minister in butchering post-adoption allowances from \$16,000 a year to \$1,500 a year.

Ms Pru Goward: It is always about money.

Ms LINDA BURNEY: Yes, it is always about the money from the Minister's perspective. We should remember also that to avoid a breakdown of adoptions from out-of-home care we need to ensure there is regular and ongoing support to young people and their new parents. We all acknowledge that foster care sometimes lets children down, but shifting the emphasis from supporting restoration and family preservation to adoption will make no discernible difference in the growing demand for placements. I can well imagine there are people within the bureaucracy of Family and Community Services who would secretly acknowledge that. Nothing should be placed higher than restoration and family preservation. Greater investment in preservation services will in fact reduce entry to out-of-home care and the duration of staying in out-of-home care and will have lasting benefits for the wellbeing of many children.

The third theme is a more responsive and child-focused system. In 2002 Labor invested \$1.2 billion to massively expand a child protection system that had been deliberately run down. My colleague the member for Marrickville persuaded the Cabinet at the time that more could be done to protect the most vulnerable in the community. Compare that to the investment of \$35 million that accompanied the announcement of this bill. Compare that to the \$750 million investment in child safety and wellbeing that accompanied my announcement of the Keep Them Safe Action Plan. Following the Special Commission of Inquiry into Child Protection Services, significant change occurred within the child protection system.

As Minister for Community Services I championed making child protection everybody's business. Through the creation of child wellbeing units the former Government provided a framework for human service

agencies to manage their shared responsibility for child protection. We raised the reporting threshold to free up resources within the Department of Community Services to deal with young people at risk of serious harm. We created regional referral services to assist families to find the local support services they needed. We improved the provision of specialist services in drug and alcohol counselling, intensive family support services, family preservation services and frequently encountered families.

Through the Keep Them Safe action plan, Labor committed to a long-term plan to change the culture in regard to child protection and to encourage and to coordinate the efforts of communities, the non-government sector and government agency groups. It was a stage-funded approach with clearly specified long-term objectives that focused on our responses to child protection but also addressed the growing pressures on the system. Without the changes and investment that accompanied the Keep Them Safe action plan, the Department of Family and Community Services would be in a perilous state. I ask the Minister: How responsive would the Department of Family and Community Services be with pre-Keep Them Safe action plan levels of investment in services? How responsive would the Department of Family and Community Services be with the caseworker numbers that we inherited? How child-focused would the Department of Family and Community Services be without the change to the reporting threshold? Compare that record with the experience today.

The real drain on the resources of the system is the transition of out-of-home care to the non-government sector. Labor started this process following the report of the special commission. I acknowledge that the charitable and non-government sectors are better placed to support children and foster carers. The non-government sector is often more responsive and more flexible. That is why the Opposition supports the transition. As the end stage of the system undergoes a costly restructure, the overall budget position remains troubling. In real recurrent terms, last year there was \$49 million less in the child protection system. There are ongoing caseworker vacancies with over 200 caseworker positions empty since mid-2012. That is a silent tragedy.

We still have growing numbers in out-of-home care. After recent declines there is again a growth in the number of reports of children at risk and children at significant risk of harm. There is growing demand, more children at risk, worsening funding, major restructuring and chronic vacancies. Add to that the ever-increasing load on caseworkers, this time in the form of dual concurrent assessment. These are not the hallmarks of a more responsive, child-focused system. In this environment we are beginning to see troubling symptoms of falling quality. We have seen the highest number of Aboriginal children—133 children—not being placed according to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child placement principle. There has been a drop in participation rates in intensive family support, cuts to training and development and falling numbers in the Brighter Futures program.

Every day clients of the Department of Family and Community Services contact me seeking my assistance. They are often parents and grandparents who are seeking advice and access to services to prevent their child entering care or pleading to have their child restored. I understand that children only enter care when there is a very real and tangible risk to their safety, but I am continually surprised by the number of families struggling to find the services that will assist them. I am contacted by grandparents who have taken up the care of their grandchildren and have been given no real ongoing support. As soon as children enter a grandparent's care, they are no longer considered to be at significant risk and priority access for family support services is removed.

Access to drug or alcohol support for partners and to mental health services continues to be a struggle for many people in this State. Parents of children with a mental illness struggle to find support. Women experiencing domestic violence cannot access more than a few weeks temporary accommodation and are not able to establish for the benefit of the Department of Family and Community Services a safe home away from a violent partner. The response of the Government is global positioning system [GPS] tracking—something described by the Commissioner of Police as "totally unreliable".

Given this day-to-day experience for many families who come into contact with the Department of Family and Community Services, one has to question the fairness of a system of parenting capacity orders. Parenting capacity orders—and most of the proposed changes—are dependent on parents having access to support services. The paucity of services available, particularly beyond the Great Dividing Range in regional and remote New South Wales, will create a catch 22 for many parents. In order to satisfy the Department of Family and Community Services that they are serious about protecting the wellbeing of their children, they must first access support and therapeutic services provided and funded by the Department of Family and Community Services, which either do not exist or cannot be accessed. The legislation says nothing about ensuring access to immediate services for parents entering into parenting capacity orders.

There are also very real concerns about increasing codification and specification in child protection programming. Parents with a statutory open plan or with children in out-of-home care cannot access the parenting and family support services funded under the Early Intervention and Placement Prevention [EIPP] program or with the Brighter Futures program. Children who enter into out-of-home care are no longer eligible for the program. It is made increasingly difficult for parents to access services and address their issues. At times the system appears to deliberately inhibit help-seeking behaviour and restoration efforts. It is logical to ask: What guarantee to support services will the Government offer children at risk and their families? Will women experiencing domestic violence be able to access a women's refuge after the reforms to homeless services?

Will Housing NSW offer priority support to the clients of the Department of Family and Community Services? Will parents who are the subject of a report of harm be guaranteed access to the Family Support Service? Are there dedicated, immediate, mental health services for families where children are at risk of harm? Without answers to these questions and without guaranteed support services that can assist, parenting capacity orders appear punitive. Every service provider I have spoken to in recent months has raised the issue of enhancement to the service base in order to ensure the smooth implementation of these promised reforms. However, all we get from this Government is cuts, cuts and more cuts—over \$48 million in cuts last year alone.

The final theme is accountability and transparency. I support the greater examination of the deaths of children and young people known to the Department of Family and Community Services. The insight to current practice that this examination affords can only benefit caseworkers and their future clients. The report will build on the work of the NSW Child Death Review Team in examining, and hopefully preventing, the deaths of children. Unfortunately, this bill provides little in the way of additional transparency beyond examination of child deaths known to the Department of Family and Community Services. We are debating a legislative reform package without the benefit of a report on the performance of the Department of Family and Community Services in 2013. The Minister often claims that, despite funding cuts and chronic vacancies, the Department of Family and Community Services is seeing more children, but the department will not release the figures upon which this claim is based.

Nothing demonstrates the commitment to accountability better than information the Minister provides to this Chamber. On 2 April 2008 the member for Goulburn, then the shadow Minister, asked me how many children in care were formally adopted by foster parents. I replied that there were 30. Recently I asked the Minister a very similar question: How many children and young people in out-of-home care are adopted? The response was very different. The Minister replied:

Information relating to Out of Home Care (OOHC) adoptions is available in the Department of Community Services Annual Report. A discussion paper was released in November 2012 outlining the Government's proposed legislative amendments designed to encourage open adoption as a preference to long-term OOHC. It is regrettable no input on this important issue to vulnerable young people was received from the NSW Labor Party.

That is petty and partisan for sure, but also a sign of the growing arrogance of the Minister for Family and Community Services. Ministerial responsibility is at the heart of this system. But this responsibility disappears when tasked with recruiting caseworkers or even being aware of the number of vacancies. The Minister knows, based on her departmental briefings, that the vacancy rate was closer to 183, or 9 per cent, at the change of government. That is lower than the 11 per cent to 13 per cent consistently run by the Minister—a failure indeed. The bill stands as the major legislative reform of the Minister for Family and Community Services. It gives an insight into what is driving reform in child protection. It exposes a government that sees child protection as a cost that needs to be managed. This bill, with its focus on tertiary child protection, confirms that the Minister has never had a plan or a policy to prevent the abuse, neglect and harm of children and that the Government is without a program to reduce the demand for child protection services. This Government is so committed to the illusion of outcome improvement it will not tell anybody what it is doing. This Government is committed to cascading cuts to child protection funding.

This bill is a testament to a government that has failed to see the body of evidence presented by international best practice and research urging a strengths-based, positive and flexible system to protect children. Disturbingly, this Government and this Minister have failed to listen to and respect the families and children who seek their protection. At the commencement of my contribution to this debate I foreshadowed that the Opposition will move amendments concerning contracts, the place of adoption in the system of out-of-home care, the flexibility of judicial independence in relation to time frames and the child's best interests, accountability and transparency, financial support for children in out-of-home care and their families, and the protection of victims of domestic violence from being penalised by the behaviour of their spouse or partner. The most vulnerable in our community deserve better than this bill.

Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed—Parliamentary Secretary) [5.44 p.m.]: I support the Child Protection Legislation Amendment Bill 2013 introduced by the Minister for Family and Community Services, who has done an excellent job addressing a very difficult subject and one that is dear to the hearts of all members of the House and the wider community. It is clear that the amending legislation seeks to address many of the issues that have plagued child protection services in New South Wales, certainly over the past few decades. The number of children and young people in out-of-home care increased from 14,667 as at 30 June 2008 to 18,169 as at 30 June 2012, which is an increase of 23.9 per cent. Those children often experienced a revolving door of placements that too many children and young people in care experience to their long-term detriment. The Government reduced the rate of growth of out-of-home care to approximately 0.7 per cent last financial year. As at 30 June 2013, 18,300 children and young people were in out-of-home care. This is a commendable effort by our caseworkers but more needs to be done.

