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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Tuesday 6 May 2014

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

The Speaker read the Prayer and acknowledgement of country.

MINISTRY

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: On behalf of the Premier, I inform this House that on 17 April 2014 the Hon. Barry Robert O'Farrell submitted his resignation as Premier to Her Excellency the Governor. Her Excellency then commissioned the Hon. Michael Bruce Baird to form a new Ministry. On the same day, Michael Bruce Baird was sworn as a member of the Executive Council and as Premier, Andrew John Stoner was sworn as a member of the Executive Council and as Deputy Premier, Gladys Berejiklian was sworn as a member of the Executive Council and as Minister for Transport, and Adrian Piccoli was sworn as a member of the Executive Council and as Minister for Education. On 23 April 2014 Michael Bruce Baird was also sworn as Minister for Infrastructure, and Minister for Western Sydney, and 21 other members were appointed by Her Excellency the Governor as members of the Executive Council and/or to the certain offices indicated.

The Hon. Andrew John Stoner, MP
Minister for Trade and Investment, Minister for Regional Infrastructure and Services, Minister for Tourism and Major Events,
Minister for Small Business, and Minister for the North Coast

The Hon. Gladys Berejiklian, MP
Minister for the Hunter

The Hon. Michael Joseph Gallacher, MLC
Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Minister for Industrial Relations, Minister for the Central Coast, and Vice-President
of the Executive Council

The Hon. Duncan John Gay, MLC
Minister for Roads and Freight

The Hon. Anthony John Roberts, MP
Minister for Resources and Energy, and Special Minister of State

The Hon. Jillian Gell Skinner, MP
Minister for Health, and Minister for Medical Research

The Hon. Andrew James Constance, MP
Treasurer

The Hon. Prudence Jane Goward, MP
Minister for Planning, and Minister for Women

The Hon. Bradley Ronald Hazzard, MP
Attorney General, and Minister for Justice

The Hon. Gabrielle Cecelia Upton, MP
Minister for Family and Community Services

The Hon. Katrina Ann Hodgkinson, MP
Minister for Primary Industries, and Assistant Minister for Tourism and Major Events

The Hon. Kevin John Humphries, MP
Minister for Natural Resources, Lands and Water, and Minister for Western NSW

The Hon. John George Ajaka, MLC
Minister for Ageing, Minister for Disability Services, and Minister for the Illawarra

The Hon. Stuart Laurence Ayres, MP
Minister for Fair Trading, Minister for Sport and Recreation, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Western Sydney

The Hon. Victor Michael Dominello, MP
Minister for Citizenship and Communities, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Minister for Veterans Affairs, and Assistant Minister for Education

The Hon. Robert Gordon Stokes, MP
Minister for the Environment, Minister for Heritage, and Assistant Minister for Planning

The Hon. Troy Wayne Grant, MP
Minister for Hospitality, Gaming and Racing, and Minister for the Arts

The Hon. Dominic Francis Perrottet, MP
Minister for Finance and Services

The Hon. Paul Lawrence Toole, MP
Minister for Local Government

The Hon. Jai Travers Rowell, MP
Minister for Mental Health, and Assistant Minister for Health.

REPRESENTATION OF MINISTERS IN THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: On behalf of the Premier, it gives me great pleasure to inform the House also of the representation of Legislative Council Ministers in the Legislative Assembly as follows:

The Minister for Transport representing the Minister for Roads and Freight.

The Minister for Family and Community Services representing the Minister for Ageing, Minister for Disability Services, and Minister for the Illawarra.

PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARIES

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: On behalf of the Premier, I inform the House also that on 6 May 2014 the following 13 members were appointed as Parliamentary Secretaries:

Mr Giovanni Domenic Barilaro, MP
Parliamentary Secretary for Small Business and Regional Development

Mr Craig Asbjorn Baumann, MP
Parliamentary Secretary for Regional Planning

The Hon. David Clarke, MLC
Parliamentary Secretary for Justice

The Hon. Catherine Eileen Cusack, MLC
Parliamentary Secretary for Tertiary Education and Skills

Mr David Andrew Elliott, MP
Parliamentary Secretary to the Premier for Youth, Homelessness and the Centenary of ANZAC

Mr Matthew John Kean, MP
Parliamentary Secretary for Communities

The Hon. Charlie John Stuart Lynn, MLC
Parliamentary Secretary for Veterans Affairs

Mr Daryl William Maguire, MP
Parliamentary Secretary to the Premier for Rural and Regional Affairs

The Hon. Melinda Jane Pavey, MLC
Parliamentary Secretary for Regional and Rural Health

Mr Geoffrey Keith Provest, MP
Parliamentary Secretary for Police and Emergency Services

Mr Mark Raymond Speakman, MP
Parliamentary Secretary for Treasury

Mrs Leslie Gladys Williams, MP
Parliamentary Secretary for Renewable Energy

Mr Raymond Craig Williams, MP
Parliamentary Secretary for Transport and Roads

GOVERNMENT WHIP AND DEPUTY GOVERNMENT WHIP

Mr ANTHONY ROBERTS: On behalf of the Premier, I inform the House also of my appointment on 23 April 2014 as Leader of the House, and the election on 6 May 2014 of Andrew Stuart Cornwell as Government Whip and of Gareth James Ward as Deputy Government Whip.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**Notices of Motions**

General Business Notices of Motions (General Notices) given.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS**VAUCLUSE ELECTORATE ANZAC DAY SERVICES**

Ms GABRIELLE UPTON (Vaucluse—Minister for Family and Community Services) [12.12 p.m.]: I was honoured to take part in four local services in my electorate of Vaucluse to commemorate Anzac Day 2014. Anzac Day is a time for us all to pause and reflect on the sacrifice and courage of the men and women who have served, and those who are still serving, our nation in war and in peace. We mark this important day—the anniversary of the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps' first landing on the Gallipoli Peninsula in 1915. This was a significant episode in our history, a baptism of fire for our proud young country and also for our New Zealand brothers and sisters. At each of the local services I attended for Anzac Day 2014 I was joined by members of the Vaucluse community of all ages and backgrounds, including veterans and serving members of the Australian Defence Force, who in large numbers this year joined with us to honour our proud Anzac tradition.

On Sunday 13 February, ahead of Anzac Day, I attended the annual commemorative walk hosted by Rose Bay RSL sub-branch in my electorate of Vaucluse. I extend warm congratulations to Rosemary Stockley, secretary of the sub-branch, on organising this event yet again. Although the weather prevented our usual parade along New South Head Road to Rose Bay War Memorial, the commemoration was no less moving a tribute. At the commemoration I was joined by the Federal member for Wentworth, the Hon. Malcolm Turnbull, and Woollahra Mayor, Toni Zeltzer. The Pipes and Drums Band from Scots College added a wonderfully stirring musical dimension to the commemoration, as it does each year.

On Anzac Day itself I joined around 3,000 people gathered at the North Bondi War Memorial at the base of North Bondi RSL for the club's dawn service. On an unusually temperate autumn dawn the crowd turned out in force to take part in the service, just steps from the shoreline of Bondi Beach, a fitting symbol for those who gathered at the first landing on Gallipoli Peninsula 99 years ago this year. We gathered close to the beach to remember our brothers and sisters who made the ultimate sacrifice for all of us. Again I was joined by the Federal member for Wentworth and Waverley councillors Angela Burrill and Leon Goltsman. The service was ably led by the club's president, Robert De Graaf. It was an honour and so very stirring to be among the crowd that morning to remember those who have served and those who continue to serve.

Later that morning I attended Waverley Council's Anzac Day Commemorative Service at the Cenotaph in Waverley Park with the member for Coogee, Bruce Notley-Smith. By that stage the rain was pouring down heavily but this did not impact the solemnity and dignity of the occasion. Following the service I attended a wreath-laying service at Double Bay War Memorial at Steyne Park. This is the first time that such a service has been held and it was hosted by Double Bay ward Woollahra councillors. It was a small and intimate gathering. I was proud to see the repairs and new concrete kerbing on display that recently had been made possible by the New South Wales Community War Memorials Fund.