The amendments in the bill are designed to address this issue on a number of fronts. First, the bill introduces a new set of valuable tools for caseworkers to use to engage and work with parents, especially when it is challenging. These tools include the renewed and strengthened parental responsibility contract and the new court-ordered parenting capacity order. The value of those is threefold. They provide a framework for caseworkers to actively engage with parents where in the past caseworkers may have been thwarted by the reluctance or inability of parents to seek the services they needed. These tools provide an opportunity for parents to step up to the plate and engage with services so that their children are more likely to remain with them. They ensure that Community Services makes every effort to work in genuine partnership with families and that intrusive State intervention is an act of last resort.

In relation to the revolving door of placements that many children in care experience, the package offers a range of strategies to avoid this and instead to find permanent homes for children, which we know is the key to making sure they have the best possible chance in life. At this point it would be remiss of me not to highlight the great work of Community Services and caseworkers in the Tweed electorate. I know a number of those workers and they go to great lengths to support children in the wider community. I assume that Mr Acting-Speaker Barilaro has similar cross-border issues with the Australian Capital Territory as I have in the Tweed with Queensland. But caseworkers do their job with refreshing honesty, integrity and diligence. The proposals in the bill support a more streamlined pathway to open adoption where this is in the best interests of the child. Carers will be able to be authorised as both foster carers and prospective adoptive parents through a single, streamlined process. This will open up the opportunity for more children to establish stability in placement as early as possible. It is important to remember that adoption is not as it was even a decade ago. It now only occurs as open adoption, where children have the right to know and remain in contact with their birth parents. However, it provides stability for children and a sense of belonging forever.

Tweed Valley Kincare comprises an active group of grandparents who do an excellent job looking after young children. I meet them regularly and note that kin carers bring a collection of thoughts to the table and a desire to assist one another. When new kin carers come into the fold they are often a little cowed by the legalities and difficulties they face and the older carers assist them through the process. I have seen the joy on the faces of the children who are placed in a stable home—it is one of the greatest joys of my life. These are innocent children who are not in these circumstances by choice but as a consequence of decisions made by others. The Minister has done an excellent job addressing this very difficult issue. Some people in the community may criticise these programs but it is easy to sit on the fence and throw stones; it is harder to be at the coalface making a difference. I applaud the excellent work of the Minister, who is in the Chamber, and her staff.

Caseworkers in the Tweed go out of their way to do their jobs with the highest level of professional ethics and integrity. I have seen how their active assistance has resulted in positive outcomes for many young children. When I was in opposition a young father came to my office with three young children under the age of 12 at 4 o'clock on a Friday afternoon. He said, "I am going to leave these children with you because I am concerned I will do them physical harm. We've been living in the car for the last three months and I cannot care for them anymore." He then walked out the door. Luckily my staff were still there so we managed to feed and clothe the children. We also managed to contact our local Department of Community Services officers, who attended within half an hour. They took every step to ensure that those children were placed in a safe environment. I was amazed at how hard they worked, not seeming to find it an effort. It was wonderful to see the look on those children's faces when they were given clean clothes and had food in their bellies—things we took for granted when we were growing up, but not these children. I will always remember the little girl hugging me around the legs and saying, "Thank you so much". It brought a tear to my eyes.

Members on all sides of politics should never forget those who are trying to help our children; we should put our differences aside in an effort to address this issue. It is difficult and will continue to be so. All steps must be taken to ensure the right messages and support are given, and I believe with this bill we are on the right track. The new guardianship orders will enable permanency where adoption is not appropriate or in the best interests of the child. They will be particularly important for Indigenous families where adoption is not culturally accepted. Guardianship orders will offer Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, who we know are disproportionately represented in the child protection system, a home for life. This new paradigm—which seeks to ensure a child's best interests in both the short and the long term—is front and centre in child protection work and promises to make a valuable improvement in the outcomes of children at risk. I commend the bill to the House.

Mrs BARBARA PERRY (Auburn) [5.54 p.m.]: I will comment briefly on sections of the Child Protection Legislation Amendment Bill 2013. It is an understatement to say that child protection is difficult. I know that all too well from my time working as a legal aid lawyer in child protection. The balance is always hard to achieve. How does one determine whether a family is able to give a child the life he or she needs in order to flourish? When should a child be removed? What risks are worth taking and what are not? What is the role of the State? How does one determine what is best for a child when there is no guaranteed good outcome whatever action one takes? Early in my career as a legal aid solicitor I had a case that still haunts me. I argued that a six-month-old baby should be restored to its family on the basis that appropriate protections had been put in place—there appeared to be support for the parents, and they were both undertaking drug counselling. A week later that baby was dead, its head hit against a brick wall when its mother was pushed as she tried to score. In her second reading speech the Minister stated:

Breaking the cycle of disadvantage is at the heart of the proposals contained in this bill.

That is certainly a good aim, and it is certainly a massive undertaking. Much of the reform is designed to facilitate permanency planning. That, too, is a good aim and one the research would fully endorse. While permanency planning is a great thing, it should come only after the courts are totally satisfied that it is not safe for a child to live with his or her biological family and that the family, despite being offered services and perhaps signing agreements, is totally unable and unwilling to make the changes needed in order to give the child a life where he or she can flourish and receive the gift of a childhood.

The reality is that the courts need to be satisfied that everything has been done to try to place children with their family. This does not mean that adoption is automatically considered over long-term fostering. It comes down to the best interests of the child. I am concerned about the need to support families who adopt. Recent research from the United Kingdom from which this adoption policy is drawn points to issues facing families who have adopted children from out-of-home care. It shows that there is no such thing as a magic solution when it comes to child protection; it simply points to the complexity of the issues involved. These children come from backgrounds of abuse and neglect. They often need very expensive support. For many children, their basic emotional, educational, health and dental needs have not been met. Some carry with them the long-term effects of trauma and many have a disability. The Minister's argument that foster parents "do it for love" misses the point. It does not add up that a Government that claims it is clearing roadblocks to adoption is taking away supports for adoptive parents. Shortly after her appointment the Minister decided to stop paying post-adoption allowances for children who were adopted from foster care.

Ms Pru Goward: They don't do it for the money. You might not understand this.

Mrs BARBARA PERRY: That is naïve, Pru. Many foster carers who would like to adopt the children in their care simply cannot afford to provide them with the expensive physical therapy and other specialised support they desperately need. Paying these allowances was good public policy and it also made financial sense. The pointy heads at Boston Consulting, who were commissioned to review out-of-home care costs for the New South Wales Government in 2009, did not even consider touching the payments and noted instead that paying post-adoption allowances was cost-effective. They found that every time a child was adopted from out-of-home care there was an average cost saving of \$16,000 per annum because children who are adopted do not need expensive caseworker support.

I note that the report of the Protecting Victoria's Vulnerable Children Inquiry to the Victorian Minister for Community Services in 2013 recommended the provision of post-adoption support, pointing out that savings are considerable when compared with the cost of the child remaining in care until the age of 18. Unfortunately, this Minister continues to refuse to face the fact that the slashing of post-adoption allowances undermines her own policy aims. What is most gobsmacking is that the Minister claims she has increased the rate of adoptions

from out-of-home care when the numbers clearly only started moving after Labor introduced post-adoption allowances and the Minister was forced to grandfather them because of the outcry when she removed them. In fact, my biggest concern about this bill is the nuts and bolts of how it will work and the funding behind it. As the chief executive officer of one non-government organisation said to me, some of this legislation could work but it could be downright dangerous if it is not funded adequately and we do not have the right people making the decisions. Also missing is funding for early intervention. In her second reading speech the Minister asserted:

The principles of this bill reflect this Government's belief that ideally, a child will live safely at home with his or her parents and Community Services will work alongside the families to help them change.

When one examines the bill there is very little focus on what it takes for a child to live safely with their parents and how Community Services will work alongside families to help them change. We know now from studies into brain development and attachment theory that early intervention is critical. However, there is no mention in the bill of prevention and early intervention to identify and support families earlier. As Anne Hollands from the Benevolent Society said in a presentation on this bill, it is always better to stop people falling off the cliff rather than sending ambulances to the bottom of the cliff.

The bill focuses far more on punitive measures for families who do not meet the mark. We know that it is very difficult to change families when it involves dealing with a mix of communities marked by poverty, unemployment, abuse, neglect and sometimes trauma. It is extremely difficult but it is possible, and it happens not only through the involvement of skilled professionals but also when communities are supported and respected and families are central to working towards their own recoveries. The Minister knows what needs to be done, as she conceded when pressed on *Lateline*. She said:

... you've got to work with the family, with the home ...

So, we are asking for enormous resources to get these families straight before we can return these children and we need to do that.

The Minister knows what is needed; she is just not putting her money where her mouth is. I acknowledge the mention of family group conferencing, which is a significant but relatively small part of the solution. However, there is little indication of where the funding and the training will come from. I question also exactly how parental responsibly contracts will fix anything. A gaping omission from child protection policies are the enormous resources, significant programs and funding for early intervention—or early action, as Anne Hollands likes to call it—that are needed to "end the cycle of disadvantage". Reforming the child protection system is heavily dependent on family support services, yet the need for early intervention is not legislated in the bill.

When I was shadow Minister we pointed again and again to the languishing budget for early intervention services. The Minister would howl loudly that we had got our figures wrong. However, when pressed she was unable to back her case that the funding was there. When we accessed information about funding through an upper House call for papers, we found what the budget papers alluded to: savings targets and gaps and cracks in the system. Under this Government the budget stream for funding early intervention programs has gone backwards. Even taking into account transfers with respect to the Strengthening Families Program and the Intensive Family Preservation program, around \$50 million is still missing in child, youth and family prevention and early intervention services—something that the Minister, despite blaming transfers of funding, has failed to account for.

We know that the department must make \$406.3 million worth of cuts by 2015-16—over four years. The Minister is under unbelievable pressure with her budget and the expensive transition of out-of-home care without increasing the overall Family and Community Services budget, as the upper House call for papers discovered. What I fear will happen is exactly what was reported in a Bathurst newspaper recently in an article headed "Magistrate's fury as homeless man languishes in jail." I will not go into that case but I urge the Minister to read the article.

I note an area that requires amendment, which is the role of foster parents in court proceedings—something that came up on many occasions when I was shadow Minister. I recently came across a case involving foster parents who have been caring for a toddler for two years. The toddler has chronic health problems, which have seen her hospitalised on numerous occasions. The foster carers have been incredibly committed to this child's welfare, with one parent spending days in hospital with the child numerous times. Her specialist has said that her health conditions are life threatening. Yet her health issues were not at the fore in a recent court hearing about the child's future. The court is considering putting her in a family placement with five other children, where she would be in day care five days a week. When foster parents have been caring

continually for a child for more than 12 months during the previous two years there should be the option for them to be joined to child protection proceedings so that their insights are also taken into account when it comes to determining the child's future.

I note also that we are only a year out from a public apology to the victims of forced adoptions. Much research has been undertaken into adoption as a result of the Senate's comprehensive and excellent inquiry into forced adoption. Many people whose children were forcibly taken from them have contacted my office about this legislation and the lack of funding for early intervention services. They believe this violates the spirit of the apology and shows that we have learnt nothing from the past. Their past experiences and the lessons learnt from those experiences must be heeded. The reforms needed in child protection in this State will not be heralded by a Minister who is more about talk than taking the real action needed to turn around the lives of children in crisis. One has only to look at the budget to see the real story. As Adele Horin wrote when this Minister came to government:

In child protection everyone wants a quick fix; no one wants a single child to die from abuse and neglect ... the fail-proof child protection system has not yet been invented ... what is abundantly clear is that effective child protection work with highly dysfunctional families cannot be done on the cheap.

It cannot be done by spouting principles that are underfunded, with a shrinking budget for early intervention. We know that legislation can be a very blunt instrument if it is not resourced properly, and this is a very blunt instrument indeed.

Debate adjourned on motion by Mrs Leslie Williams and set down as an order of the day for a future day.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr John Barilaro): Order! It being before 7.00 p.m., private members' statements will be proceeded with.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

BASEBALL FUNDING

Mr BARRY COLLIER (Miranda) [6.04 p.m.]: By any measure the Major League Baseball matches between the Los Angeles Dodgers and the Arizona Diamondbacks last weekend were an outstanding success. Enthusiastic crowds of baseball fans, local players and local baseball club members together with fantastic weather at the historic Sydney Cricket Ground combined to produce a marvellous spectacle. The Sydney Cricket Ground was transformed into a picture perfect, authentic United States baseball stadium, complete with special clay flown in from San Diego. In the shire we have the Cronulla Sutherland Junior Baseball Association comprising eight teams that are affiliated with the Minor League Baseball Association. You might not believe it if you only read their press releases, but bringing Major League Baseball to Sydney was not the idea of the Minister for Tourism, Major Events, Hospitality and Racing, or the Minister for Sport and Recreation, or the Premier, but the brainchild of promoter Jason Moore, who began working on the project way back in 2006. David Hynes, President of Baseball Australia, stated:

This wonderful event would not have been possible were it not for the vision and determination of Jason Moore of Moore Sports, together with Major League Baseball and their dedication and commitment to growing the game of baseball in Australia.

Let us give credit where credit is due. Mr Hynes further stated:

... it is so exciting to have this unique event in our backyard to connect and inspire young ball players around the country.

Speaking to my constituents, fans and supporters at the Sydney Cricket Ground and peak sporting groups before Sunday's game, it is quite clear that baseball—and, indeed, other sports in this State—face two very real problems that the State Government can easily fix. Baseball is one of the fastest-growing sports in Australia. Baseball New South Wales now boasts 21,000 players statewide, including 3,000 women. There is no doubt, as team Australia's performances against the United States teams shows, we are producing world-class baseball players. But producing world-class baseball players, or world-class players in any sport, requires appropriate development funding over time as well as world-class infrastructure and facilities.

New South Wales Government development funding for State peak sporting organisations such as Baseball New South Wales ranges from \$5,000 to \$60,000 per annum, which is lower than that of other States.

At \$36.38 per head of population, sports development funding in New South Wales is by far the lowest of any State in the Commonwealth. When we consider that State sports development funding ranges from \$606.35 per head in Queensland to \$104 per head in Victoria, we can see that New South Wales is way behind. Even funding of the New South Wales Sports Federation, the peak independent, not-for-profit body for sport in New South Wales, is well below the current level of funding for similar peak sporting bodies in other major Australian States. As part of the 2000 Olympic Games, the then Labor Government built world-class sporting facilities in and around Sydney. These purpose-built facilities form part of our precious Olympic legacy and now provide venues for key State, national and international events.

Two such former Olympic facilities, the State Baseball Stadium and the State Softball Stadium, are now part of the Blacktown International Sports Park [BISP] in Western Sydney. The facility has grown since 2000 and has become a major interstate and international competition venue. It is also the home of the Sydney Blue Socks, the Greater Western Sydney Giants Academy, New South Wales Blues and the New South Wales Breakers. Last year alone there were more than 500,000 visitors, including my constituents, to Blacktown International Sports Park. In 2013 it hosted more than 4,000 events and acts as a nursery for many of our future sporting stars, male and female, not just in Western Sydney but across the State and Australia. The former State Labor Government well understood that. Starting with the Carr Government, successive State governments have provided annual funding of \$736,000. At the same time the Blacktown City Council has made an annual contribution of \$850,000 to the operating costs of the Olympic venues at the facility and is committed to doing so until 2018.

Astonishingly, and despite all the spruiking by those opposite, the current State Government has torn up the arrangements that have been in place since 2000 and slashed the funding to Blacktown International Sports Park. It is now up to Blacktown council and its ratepayers to continue the funding. There is no doubt that losing \$736,000 per annum will impact on the financial viability of this important facility. You really have to wonder how the Minister for Sport and Recreation, charged with promoting the development of our future sporting stars, can rip \$736,000 from this key facility. How can the Premier, who claims to represent Western Sydney in this place, say how proud he is to bring Major League Baseball to the Sydney Cricket Ground on the one hand but cut funding to Sydney's premier baseball stadium on the other? If they are fair dinkum the Premier and the Minister for Sport and Recreation must increase sports development funding, restore the annual funding to the Blacktown International Sports Park and secure the future of baseball in the State. I call on them to do so.

TRIBUTE TO MARK STRACHAN

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie) [6.08 p.m.]: This afternoon I bring to the attention of the House someone whom most people on the Mid North Coast wake up to every morning. His name is Mark Strachan, or "Strawny" as he is affectionately known, and this week he celebrates 25 years at our local radio station, 2MC FM. Throughout the past 25 years Mark has served the local community as the breakfast announcer, working on air six days a week: Monday to Friday he is on live from 5.00 a.m. to 9.00 a.m. and Saturdays from 6.00 a.m. When you wake up with Mark, it is always a positive and lively welcome to the day complemented with great music, plenty of comedy and loads of information about what is happening in our local community. Over the years Mark has been supported by many characters, mostly from his own imagination, including Sir Dorkley Rich Mongrel, Stinky from Buckramadidie, MC Pelican, Paddy from Nambucca Railway Station or Neville from Nabiac. They have all been entertaining.

These days we never know who will join Mark on *Strawny's Brekky Show*. On any given day it is as likely to be John Michael Howsen as Otto Von Beer Bottle, Bluey Waters, June the Tea Lady, Dear Bill, or the cast of characters from Australia's longest-running radio comedy show *How Green is My Cactus*, on which Mark is a writer. Mark is a major part of the Mid North Coast community through his constant involvement with local community groups. He regularly gives up his time to host or speak at events held by charities and not-for-profit organisations. As an active member of the Port Macquarie Surf Life Saving Club, Mark has helped in countless surf rescues over the years and has been a life guard captain. Mark is a major supporter of the Port Macquarie Koala Hospital and has been a patron in previous years.

Other events that Mark has coordinated for charity include Cents for Surf, which organises local schools to bring in loose change to place in lines at school for their local surf club, and Bras for Breast Cancer. With the support of the Port Macquarie City Bowling Club, Mark encouraged the ladies of the Mid North Coast to donate their old bras for each of which the bowling club donated \$2. The event raised more than \$20,000 for breast cancer research. For the Salvation Army Mark has organised a "near nude" calendar, a celebrity cookbook and a Christmas album featuring local artists singing their favourite Christmas songs. All those initiatives attracted considerable donations to enable the Salvos to continue their great work in the community.