As the member for Vaucluse, I thank North Bondi RSL sub-branch, Waverley Council, Woollahra Council and Rose Bay RSL sub-branch for extending invitations to me and for organising such fitting commemorations for the community to take part in. We had cause to remember so much that day, including the brave sacrifices that were made for the peace and safety of our whole community. Finally, I look forward to attending the Russian branch of the New South Wales Association of Jewish Ex-Servicemen and Women Memorial Service for Victory Day this Friday 9 May at the Waverley Park Cenotaph to commemorate the sixty-eighth anniversary of the victory in World War II. This service is jointly hosted by the Russian branch, Waverley Council, the Russian-speaking association and the Russian weekly newspaper *Horizon*. Lest We Forget. I commend my private member's statement to the House.

TRIBUTE TO MARLENE SEWELL

Mr RICHARD AMERY (Mount Druitt) [12.16 p.m.]: I ask the House to note with great sadness the passing of Mrs Marlene Sewell of Cawarra Street, Eastern Creek. Marlene passed away last week in the palliative care ward of Mount Druitt Hospital, a hospital for which she had worked so hard over many years and raised thousands of dollars over a long time. I have been a member of Parliament for many years and I cannot recall a time when Marlene Sewell, her husband, Steve, and family were not involved in some community benefit or cause. I have enjoyed much support from Marlene and her family and it was with sadness that in what seemed a relatively brief period of time we learned of Marlene's sickness and passing during the recent parliamentary recess over the Easter holiday period.

In the few minutes allowed for a private member's statement it is not possible to mention all the roles that Marlene has played or causes she has been involved in over a number of decades. Among her collection of tributes are awards from Blacktown City Council and certificates for community services from the Western Area Health Service, Mount Druitt Hospital and the former hospital archdiocese council. She has also received acknowledgement from the Lupus Association, Eastern Creek Public School and Sacred Heart Primary School at Mount Druitt, to name just a few. In the past couple of years, although her health may not have been the best, Marlene would often ring my office after reading in the local newspaper of petitions being circulated to lobby for lifts at Rooty Hill railway station or to prevent the closure of the cardiac ward at Mount Druitt Hospital.

Marlene would just grab a handful of petition forms and visit the local shops and talk to people in the street, seeking signatures and support for the cause. Her personal support of me, members of my family and the local branch of the Labor Party, especially at election time, was always forthcoming. One never had to ask; Marlene would just call or turn up. She was an incredibly loyal person, dedicated to the area in which she raised her family. On the subject of family, it should be noted that the time Marlene Sewell put into her local community was not because she lived alone or because she had plenty of time on her hands; quite the contrary. Marlene's family was the focus of all her time.

For example, over many years, Marlene could be seen raising funds or donating items to various organisations. In nearly every case when she was seen or photographed it seemed her husband, Steve, or one or more of her children or grandchildren was by her side. In other words, community support was a family affair for Marlene. On this sad day, as the funeral is being held at Pinegrove, just across the road from her home, our hearts go out to Marlene's husband, Steve; and Marlene's children and in-laws: Darren and Louise, Wendy and Suzanne. Marlene is a grandmother to Kristy, Julia, Jack, Thomas, Alex, Max and Samuel, and, despite her relatively young age, a great-grandmother to Brock.

Marlene Sewell is a well-respected and much-loved Australian who balanced raising and supporting a family with a self-driven desire to make the community where she lives a better place. My thoughts go out to not only the community, which has lost a proud supporter, but also the Sewell family, in particular Marlene's husband, Steve. Marlene married Steve in March 1964. They celebrated 50 years of marriage on 13 March 2014. They moved to the Eastern Creek-Rooty Hill area in 1973, and their presence was always felt, as I have indicated. I thank the Parliament for allowing me to mention the passing of Marlene Sewell and to record our great sadness. We all extend sympathy to her husband, Steve, and to all her children, grandchildren and extended family. Marlene Sewell will certainly be missed.