Just two weeks ago at the Comboyne Show annual goat race Mark came first for the second year in a row. There is talk that if he wins next year he will change his name to Makybe Diva. Mark continually donates his time to host charity events. Some are joyous occasions but many are held to raise funds for people in tragic situations. They may be families who are in financial trouble or who have lost a family member due to illness. Mark is aware of his role to ensure the community is informed during his time on air. Over the years he has kept us updated on floods, bushfires and major accidents on the Pacific Highway. Mark will go to the studio and broadcast information to our community for as long as an event is happening. He has always done that without complaint because he understands the important role radio plays in the local community. Mark has been recognised by local Rotary clubs for his community work and last year he was honoured as a Paul Harris Fellow live on air, much to his surprise.

Mark Strachan is a humble man who does not do things for self-promotion. He is a generous and big-hearted person who truly believes in doing what is right and helping and supporting the community in which he has lived for the past 25 years. With the support of his wife, Deb, and son, Alex, Mark Strachan has demonstrated his true character. He is very talented, generous with his time, always looking out for others and always going above and beyond for his community. On behalf of the community I congratulate Mark Strachan on his 25 years at 2MC FM and hope that he continues to entertain us for another 25 years.

F6 MOTORWAY EXTENSION

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Parliamentary Secretary) [6.12 p.m.]: Last week I joined with members representing the electorates of Heathcote, Kiama, Menai, Oatley, Rockdale and South Coast to launch a public campaign to advance the long-awaited F6 extension in southern Sydney.

Mr Barry Collier: What are you looking at me for?

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN: You'll find out. We are calling on the New South Wales Government to allocate sufficient funds in the 2014-15 budget to bring planning of the F6 extension forward to the shovel-ready stage within two years. This level of planning is required for the F6 extension to be built. We seven local members are organising a petition to gather community support. We intend to bring that petition to this Parliament and present it to the Minister for Roads and Ports, the Hon. Duncan Gay. I have previously spoken in this House about why we need the F6 extension. The benefits include reductions in congestion, travel times for motorists, vehicle operating costs, fuel consumption and emissions, and road crashes. Benefits also include taking traffic off local rat runs, increasing jobs growth and encouraging business development. After lobbying by me and my colleagues last year the Government allocated \$1 million for advanced planning for the F6 in the 2013-14 budget.

This financial year studies have been undertaken to review changes in land use, to develop detailed transport requirements of the new motorway, to investigate surface transport connections needed to ensure that the new motorway meets the needs of community in southern Sydney, to undertake modelling to test the feasibility of a motorway proposal, and to coordinate design concepts for the F6 including interfaces with the WestConnex project. But that work will not get us to the shovel-ready stage. We need to do more. We need to complete preconstruction planning so that we are ready to go when construction money is available either from the State Government, the Federal Government, private interests or from a combination of those entities.

We know that the previous Labor Government cancelled the F6 project altogether. The current New South Wales Government infrastructure strategy incorporates an F6 extension. We have no F6 not only because of the massive \$30 billion infrastructure backlog that we inherited but also because of the inertia and obstruction of Labor governments that sold off much of the corridor. In 2002 then Minister Scully announced the abandonment of the F6 extension and the February 2010 Metropolitan Transport Plan did not even mention it. We know that less than 10 days before that plan was released Premier Keneally personally intervened to remove any mention of the F6.

At the next State election 10,000 of my constituents will move from the electorate of Cronulla to the electorate of Miranda. We need to know where the member for Miranda stands on this funding issue. In 2005 he told this House that when he picked up his local newspaper to find that Minister Costa had effectively put the F6 back on the agenda he told the Minister that he would fight it tooth and nail. In 2007 he told the *Sydney Morning Herald* that the F6 would be built over his dead body. Last November an article in the *St George and Sutherland Shire Leader* described the member for Miranda as having performed a U-turn on the F6. He said he

would consider supporting it if it was in a tunnel and met other conditions. When pressed by the local newspaper he said he would "have a look at it" if the road was built in a tunnel from Loftus to Taren Point Bridge and met some other conditions.

If we are successful in commissioning a study to get the F6 to the shovel-ready stage we will have the chance to look at the options such as whether the F6 should be below ground or above ground or a hybrid of the two. We will also have the chance to look at the number of lanes and the entrance and exit points. In other words, the member for Miranda will get his chance to look at it. All shire residents and the 10,000 constituents who are moving from the Cronulla electorate to the Miranda electorate at the next election need to know where the member for Miranda stands on this issue. Does he support a commitment to funding for detailed planning of the F6 as a matter of priority? Will he mobilise his electorate to get behind the petition, because they are calling out for the F6 to be built? This will test the genuineness of the member's commitment to "have a look at it". I look forward to his answers to those questions.

CESSNOCK MEN'S SHED

Mr CLAYTON BARR (Cessnock) [6.16 p.m.]: It was with great pleasure that I recently attended the opening of the newly established woodwork workshop that is the most recent expansion of the Cessnock Men's Shed and Community Garden. Members from across the State frequently brag about the quality of their local men's sheds and the contribution the sheds make. Tonight I will be no different except I will offer my contribution in a slightly different format. For the many thousands of people in the Cessnock electorate and across the State who regularly tune in to the audio broadcast from this Chamber I offer this: Tonight I will recite poetry. I suggest listeners fill up a cup of tea or coffee, put some jam and cream on a scone, find a comfy lounge chair, roll out the crocheted rug and settle in.

While listeners make themselves comfortable I will return to outlining my most recent visit to the Cessnock Men's Shed. In 2013 the group was fortunate enough to receive \$15,900 from a Community Building Partnerships Grant—a great Labor initiative. The funds were used to completely overhaul an area that was once a greenhouse. With a fair bit of trade-based skill, a Yes We Can attitude and a bunch of guesswork, the greenhouse is now a fully enclosed, purpose-built woodwork room. This new space will allow the Cessnock Men's Shed to expand its pursuits and take on extra projects. Importantly, with the assistance of local inventor and creator Noel Findley they will undertake sign projects on wood using his hand-built pantograph.

I am sure that many from the shed will be at home listening now, so to shed president Peter Torenbeek and his hardworking team I extend my warmest regards. I hope shed member "Dunny" has filled the bus for his excursion to neighbouring men's sheds. I remind anyone who has plans to drop out of the trip that the refund policy of the good Mr Dunnicliff is anything but generous. Now to the poem: Noel Findley is not only the creator of a clever pantograph machine but he also has a real talent for words. He tells me he drafted the following poem in just a few hours. For me it sums up quite brilliantly my experiences in attending men's sheds across the region. I encourage members of Parliament who are keenly awaiting my poetry recital to share these words with their local sheds. Perhaps it will spur on a men's shed word challenge, which I will happily sponsor.

The poem that I am about to read—probably ruin—has been professionally narrated by Mike Goodman and it can be sourced from the Cessnock Men's Shed. Running alongside Mike's dulcet tones is a photo slideshow featuring all of the types of work, activity and socialising that happens at the Cessnock Men's Shed. To that end, each local shed would be able to take the existing voiceover recording and insert their personalised photographs. I hope that I do Noel Findley of Cessnock Men's Shed proud as I read his September 2013 poem entitled *The Men's Shed*:

Let me relate a little lament
About an old man's life in retirement
I finished work some time ago
And since that time, it's been rather slow

I mowed the lawn from dusk till dawn
The firewood was duly sawn
I fixed the house, I washed the car
But things like that don't take you far

I looked around and I did see
The life that I knew did promptly flee
I wondered then about the years I spent
About the many jobs that came and went

My health went off, the black dog came
 I felt as though I was quite insane
 I didn't want to fall in a heap
 Or spend all day in a wasteful sleep

Sometime after retirement
 I wondered where all the good blokes went
 Then I heard about this Men's Shed thing
 "Do you think dear wife, should I give it a fling?"

"Yes!" she agreed in sympathy
 Dancing about with obvious glee
 "I have aerobics and coffee, and shopping to do
 All the things that I did before I had you"

The first time I entered that gate with a tremor
 With a feeling like being an apprentice, I remember
 But I was greeted with friendship and "Sit down please do!"
 And asked if I took my coffee with one lump or two

"You can spend your day reading a paper" said he
 "Or join yourself in a building spree
 But whatever it is you choose to do
 The decision is simply up to you"

"If a nice long chat is to be your thing
 There's nothing here to give you a sting
 Some blokes just need to have a talk
 Or maybe to take a simple walk"

So if you think your talent is a bit short
 Then let me make to you a simple report
 We're here to support you and give you some will
 To stand right beside you, even when you are ill

In friendship and mateship we will stand
 Always willing to help and lend you a hand
 So start with a walk through the front gate
 And spend time with us at the Men's Shed, MATE!

DROUGHT RELIEF HAY RUN

Mr GREG APLIN (Albury) [6.21 p.m.]: Early last summer the worst fears of farmers and graziers living in drought-ravaged western New South Wales were confirmed: There was no end in sight to one of the worst droughts in the history of that area. Already they had gone for almost two years since the last good rainfall. What could be done to help those graziers and their livestock to get through the crisis? Brendan Farrell, a truck driver, got the idea to put on a hay run from Burrumbuttock, a village near Albury, to Bourke in the State's north-west. The organisers quickly gathered support along the border region, with farmers delivering livestock feed to Burrumbuttock in anticipation of the run. On Friday 7 February at 6.00 a.m. they set off on their journey. In convoy this comprised three road trains, one B-double and 12 semitrailers, along with a vehicle to provide support. The fuel bill alone would amount to \$50,000. On board were five tonnes of grain and 750 bales of hay and straw. Heading north along the Kidman Highway, they arrived in Bourke that evening.