Mrs JILLIAN SKINNER (North Shore—Minister for Health, and Minister for Medical Research) [12.21 p.m.]: As the Minister for Health I thank the member for Mount Druitt for acknowledging the wonderful work of Marlene Sewell. I pass on my condolences to Steve and the rest of her family. Marlene, along with many others like her, was a wonderful contributor to the Blacktown Mount Druitt Hospital. I met them on many an occasion, whether they were raising funds or running services for the hospital to help patients and staff. It is a most wonderful community in terms of its contribution to the hospital. I thank the member for Mount Druitt for paying tribute to Marlene Sewell and join with him in extending my condolences to her family.

YOUNG PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES CARE FACILITIES

Mr LEE EVANS (Heathcote) [12.22 p.m.]: Today I raise the issue of the desperate need for retirement and aged care facilities for the young disabled not only in Heathcote but across New South Wales. As a member of the New South Wales Parliament, it has become glaringly obvious to me that we are heading for a crisis in the not too distant future. It was my great pleasure recently to join the Minister for Ageing and Minister for Disability Services, the Hon. John Ajaka, and the member for Cronulla at a new facility for young disabled

people at Caringbah. This facility represents a new way of approaching care for young disabled people. In the past the only option was to place these vibrant young adults in nursing homes, where they were surrounded by older residents who had nothing in common with them. These new one- and three-bedroom apartments are purpose-built for their needs. This raises a valid question about where future disability, retirement and aged-care facilities could and should be situated.

Recently a new aged-care facility opened in Engadine, a suburb in the Heathcote electorate. This is the first aged-care facility opened in Heathcote for decades. The existing centres are full to capacity and have extensive waiting lists. The new Moran facility is state of the art, with wide open areas and the convenience of being situated right in the centre of town. Using existing air space, the facility takes full advantage of its position in the centre of town. Following a conversation with an RSL club manager, I believe we might have an answer to the question I raised earlier. Clubs in New South Wales own 7 per cent of the total land mass of New South Wales and are situated in prime sites in every city, town and village in New South Wales. This raises a valid question about where future disability, retirement and aged-care facilities could and should be situated.

What if clubs were permitted and encouraged to develop disability, retirement and aged-care facilities using the air space above the club or the car park areas? This would mean sites most suitable for disability, retirement and aged-care facilities would immediately become available across New South Wales. Clubs are usually in the centre of town, right next to transport, cafes and restaurants and within easy walking distance of shopping and services, including doctors. This will have a two-pronged effect. I believe this simple idea could give New South Wales a decided advantage if we move swiftly.

The biggest issue I see is that people consider downsizing for retirement but then do not because they will have to move away from their local area, which they know and love and are familiar with. Churning house stock would be another added bonus as older people move from their three- or four-bedroom homes into convenient retirement living close to their friends and neighbours. This would open up opportunities for the renewal of entire suburbs, with young families moving in to take advantage of the services and schools already established within the suburb and begging for a new generation. This follows the backfill policy of councils and would make available sites in prime locations that would otherwise be wasted. We as a Government need to look forward, and think outside the square, to grasp or to create new opportunities.

Parents who are no longer able to care for their young disabled children are forced to place them in nursing homes. Although necessary, this is not the best outcome for any young person. The cost of land that is convenient and available for development in New South Wales is prohibitive. In most suburbs this makes the building of new disability, retirement or aged-care facilities almost impossible. That is why most facilities of this type are constructed on sites away from all amenities. We must consider what we will face over the next five to 10 years as baby boomers move into retirement. The amount of accommodation currently available is less than the demand and urgent action needs to be taken on this front. Let us start the conversation about this today.

The SPEAKER: I call the member for Bathurst and congratulate him on his recent elevation to Minister for Local Government.