The convoy was met by Sharon Knight, who is a rural counsellor in Bourke. Mr Farrell has reported that Ms Knight worked as the local coordinator, helping distribute the hay and straw. She described the hay run as a huge morale booster for the town and region. Each grazier was able to collect, on average, eight bales. Altogether around 91 farmers received supplies. Mr Farrell said:

I will never forget seeing the farmers coming in when we came with the hay. Some farmers drove 200 kilometres for hay and there were kids clapping with banners on the roadside in Bourke and Cobar.

In the aftermath the Mayor of Bourke Shire, Andrew Lewis, wrote to the *Border Mail* to express his thanks. He said:

The project was very much appreciated by landowners and the broader Bourke community and it did a great deal to lift the flagging spirits of those on whom this devastating drought has had a significant impact.

The effort and generosity of all those involved in donating, loading, transporting and distributing the hay was tremendous and very much appreciated.

The hay run gained widespread attention in the media, striking a nerve within the community and among those feeling the need to help in some positive way. A second hay run to Bourke is planned for Friday 4 April and

Saturday 5 April. Arrangements have been made to meet up in Cobar with a convoy of 16 road trains coming across the Nullarbor from Western Australia to join them. Organisers are hoping to take a further 1,500 bales of hay on board up to 51 trucks and 79 trailers. The aim this time is to deliver hay to around 130 farmers in the Bourke-Brewarrina area, with a second collection point at Lightning Ridge, where hay will be available for a further 50 or 60 farms. The convoy will head into these towns on the Saturday, where drivers will be met by local farmers who have been selected by ballot to ensure the stockfeed makes it to those most in need. Meanwhile, the hay run is inspiring others to get on board in different ways. Ken Lacey, who works in the agriculture industry in Albury, was inspired by a television report to get involved. He has been placing fund-raising buckets at rural supplies businesses on the border.

While you might think that farmers and graziers would have little to do in the midst of a long drought, in fact, the reality is quite different. Saving a farm is an endless task, when feed and water is not at hand. Livestock in peril requires more management than ever. While one of the primary goals of the hay run is to save livestock, Mr Farrell has other important concerns on his mind. He said:

We cannot all sit around and worry about ourselves. We need to let these people know we care. Farmers are just walking off the land, they are just packing up their houses and leaving or killing themselves.

These words remind us that drought—along with other natural catastrophes—takes a terrible toll on our nation. The land is not the only part of this drought that can take years to heal. The hay run is a brilliant response to natural disaster. At its centre is the fundamental moral decision to be a good neighbour to those in need. It is a message that remains potent today: Do not just sit there, do something positive. The hay run is, on one measure, a drop in the bucket of endless need. The hay delivery might only help a grazier keep going for a few more weeks, but what we are seeing is that the hay run was never just about the hay. It is a visible sign that people—even people from far away—care.

Particular thanks must go to Brendan Farrell, Brad Schulz, Brett Lieschke and Sharon Knight, and to all the drivers, hay suppliers and transport operators who so generously donated hay, vehicles and fuel. Brendan says that Rotary and the "We're for the Bush" foundation have helped with expenses, including the expected fuel bill of more than \$70,000. It is a great effort all round. Long may you run!

Private members' statements concluded.

CENTENARY OF ANZAC

Matter of Public Importance

Mr TIM OWEN (Newcastle) [6.26 p.m.]: It gives me great pleasure to contribute to this Matter of Public Importance regarding the Centenary of Anzac. This August marks 100 years since the commencement of World War I. Around the world, the Anzac Centenary will be commemorated by millions of people, in places of special meaning and in ways personally significant to them. During the Anzac Centenary we will not only remember the original Anzacs who served at Gallipoli and the Western Front but honour more than a century of service by Australian service men and women. We are also able to honour the multicultural and migrant members of this wonderful society of ours.

New South Wales alone provided more than 164,000 enlistees in the Australian Imperial Force and the Australian Naval and Military Expeditionary Force. This figure represented 39.8 per cent of all males in this State between the ages of 18 and 44, which is the highest percentage of any State in Australia. It is estimated also that more than 3,000 New South Welshmen enlisted in the Royal Australian Navy between 1914 and 1918. It is staggering to think that of all the volunteers who enlisted in New South Wales for the Australian Imperial Force, over 50 per cent were either killed or wounded in battle. Most Australians, even today, are directly affected by war and have a story to tell.

Having served in the military I am often asked about my most profound personal experience while serving in the armed forces. To be honest, it is not so much a specific event or memory from Iraq or Afghanistan that has stuck with me; rather it is the profound knowledge and understanding of just how lucky we are to live in a free and democratic society like Australia. It is with great pride that I thank the men and women who have protected our country and helped to make it what it is today. It is also important to recognise the vital members of the Australian society who may have been our allies or our enemies in past years. That is one of the most wonderful things about Australian society.

Accordingly, I am excited that the Minister for Citizenship and Communities recently announced the Joining Forces initiative to commemorate our veterans. New South Wales offers a rich collection of family stories from the First World War within our migrant communities. Some people may be surprised to learn that approximately 1,000 Indian soldiers died at Gallipoli and also that a high proportion of Jewish Australians enlisted during the wars. The Anzac spirit is something our migrant communities should and do embrace and be proud of. Joining Forces will encourage activities such as a Jewish community group selling badges with Sydney Legacy during badge week; an Indian community group selling poppies for Returned Services League NSW on Remembrance Day; a Chinese community organising a morning tea following an Anzac Day service; or a member of the South Sudanese community laying a wreath at a Remembrance Day service.

Another New South Wales Government initiative, United We Stand, encourages local sporting clubs to get involved in Centenary of Anzac activities. Our sporting clubs, through members past and present, hold a lasting link to the stories of our diggers. This initiative is about looking at ways to discover those personal stories and about respecting the legacy of those who served. Most local sporting clubs would have a unique story to tell during the Centenary of Anzac and the patrons of these clubs played an important part in our military history. During my summary I will cover a couple of key events in Newcastle during this celebration year. I am thrilled to be launching on Saturday, with Lieutenant General Gillespie, a book called *The Digger's View*, which is a Newcastle-based publication produced by two wonderful Novocastrians, Mr Juan Mahoney and Mr Kent Rowe. *The Digger's View* is a book featuring World War I photographs that have been painstakingly restored and printed in colour so that we can appreciate the journey that our diggers faced in years gone by. It is a wonderful book that honours the history behind World War I and it can give readers a real sense of the conditions in which our diggers had to live.

The Anzac centenary is about commemoration, not celebration. It is a time when we should encourage our society to learn about the trials, tribulations and sacrifices of many Australian men and women who stood up for what is right. It is unquestionably important that this education is carried out in our schools so that the children of today and those of generations to come can appreciate and understand the sacrifices our forebears made. From a population of fewer than 5 million people in Australia at the time, more than 400,000 men enlisted, of whom more than 60,000 were killed and 156,000 were wounded, gassed or taken prisoner. This history must never be forgotten and never taken for granted.

Ms SONIA HORNERY (Wallsend) [6.31 p.m.]: I would like to relate a personal story about Anzac Day and the message of its importance that history teachers pass on to their students. In both our public and private schools history teachers in New South Wales have a great respect for the tradition of Anzac and they try to impart important information about it and show students what it was like for the Anzacs. In my early years in high school I loved history and I was asked to give a speech about Anzac Day. For my sins, I remember writing a book report about World War I—goodness knows why because although it was interesting to me I do not know whether it was quite as interesting to other students.

When I had just turned 18 I had the pleasure of joining the United Nations Regiment of the New South Wales Reserve Regiment. It was a very interesting time in my life. I spent a lot of time at Anzac Day services and it is a time I remember well. As a teacher I thought a lot about how I could impart the importance of Anzac Day to teenagers and make them respect it and understand what it was like for the Anzacs. One of the areas of research I undertook was about soldiers in World War I. I came across information that fascinated me and I think it helped some of the students understand what the Anzacs went through. James Martin was born in Melbourne in 1901 and following the outbreak of World War I he enlisted in the Australian Imperial Force in 1915. He served in the Gallipoli campaign but after six months, following a period of cold temperatures and heavy rain in the trenches, he got very sick with typhus and was evacuated to a hospital ship called the *Glenart Castle* where he died on board and was buried at sea.

I spoke to my students about this man and we discussed what life would have been like in the trenches at the time and how hard it must have been. We discussed food, the lifestyle, the cold and the conditions and I think the students began to understand how difficult it must have been for the soldiers. I asked the students what they thought was the minimum age at which one could enlist in the army. The students thought it was 21 but we later found out it was 18. What was interesting about James Martin was that he died at the age of 14 years and nine months. Many of my students at that time were older than this young man and I think that had an impact on them. I have not been able to discover how many young people enlisted illegally at the time but we understand that many young men enlisted because they were from poor families and they thought it was a way to help their families and at the same time have an adventure.

The one thing the students could not believe was that a young person was allowed to enlist in the army at 14 years of age. His parents at first did not want him to enlist but he convinced them eventually and he illegally used someone else's proof-of-age documents to do so. This is all to inform the House how important Anzac Day is to teachers and how they strive very hard to get this message across to their students, as I did. I hope I made that lesson interesting for my students and that they learned the importance of Anzac Day and how it is to be respected.