BATHURST ELECTORATE COMMUNITY SERVICES

Mr PAUL TOOLE (Bathurst—Minister for Local Government) [12.27 p.m.]: I thank Madam Speaker for her kind introduction. It gives me great pleasure to be back here in this House after a short break. I highlight today a number of different projects occurring in my electorate. These important projects are supporting those people who are most vulnerable. I am pleased that we on this side of the House are recognising the importance of supporting those people by making an investment in communities across New South Wales. The two projects I wish to speak about today are a group home for people with disability, and community transport. Last Friday the Minister for Disability Services came to Bathurst. We visited a new facility at 303 Durham Street, which is almost completed. This is a five-bedroom home that will be used by people with disability in Bathurst. Residents are one step closer to moving into a fantastic multipurpose home. The beauty of this home is that it will assist these clients every day in their lifestyle and allow them to do things that we take for granted such as watching television or cooking. These people will now be given the opportunity to live in this group home. It will have a big impact on their lives and the way in which they live.

The important thing is to recognise that these people with a disability need to be treated with respect and dignity. This new \$1.8 million home is part of the New South Wales Government's commitment to provide

new contemporary housing for people with disability in my electorate. These people have lived most of their lives at the Riverside large residential centre in Orange. This building is one of 10 that are going to be constructed in Bathurst and Orange. This is the second home to be completed in Bathurst. Residents will start moving in on 26 May. Another facility will begin operating towards the end of next month as well. We will see about 50 people in my electorate moving into this group housing. These facilities will allow people with disability to live independently and offer them greater flexibility. It allows people the opportunity to participate in their local community. They are now a part of the local community. They have neighbours. They have a fantastic backyard. I know from visiting that the residents who will be moving into the home shortly are already very excited.

One resident ran to show me the room he was going to be moving into. He had proudly chosen the colours for his room. Another resident called Michelle was so excited she could not stop following us on the tour through the house and thanked the Minister and me for the opportunity she had been given. Community transport is a valuable service to communities in New South Wales. Community transport provides a service for the aged, frail or disabled and their carers. An agreement with the Federal Government will see an 11 per cent increase in funding for community transport in my electorate.

The \$23,415 that Bathurst will receive for the community transport service will fund another 752 passenger journeys. Just down the road in Lithgow, \$27,462 has been allocated so that an additional 882 journeys can be undertaken. The community transport service allows people to live independently and to stay in their homes as long as possible by providing necessary transport. Community transport allows people to go to the shops, travel to medical appointments around the city and attend engagements and appointments. I thank the Minister for Transport for the work she has done in relation to securing this additional funding. These programs will benefit electorates throughout the State and the citizens we represent.

BANKSTOWN ELECTORATE ANZAC DAY SERVICES

BASS HIGH SCHOOL ANZAC COMMUNITY GARDEN

Ms TANIA MIHAILUK (Bankstown) [12.32 p.m.]: Today I will speak about recent Anzac Day commemorations held in the Bankstown community and the opening of the Anzac Community Garden at Bass High School. I have had the honour of attending several Anzac services in the Bankstown electorate, including the Bass Hill, Bankstown and Chester Hill RSL sub-branch services and the 25th Brigade Australian Imperial Force [AIF] Seventh Division service. During the week I had the pleasure of attending a number of Anzac services held at schools, including the opening of Bass High School's Anzac Community Garden, plaque dedication and Anzac Day service. The community garden was made possible through the efforts of the Bass High School parents and citizens association, which secured a grant under the Community Building Partnership program.

Three plaques will serve as a permanent commemoration of the invaluable contribution made by many dedicated local service men and women. The first plaque commemorates a fallen soldier and former student of Bass High School. Private Michael Muc attended Bass High School from 1959 to 1962. Private Muc was conscripted for national service during the Vietnam War where he was attached to the 4th Battalion, which also encompassed two New Zealand company groups. During the 4th Battalion's tour of Vietnam Private Muc was killed in an ambush whilst his battalion was engaged in Operation Hawkesbury against Vietcong main force units along the Phuoc Tuy province border. Nineteen soldiers from the 4th Battalion did not return home to their families. We can only imagine the pain, hurt and grief associated with that loss of a parent, partner, child or sibling.

Importantly, Private Michael Muc's plaque serves as a commemoration for the families who still suffer from the effects of war. The heartache is still felt by members of Private Muc's family, especially his siblings. Mr Ivan Tilmouth, a member of the Chester Hill RSL Sub-branch, fought with Private Muc in Vietnam. Mr Tilmouth championed the commemorative plaque at the school, as he and Private Muc were both former students of Bass High School. I take this opportunity to pay tribute to Private Muc's family, including his two brothers, Peter and Mick, and sister, Irene.

The opening of the garden was attended by members of the 7th Division, including Mr Dick Payten, OAM, and Mr Norm Ensor. Also in attendance were Ms Veronica Hehir; Mr Ralph Haneford, a member of the Bass Hill RSL Sub-branch; Mr Ivan Tilmouth and Bill Warren from Chester Hill RSL Sub-branch; Reverend Steven Miller; David Horton, Principal of Bass High School; and Ingrid Winter, community engagement officer. The Bass High School Anzac Community Garden commemorates the contribution of those who served in the 7th Division, Australian Imperial Force, from 1940 to 1944.

The second plaque is dedicated to the second Australian Imperial Force campaigns of World War II, which include Kokoda and Milne Bay, amongst others. It commemorates Victoria Cross recipients from the Second Australian Imperial Force campaigns, including Corporal Jim Gordon, Private Bruce Kingsbry and Private Richard Kelliher. Mr Dick Payten, OAM, President of the 7th Division AIF Association and a member of Bankstown Legacy, was recognised with a plaque in the community garden. Mr Payten served 17 months in New Guinea during World War II and has been a strong supporter of the initiative to construct the Anzac Community Garden.

The Anzac spirit has shaped the course of our national identity and is as relevant today as it was all those years ago. We are a society that values freedom, tolerance and a fair go. These are the ideals that our Anzacs fought for. The courage, determination and mateship that are pivotal to the Anzacs have grown to typify the characteristics of not only the Australian soldier but also the Australian spirit. Anzac Day is a day when we should pause and reflect on our country's past military feats and battles. All our soldiers deserve to be held in the highest esteem and with reverence and respect. I take this opportunity to once again thank Mr Dick Payten, OAM, Mr Ivan Tilmouth of Chester Hill RSL Sub-branch, Bass High School principal Mr David Horton, Ingrid Winter, the Muc family, and particularly Peter Muc who assisted me to prepare for this contribution. Lest we forget.

WHITE STONE CENTRE

Mr TONY ISSA (Granville) [12.37 p.m.]: Today I acknowledge the valuable work of the White Stone addiction recovery centre. The White Stone recovery centre is the first addiction recovery centre focused on the Eastern community in Australia. I recently had the pleasure of meeting the founder of the organisation and chairperson of the White Stone management committee, Sister Rose Therese Tannous. The Maronite Sisters of Australia have a proud history of managing schools and aged care facilities and helping the less fortunate members of the Lebanese community. Addiction affects many people regardless of race, religion, socio-economic background or level of education, and the Eastern Christian community is no different.

In 2012 White Stone was established to address the growing need for an addiction recovery service for the Eastern community. White Stone aims to provide a long-term residential addiction recovery centre that accommodates and treats victims of addiction. Currently there are no recovery centres catering for members of the Eastern community with addiction problems. White Stone's core services will cater to all forms of addiction: alcohol, drugs and gambling. When up and running the centre will focus on rehabilitation, education, prevention and reintegration.

Primarily it will cater for the needs of victims of addiction from Eastern cultures and non-English speaking backgrounds but it also will be open to all who meet the eligibility criteria. Its recovery methods will be similar to those in the Twelve Steps. The program includes a set of guiding principles and a course of action for recovery from addiction. While the Twelve Steps recovery program began as a method for treating alcoholism, it since has been adopted to address a wide range of substance abuse and dependency problems. It also employs therapeutic community treatment, which has been employed for about 40 years.