Mrs ROZA SAGE (Blue Mountains) [6.36 p.m.]: The landing at Gallipoli marks one of the most significant events for Australia as a nation—the first time that we as a federated Commonwealth defended ourselves abroad. In a display of unique heroism, our soldiers stormed the beaches and made significant progress on the first day of the campaign. Unfortunately, 744 Australians died that day. During the course of the campaign a further 8,709 Australians lost their lives. The campaign was a disaster but the heroism, valour and mateship displayed by the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps—ANZAC—became a legend. We commemorate the heroism of our soldiers on 25 April every year, noting the sacrifice that all of our soldiers have made in giving up their lives for our security and freedom. One hundred years have now passed since that fateful landing at Gallipoli but the sentiments and significance grow stronger each year. World War I lasted from 4 August 1914 to 11 November 1918. The Centenary of Anzac commemorates an important chapter in our nation's history and encourages communities to unite as one people committed to democracy, the rule of law and a sense of fair play.

Joining Forces is an initiative between the New South Wales Government, Sydney Legacy and the RSL to encourage multicultural communities to join in the centenary of Anzac celebrations and to help migrant communities, who may not feel connected with the Anzac tradition, recognise that they, like all of us, are the beneficiaries of the sacrifice our ex-service men and women made. We also want to ensure that the service of 400 Aboriginal Australians who fought in Gallipoli and on the Western Front is recognised, as Aboriginal Australian ex-servicemen faced prejudice and exclusion from Anzac Day events after the war and their role has never been fully appreciated. The Wartime Legends program encourages the community to recognise and honour the contribution made by Aboriginal Australians who served in the defence forces. It is important to note that while in uniform those men fought as equals and were treated as equals until they left the service. In the Blue Mountains we have a reserve called the Digger Cooper Reserve, which recognises one of our Aboriginal families who lived there. It is fitting that Lieutenant General Ken Gillespie is the chair of the New South Wales Centenary of Anzac Advisory Council.

Anzac Day does not just commemorate those who lost their lives in the First World War but all our soldiers, sailors and airmen—men and women who served abroad and put their lives at risk to defend Australia and the values that we hold dear. The centenary of the First World War and the Centenary of Anzac will provide an opportunity to commemorate those who have served in the past, as well as those who have recently served in Iraq and Afghanistan. Having served in the Royal Australian Air Force it is a significant event personally.

Mr TIM OWEN (Newcastle) [6.39 p.m.], in reply: I thank the member for Wallsend and the member for Blue Mountains for their outstanding contributions. I commend the member for Wallsend for the outstanding work she has done with school children. I also commend the member for Blue Mountains who spoke on many issues, from migrant communities to the Indigenous soldiers who served this great country. Earlier I mentioned two great programs: the Joining Forces initiative and the United We Stand project. However, there are two significant deliverables from the Centenary of Anzac: firstly, the finalisation of the War Memorial in Hyde Park—a project near and dear to General Ken Gillespie's heart and I hope one that we will have an opportunity to finalise.

Secondly, my electorate of Newcastle has a rich defence history and continues to be a viable part of the Australian Defence Force. We have possibly the busiest Royal Australian Air Force base in the country in the Australian Army Bullecourt barracks located at Adamstown. Looking back on Newcastle's involvement in World War I, not only did our region provide many men to fight for the protection of our country but Newcastle provided the bulk of metals for the war effort, which came from the then newly built BHP plant in 1915. It is appropriate that the next 12 months will see the construction of the Memorial Walk—a \$4.5 million project funded entirely by a private consortium in Newcastle, of which I am proud to be a part. It will be constructed from Strzelecki Lookout to Trig Point and continue to a project run by the Newcastle City Council called Bathers Way.

BHP has committed \$3 million of construction funding to mark the 100 years that BHP has been in the City of Newcastle. It also will be a fitting contribution to remember the men and women who served in the

Australian Defence Force and the 100 year celebration of Anzac Day. Funding of \$300,000 will come from the Federal Government's Green Army project and \$1.2 million to \$1.5 million will come from the Newcastle City Council to link the walk to Bathurst Way. The memorial is being constructed primarily to honour the sacrifice of ex-servicemen and women and to commemorate the Centenary of Anzac. The names of more than 10,000 Hunter ex-servicemen and women will be written on steel silhouettes of soldiers. It will be the most significant World War I memorial to be constructed in Australia for the centenary and should attract thousands of tourists to Newcastle each year. It will ensure that the memory of Anzac lives on forever.

Discussion concluded.

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr John Barilaro): Order! The matter of public importance having concluded, and in accordance with the earlier resolution, community recognition statements will now be proceeded with.

COMMUNITY RECOGNITION STATEMENTS

JOHN MCKECHNIE LOCAL ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

Mrs ROZA SAGE (Blue Mountains) [6.42 p.m.]: It is my pleasure to recognise the valuable contribution to the Blue Mountains community by Mr John McKechnie. This week I presented Mr McKechnie with a NSW Seniors Week Local Achievement Award, in particular to honour his tireless efforts to recognise and assist national servicemen, of which he was one. As current treasurer of the Blue Mountains Nashos and a founding member of the New South Wales branch of the National Servicemen's Association, Mr McKechnie has dedicated countless hours over decades to the cause. His contribution to the Blue Mountains continues to be invaluable and he is a shining example of the contribution seniors can make to the community.

TIMELESS TEXTILES STITCH-A-THON

Ms SONIA HORNERY (Wallsend) [6.43 p.m.]: We recognise the tireless and hardworking Anne Kempton and Wilma Simmons for their contribution to International Women's Day. Anne and Wilma organised a 14-hour Stitch-a-thon in Newcastle to demonstrate the community support for the White Ribbon movement that works to end violence against women. Anne and Wilma organised local women to embellish lengths of white ribbon to show support for the White Ribbon movement and International Women's Day. This ribbon will be presented in Fiona Wright's show "Talking Needles" in May. On behalf of the Hunter community I thank Anne, Wilma and Fiona for their efforts in promoting this wonderful cause.

WALLAMBA DISTRICT 102ND ANNUAL SHOW

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) [6.44 p.m.]: On Saturday 22 March I attended the Wallamba District 102nd Annual Show. It was a fantastic day with a big crowd. The show was officially opened by Alan Richards, a life member of the Wallamba District Show. I was present when Leonie Patterson and Lola Reeve were bestowed with life membership. Both women have served the Wallamba District Show Society for over 30 years in many forms, from competing to being part of the committee. I commend these two ladies and the show society for the wonderful show they organise each year.

TRIBUTE TO THE LATE MOST VENERABLE THICH PHUOC HUE

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) [6.45 p.m.]: On 5 January 2014 I attended the second annual memorial of the late Most Venerable Thich Phuoc Hue, OAM, at the Thich Phuoc Hue Buddhist Monastery. I was joined at the memorial by the Most Venerable Sud ham Tiravanich, President of the Buddhist Federation of Australia; Senior Venerable Thich Thien Tam, President of the United Vietnamese Buddhist Congregation in Australia; Mr Nick Lalich, member for Cabramatta; Mr Chris Hayes, Federal member for Fowler; Councillor George Barcha, Deputy Mayor, Fairfield City Council; members of the organising committee; and members of the public.

The legacy of the Most Venerable Thich Phuoc Hue was heard time and again in a number of speeches where his commitment and achievements and the outstanding work he had done throughout our community was acknowledged and commended. The memory of the Most Venerable Thich Phuoc Hue was honoured through quiet reflection and Buddhist chanting. The passing of the late Most Venerable Thich Phuoc Hue was a great loss to our community; however, his legacy lives on today.

WOLLONDILLY SENIORS AND PICTON HIGH SCHOOL DEBATE

Mr JAI ROWELL (Wollondilly) [6.46 p.m.]: On Monday 7 March I had the honour of adjudicating a debate between a local senior's team and the Picton High School debating team as part of the NSW Seniors Week celebrations. The subject of the debate was "Should high school students be drug tested?" The fantastic Picton High School team, consisting of Hannah Matthews, Daniel Bennett, Jarred Reddie and Jessica Smith, argued the affirmative and the seniors' team, consisting of Phil Costa, the former member for Wollondilly, David Eden, Sue Davis and Richard Booth argued the negative. It was an incredibly impressive and well-structured debate—particularly on the side of the students—with contestants differing in age by up to three generations. In the end the students won convincingly and I congratulate them on their fantastic effort.

BANKSTOWN GREEK COMMUNITY

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) [6.47 p.m.]: The date 25 March is Greek Independence Day and tonight I recognise the important contribution of the Greek-Australian community in Bankstown. The large Greek community in Bankstown and throughout New South Wales has enriched our society for the better. Greek culture is widely appreciated and many prominent Greek Australians have achieved great success in the areas of business, politics, sport and academia. In my electorate of Bankstown, I particularly wish to recognise the valuable contributions of many Greek Australian institutions, including the Greek Older Women's Network, which has played an active role in promoting women's rights and in fundraising for local charities. I also acknowledge the St Euphemia Greek Orthodox Church and the St Euphemia school and college. I wish the Greek community a happy Greek Independence Day and a happy Easter.