Unlike the Twelve Steps program, therapeutic communities are drug-free residential settings where residents progress through stages that reflect their increased levels of personal and social responsibility. Peer influence, mediated through group therapy, encourages individuals to learn and assimilate social norms and to develop more effective social skills. Eastern ethos, prayer and ministry are also employed by White Stone as methods to assist people to overcome their addiction issues. The name White Stone is built upon the word of God in Revelations 2:17, which states:

Whoever is victorious, I will give him a white stone, with a new name written on it, known only to the person who receives it...

In Roman courts the white stone was given as a sign of innocence to those who had been sentenced to death. Sister Rose Therese said to me, "This is what we hope for every person and family who lives in the prison of addiction, to receive the salvation of God and a new life." White Stone is committed to reconciling individuals with themselves and their history, reuniting families and re-engaging communities. White Stone is currently raising funds for the project. An estimated \$1.8 million is needed for land acquisition and construction of the addiction recovery centre. I encourage people to support this worthy cause.

I thank Minister Dominello for accompanying me when I presented a cheque to White Stone from the Community Building Partnership grants program. Minister Dominello, who is out and about every day in the community helping people, did not hesitate to support the organisation. I also thank Dr Geoff Lee, the member

for Parramatta, for lending his support. The Sisters are committed to providing this service not only to the Eastern and Lebanese communities but also to the wider community. Sister Rose-Therese Tannous said to me that their aim is to help every single person and family in need. I acknowledge the work White Stone has done so far and look forward to continuing to support the organisation. I commend White Stone for its great work.

BALLINA ELECTORATE ANZAC DAY SERVICES

Mr DONALD PAGE (Ballina) [12.42 p.m.]: On 25 April I, like other members of this House, attended Anzac Day services. I was impressed by the large turnout at the dawn service in Byron Bay and, later, the hundreds of people who lined the streets of Alstonville for the Anzac Day march. The large number of children present with their parents and grandparents was a great indication that the spirit of the Anzac continues to grow. Some 416,809 Australian men enlisted to serve in World War I, which equated to almost 40 per cent of the Australian male population at the time. Some 164,000 of those men were from New South Wales. They left their farms, their parents and in some cases their wives and children for the "adventure" of war.

In recent times I have researched the history of some of the young men from my area who enlisted and fought in World War I. One of those men was 20-year-old Paddy Bugden from Alstonville, who confided to his mother in a letter written the day before he was going into the firing line, "I have never done a deed that I am ashamed of so I fear nothing." Paddy died in September 1917 but not before showing outstanding bravery, including rescuing wounded men under intense shell and machine-gun fire. Private Bugden was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross, the highest award for acts of bravery.

I was touched by the story of 25-year-old Percy Lawrence Wilson from Byron Creek. He was a stoker on the submarine *AE1*, which sank without a trace on 14 September 1914 in St Georges Channel in the waters off Papua New Guinea. The submarine was part of a flotilla that was dispatched to seize the then German colony after the war broke out. The wreckage of the *AE1* has never been found. A Ballina minister also made the ultimate sacrifice after leaving his wife and three young children to serve as a chaplain on the Western Front. Captain David De Venny Hunter was 40 years old when he signed up in 1916. He comforted and buried many young soldiers before he was killed in 1917 on the same day as Paddy Bugden, VC.

World War I had an immense impact on regional areas such as the Northern Rivers. This always hits home to me as I look at honour boards when I attend functions in local halls at Newrybar, Tintenbar, Alstonville, Bangalow, Mullumbimby, Ballina, Byron Bay and other towns and villages in my electorate and I see the large numbers of fallen sons, fathers, brothers and cousins from rural communities. One in five men who enlisted to fight for Australia never came home. One of the lucky ones was Private Australia Rangy Jerome Clarke, who signed up in 1915 and was wounded twice but returned home to marry his sweetheart, Annie Wood, in Bangalow in 1919. The contributions that people like Private Clarke, Stoker Percy Wilson, Captain David Hunter and Paddy Bugden, VC, made to Australia's war effort have helped make this country the great nation it is today. Those left at home, including the wives and children, also suffered incredible hardship running family farms and eking out a living whilst their men were at war.