TIFFANY MARTIN, OUTSTANDING EDUCATOR AWARD

Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands) [6.48 p.m.]: I commend primary school teacher Tiffany Martin of St Mary of the Angels Catholic School at Guyra, who has been recognised as an Outstanding Educator (Early Career Teacher) at the Spirit of Catholic Education Armidale Diocese Awards recently. In 2012 Tiffany was an ambassador for World Youth Day celebrations in Madrid and also completed a Graduation Certificate of Theology. She coordinates the school's Transition to Kindergarten program, has a keen interest in information technology integration, engages with the community through local sporting opportunities and acts as liaison person for the Scientists in Schools program. Tiffany is also the staff representative on the St Mary of the Angels school board, she has established a Mini Vinnies group at the school and she is an accredited dance teacher who gives selflessly of her talents, to the benefit of every student in the school. I congratulate Tiffany on her award and on her wonderful commitment to her school, students and community. For such a short career, she has certainly made an enormous contribution and I wish her well in her future career.

PLUMPTON RURAL FIRE BRIGADE

Mr RICHARD AMERY (Mount Druitt) [6.49 p.m.]: The Rural Fire Service is often the subject of public congratulations, especially after their efforts are highlighted during the massive bushfires that too regularly affect our State. Tonight I want to highlight the many other roles they play and in particular congratulate and thank the Plumpton Rural Fire Brigade on the excellent community work they did in my electorate during Christmas 2013. During December, the Plumpton Rural Fire Brigade brought Christmas cheer to many suburbs in my electorate in what they call the "Santa runs" where Santa Claus is escorted by bushfire officers and volunteers. From the suburbs of Rooty Hill, Hebersham, Plumpton, Dean Park, Glendenning, Oakhurst, Hassall Grove, Doonside and Stonecutters Ridge, the community says a big thank you to the Plumpton Rural Fire Brigade for their excellent work and community spirit.

COOPERNOOK AND LANDSDOWNE FOREST HISTORY GROUP

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie) [6.50 p.m.]: I congratulate the Coopernook and Lansdowne Forest History Group which is working hard to retain and protect the Coopernook Forest headquarters cottage located adjacent to the Coopernook Forest Park. The cottage dates back to the 1930s and is currently in very poor condition. Despite this, the group is determined to save the cottage and restore it to its former glory, as well as installing static displays detailing the heritage of the cottage and the entire forest area, which is rich in history.

With the assistance of Kathy Jones, Regional Manager with the Forestry Corporation of New South Wales, a permit has been prepared offering the group permission to restore the Coopernook cottage. The group

currently has approximately 50 members who are extremely keen to undertake the works, led by Bob Smith, Dallas Willis and Geoff and Daniel Leonard. The task before them is great but clearly they have the determination and preparedness for hard work to ensure that the cottage can be transferred and again hold pride of place alongside the Coopernook Forest Park. Congratulations to the Coopernook and Lansdowne Forest History Group on undertaking this project for the benefit of the community and future generations.

MIRANDA ELECTORATE LOCAL ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS

Mr BARRY COLLIER (Miranda) [6.51 p.m.]: Last Friday, during NSW Seniors Week, I had the honour of presenting the 2014 Local Achievement Awards to eight extraordinary seniors during a reception at my Miranda electorate office. These awards were the Miranda people's way of saying thank you to these seniors for their continuing enthusiasm and outstanding commitment to our Sutherland shire community over many years. Award recipients were: Barbara Anderson, nominated by Thomas Holt Village; Robert Bayles, nominated by GyMEA Probus and Sutherland Rotary; John Hoppitt, nominated by Sutherland Shire Philatelic Society; Maurie Keane, nominated by the former member for Menai, Alison Megarrity; Colin Russell, nominated by Port Hacking Lapidary Club; Janet Stirling, nominated by Sutherland Shire Community Services; Lorna Stone, nominated by Sylvania Rotary Club; and Jan Taylor, nominated by the Australian Plants Society. I ask the House to join me in acknowledging the outstanding work and contribution of these amazing seniors to the shire community and to our society at large.

ALBURY ELECTORATE COMMUNITY ACHIEVEMENTS

Mr GREG APLIN (Albury) [6.52 p.m.]: Congratulations to the rescue team and auxiliary members of the Corowa Rescue Squad, Alan Robb, Jim Walliss and Peter Wright on 35 years of service and Shayne van der Heide for 25 years. A special awards dinner function was organised to recognise these volunteers for their outstanding work and many years of service to the region. The career of inspirational teacher, Judy Morison, was celebrated at a retirement dinner in Henty by former students and colleagues. Judy has retired after spending the past 25 years at Henty Public School and I wish her all the best in her retirement.

Well done to Rachel Burns and her staff at Albury hair salon Harrington Hair, who won the New South Wales-Australian Capital Territory Business of the Year at the inaugural Australian Hair Industry Awards held in Brisbane. Congratulations, that is an amazing feat given they were up against top city salons. Congratulations to Bob Parr and Corowa residents on assisting troops from the Parachute Training School who were blown off course during unexpected abnormal weather conditions in Corowa. Bob was presented with a certificate of appreciation for assisting an injured soldier until help arrived.

ENDEAVOUR SPORTS HIGH SCHOOL SPECIAL KIDS WITH A DISABILITY

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Parliamentary Secretary) [6.53 p.m.]: On 17 March I visited Endeavour Sports High School Special Education Unit and Endeavour Special Kids with a Disability, known as SKWAD, with the Minister for Disability Services, and the former Endeavour Parents and Citizens president, the member for Heathcote. We were welcomed by school principal Dale Palmer, the head of the Special Education Unit, Brenda Pyett, her staff and Endeavour Special Kids with a Disability parents, including president Patrick Feeney and treasurer Paul Hickey, who do great work.

Special Kids with a Disability supports a junior cohort through providing interactive smartboards, classroom computers and special education buses and supporting talented athletes in their representative capacity. Special Kids with a Disability also supports a senior cohort through the provision of a class set of iPads and the synchronising of a locked trolley, interactive smartboards, class computers, Red Reading Box, a Tutor Systems Reading Program and, most importantly, funding for the Supported Work Program. I congratulate Special Kids with a Disability on its hard work and support for special needs students at Endeavour.

ZONTA CLUB OF NORTHERN BEACHES

Mr ROB STOKES (Pittwater—Parliamentary Secretary) [6.54 p.m.]: Today I draw the attention of the House to the outstanding work of the Zonta Club of Northern Beaches. This remarkable and inspiring group of women from a diversity of backgrounds and professions provide a fantastic example of the contribution that grassroots community groups can provide on a local and global scale. Since 1975 the Zonta Club of Northern Beaches has been actively involved in a range of enormously important initiatives, from fundraising for improved women's educational opportunities through to the assembly of birthing kits for women in developing nations.

Earlier this month I was delighted to participate in the group's annual Pittwater International Women's Day Breakfast which honours the outstanding contribution and achievements of local women and raises much-needed funds to further the group's endeavours. I acknowledge the ongoing efforts of club president Dr Yvonne Blount, along with Ann Asker, Evelyn Whittaker and Trisha Haines and all the other Zontans for their unfailing passion and commitment towards this enormously worthwhile movement.

HELEN AND RON HERBERT, NEWCASTLE HOSPITAL VOLUNTEERS

Ms SONIA HORNERY (Wallsend) [6.55 p.m.]: Anyone who has been a hospital patient knows the crucial role that volunteers play in making their stay easier. I am proud to commend Edgeworth couple Helen and Ron Herbert for their long and dedicated service to Newcastle's hospitals, particularly the John Hunter Hospital. Mrs Herbert has been a hospital volunteer for 25 years and Mr Herbert for eight years. At the John Hunter Hospital alone, volunteers last year gave about 40,000 hours of their time. I sincerely thank Mr and Mrs Herbert for making life better for those who are being treated in hospital.

ST JOSEPH'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL JOEYS FOR JUSTICE

Mr JOHN FLOWERS (Rockdale) [6.55 p.m.]: Congratulations to the pupils at St Joseph's Primary School at Rockdale who are learning the values of empathy and charity through the Joeys for Justice program. The current group, comprising pupils from years 3 to 6, has 50 students who give up their lunch hour one day a week to organise social justice activities. One of their lessons in compassion involves participation in a modified version of the annual Vinnies sleep out for the homeless. The program gives them a greater understanding of current events in the world and makes problems such as homelessness more real to them. Well done, St Joseph's Rockdale.

SOPHIA WAKELING, YMCA YOUTH PARLIAMENT REPRESENTATIVE

Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Hawkesbury—Parliamentary Secretary) [6.56 p.m.]: I commend Sophia Wakeling, a year 10 student who will be representing the Hawkesbury electorate in the YMCA Youth Parliament to be held in this Chamber. At last year's youth parliament she was elected deputy premier. I wish the participants in the YMCA Youth Parliament a successful and enjoyable event. Sophia is also a member of The Hills Relay for Life committee for 2014 and has contributed to its fundraising efforts. She is also a very accomplished public speaker and competed at the State finals of the Rostrum Voice of Youth Competition. I have no doubt that Sophia is a very worthy recipient and a great ambassador for the Hawkesbury at the YMCA Youth Parliament.

CANOBOLAS RURAL TECHNOLOGY HIGH SCHOOL NATIONAL DAY OF ACTION AGAINST BULLYING AND VIOLENCE

Mr ANDREW GEE (Orange) [6.56 p.m.]: More than 900 Canobolas Rural Technology High School students united yesterday in the fight against bullying on the National Day of Action against Bullying and Violence. The theme, Taking a Stand Together Against Bullying and Violence, was implemented by school Welfare Coordinator Gabriel Lindsay. I congratulate Principal Chad Bliss, Deputy Principals Kate Wootten and Stuart Riles and the students of Canobolas high school for participating. A group of anti-bullying ambassadors were appointed on the day. I make particular mention of students Zali Pettit, Rebecca Blandford, Rheiss Kasjan and Jess Whan for their participation in this event. Canobolas Rural Technology High School is a real go-ahead school. I congratulate everyone involved on this initiative, one of many at this great high school.

BOSSLEY PARK HIGH SCHOOL DIGITAL DETOX CAMPAIGN

Mr ANDREW ROHAN (Smithfield) [6.57 p.m.]: On 21 March 2014 I was honoured to attend the launch of the Digital Detox campaign at Bossley Park High School in my electorate of Smithfield. The campaign raises awareness of cyber bullying affecting young persons by requiring participants to take a break, or detox, from their digital social networks for 48 hours. A workshop was conducted where more than 100 students participated. Scenarios were provided whereby students discussed how they would react to each situation. This was followed by a screening of a short film titled *Best Enemies*, written and directed by Ross Bark, which gave an intimate account of how two best school friends became best enemies due to bullying. I commend the work of the Bully Zero Australian Foundation, the Best Enemies Education organisation and Bossley Park High School, especially the principal, Michelle Wood, for providing the venue for this campaign.

FAIRFIELD CITY COUNCIL COMMUNITY AWARDS

Mr GUY ZANGARI (Fairfield) [6.58 p.m.]: On 23 January 2014 it was a pleasure to attend Fairfield City Council's Community Awards and Citizenship Ceremony. Members throughout the local community were acknowledged and commended on the evening for their outstanding contributions throughout Fairfield over the years. I personally extend a great big thank you and congratulations to the following recipients of awards on the evening for their contribution over the past year: Mr Sam Salemi, Citizen of the Year; Mr Basim Shamaon, Young Citizen of the Year; Mr Stefan Pupovac, Sports Achiever of the Year; and Mr Peter Moore, Volunteer of the Year. Appreciation certificates were awarded to: Susan Fedoryschyn, Warren Gaffney, Jo-Anne King, Christopher Fitzpatrick, Mary Jammo and Sina Nou. Last but not least, the recipients of Achievement Medallions were Mr Dean Audicho, Mr Matthew Foster, Mr Albert Mooshi and Mr Matthew Dobrincic.

RAMON U'BRIEN LOCAL ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

Mrs ROZA SAGE (Blue Mountains) [6.59 p.m.]: Ramon U'Brien has made a huge contribution to the wellbeing of the Blue Mountains community as a founding member of the Lower Mountains Men's Shed—now known as the Nepean Men's Shed. It is a shame Blue Mountains City Council was unable to assist with locating a new venue for the group. The group is not only a great outlet for the members who have the opportunity to make new connections in their community but the members also get out and help their community through various projects. It is through Ramon's commitment that this group was founded and has now grown out of its original home. Ramon is a truly worthy recipient of the Seniors Week Local Achievement Award with which I presented him this week.

LEBANESE COMMUNITY COUNCIL HARMONY DAY

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) [6.59 p.m.]: I was delighted to join the Lebanese Community Council last Friday for its national Harmony Day barbecue at its offices in Bankstown. I take this opportunity to acknowledge the efforts of the Lebanese Community Council in coordinating very strong community and stakeholder relations across the Australian-Lebanese community and for its efforts in supporting the local and Australian-Lebanese community. I take this opportunity to acknowledge the chairperson, Councillor Ali Karnib; the executive, staff and volunteers of the Lebanese Community Council and thank them for their kind hospitality on the evening. I take this opportunity to acknowledge the Hon. Shaoquett Moselmane, who was also in attendance and supported the event.

KAREN OWEN, AUSTRALIAN POLICE MEDAL

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) [7.00 p.m.]: I inform the House that Karen Owen from Killawarra in the Manning River Valley has received an Australian Police Medal for her 32 years of distinguished service. For the past 30 years Karen has dedicated herself to the NSW Mounted Police and has achieved recognition both in Australia and internationally for her passion and experience. Karen was the second female to join the NSW Mounted Police, which was a male-dominated unit and the oldest continuous mounted police force in the world. In 1997 Karen became the first female officer to attain the rank of sergeant in the 185-year history of the NSW Mounted Police unit. In 2012, together with 19 other officers, Karen travelled to London to perform at the Queens Diamond Jubilee Pageant.

THE OAKS PUBLIC SCHOOL HARMONY DAY

Mr JAI ROWELL (Wollondilly) [7.00 p.m.]: The Oaks Public School was a sea of orange last Friday as the school celebrated national Harmony Day. The festivities of national Harmony Day were to promote cultural tolerance and educate the students of a rural school on cultural diversity. The day was organised by year 1 teacher Roz Stevenson whose efforts to encourage multiculturalism have been imperative to the program's success. I congratulate Roz Stevenson and The Oaks Public School on a fantastic day and great work.

NORTHCONNEX MOTORWAY

Mr JONATHAN O'DEA (Davidson) [7.01 p.m.]: I welcome the recent formal announcement on the much-needed NorthConnex. Construction of NorthConnex is great news for the movement of traffic in and around Sydney. It meets a strategic need in completing a motorway-grade bypass of Sydney. There are 40 sets of lights on the Pacific Highway from the M1 ramp to the Sydney Harbour Bridge. Where possible, motorists should use NorthConnex to avoid these lights, just as they should avoid the 21 lights at Pennant Hills Road to the city. The project should particularly benefit Davidson electorate residents through reduced traffic on the Pacific Highway along the North Shore, with reduced noise and other pollution for those living nearby.

GLEN INNES RED CROSS CENTENARY BALL

Mr ADAM MARSHALL (Northern Tablelands) [7.01 p.m.]: I congratulate the Glen Innes Red Cross Centenary Ball Committee on staging a wonderful celebratory event at the Town Hall last Saturday night. *The Great Gatsby* theme was embraced with gusto by the 220-strong capacity crowd, making it a fun and memorable evening. Congratulations to Glen Innes Red Cross president Margaret Lamph and ball committee members Leonie Hawkins, Jo Cameron, Val Lennon, Anna Bower, Natalie Pettit, Julie Adams and Catie Macanch. Their attention to detail was impressive. From the table dressings to catering, entertainment, the auction and refreshments, no-one was left wanting or waiting. The support provided by local businesses and the community was fantastic. Well done, Glen Innes Red Cross.

PAUL RAYNER, EMERGENCY SERVICE VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR

Mrs LESLIE WILLIAMS (Port Macquarie) [7.02 p.m.]: The Port Macquarie Rotary Club recently named Paul Rayner as the Emergency Service Volunteer of the year for 2014. Paul was nominated by the Mid North Coast branch of the Surf Life Saving Association. He is the current chief training officer of Port Macquarie Surf Life Saving Club and has an outstanding record in surf lifesaving. In 2013 he completed 105 voluntary patrol hours in addition to the time he already spent training members, assessing water safety, fundraising, holding surf meetings and conferences, plus emergency surf rescue callouts. This amounts to over 400 voluntary hours last year alone. Following his 2007 male Lifesaver of the Year award, I congratulate Paul Rayner on winning the inaugural Emergency Service Volunteer Award 2014.

CRONULLA SHARK ISLAND SWIM

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla—Parliamentary Secretary) [7.03 p.m.]: I congratulate the Cronulla Surf Life Saving Club, which has been holding the annual Cronulla Shark Island Swim Challenge since 1987 and conducted another successful swim on the weekend. Two events were held, the first being a swim of approximately 2.3 kilometres and the second a one-kilometre swim. Jesse Goodyear, aged 14, became the youngest swimmer to win the 2.3 kilometres swim, in 28 minutes and 24 seconds. Second was Cronulla's Mark Simpson, who swam the distance in 28 minutes and 43 seconds, and Elouera's Jake Little was a close third. The first placed woman was Taylar Puscaric, who has won the women's division for the fourth consecutive year. The race was held in perfect conditions, with a total of 709 swimmers competing in the main race and the earlier one-kilometre swim.

BYRON GROUP MANUFACTURING PLANT

Mr ANDREW ROHAN (Smithfield) [7.03 p.m.]: On 13 February 2014 I accompanied the Premier, the Hon. Barry O'Farrell, to the opening of the Byron Group's new 18,000 square metre multipurpose manufacturing plant in Smithfield, which consolidates the company's six divisions into the one location employing more than 200 people. The company manufactures and supplies specialist components to high-tech ambulances, correctional services, vans and aged-care transport vehicles, as well as hardware and software technologies for satellite communication systems to both the domestic and export markets. Despite the currently precarious state of manufacturing, the Byron Group is thriving due to its high-tech innovation and vision to fill market needs for specialised vehicles. Congratulations to Bill Pike, Chief Executive Office of the Byron Group, and Mark Richardson, Managing Director and Founder of Wolseley Private Equity, on their phenomenal success.

BILL BAGNALL, PORT STEPHENS FIREFIGHTER

Ms SONIA HORNER (Wallsend) [7.04 p.m.]: Emergency services are the backbone of our community and I acknowledge and thank 71-year-old Bill Bagnall for his 40 years of service as a retained firefighter with Fire and Rescue NSW in Port Stephens. Bill's first bushfire callout was at Corlette about a year before Darwin's Cyclone Tracy. Bill's biggest jobs included a bushfire in the 1980s that stretched from Taylors Beach to Fingal Bay and a big blaze west of Cessnock in the 1990s. I thank Bill for his service and wish him all the best for his well-earned retirement.

Community recognition statements concluded.

**The House adjourned, pursuant to standing and sessional orders, at 7.05 p.m. until
Wednesday 26 March 2014 at 10.00 a.m.**