The outbreak of World War I saw several New South Wales parliamentarians also answer the call. They included Ted Larkin, who was the member for Willoughby in 1914. Larkin was an incredibly gifted sportsman and all-round good bloke. He and his brother signed up and were among the many soldiers who landed at Gallipoli on 25 April 1915, the first day of the campaign. A plaque on the wall of this Chamber in remembrance of Sergeant Larkin and Lieutenant George Braund recognises them as being the first legislators in Australia to sign up for the Great War but, as Peter FitzSimons pointed out, the plaque incorrectly states that Larkin died in action at the Dardanelles in May 1915. After being one of the first ashore, he in fact died together with his older brother Martin at Gallipoli on the first afternoon of the attack on 25 April.

Apparently, he did not die immediately when he was shot. When the stretcher bearers came to tend to him he told them to go and look after others who would be in greater need of medical attention. This was the measure of the man. Shortly afterwards, his blood drenching the Gallipoli soil, Sergeant Ted Larkin breathed his last breath. Before his unexpected resignation, former Premier Barry O'Farrell indicated he would have the mistake on the plaque rectified. I am pleased that new Premier Mike Baird has said he will honour this undertaking. Of the more than 400,000 men who enlisted in World War I, in excess of 60,000 were killed and 156,000 were wounded, gassed or taken prisoner. The stories of the bravery of the people who went to war from my electorate of Ballina are no different to those in other electorates. We must continue to commemorate our military heritage and the sacrifices of people like Paddy Bugden, VC, Ted Larkin and the thousands of others who had no idea of the impact their courage and bravery would have in shaping the wonderful country that Australia is today.

BATLOW CIDERFEST

Mr DARYL MAGUIRE (Wagga Wagga) [12.47 p.m.]: The RoadCider GorMay event, which is soon to take place in my electorate, has been fashioned by Aussies who are willing to learn from European tradition. The emphasis will be on cider tasting in the street, hence the term "RoadCider". Naturally enough, "GorMay" refers to the delicacies that will be served from a variety of stalls on 17 May, the third Saturday in May, in the small town of Batlow in Tumut shire nestled in the foothills of the Snowy Mountains. Live entertainment, plenty of seating and a festival atmosphere will feature in Batlow's main street. Free parking will be available throughout the town. According to organisers, the day's activities will not be targeted at children but at an older age group of patrons who are prepared to travel a couple of hours to sample Australia's best ciders, some of which have been made from Batlow apples.

There is no massive promotional campaign preceding this event, just word of mouth and a growing number of young people choosing to enjoy good company, fruity ciders and gourmet delicacies. Needless to say, because ciders and other alcohol will be available for tasting, designated drivers will also be catered for. Apple juices and coffee will be available throughout the day and no-one will be disappointed with the quality or quantity of foods on offer.

Since CiderFest was first introduced into the Tumut shire in 2012 Batlow entrepreneurs have created their own gourmet sausage. Affectionately known as Batlow's wurst or Batwurst, it will come into its own when discerning food lovers descend on the small town of Batlow for a day of socialising and cider tasting. Modelled on the traditional German sausage, Batwurst is sure to tantalise the tastebuds of even the most discerning foodie. Organisers are thrilled that supplies will be plentiful on a day when gourmet foods will be in big demand.

Wacky Apple Tarts and Wacky Cider Lovers, who in the past have played host to visitors from around the State and the Australian Capital Territory, once again will be dancing in the street and enjoying the fun of dress ups, which have already made their mark on one of Tumut shire's newest festivals. Bavarian beer wenches have provided the prototype outfit for Batlow's Wacky Apple Tarts and traditional German lederhosen have morphed into the bib and brace for Australia's Wacky Cider Lovers. Locals and visitors alike are being invited to get into the swing of things by digging out the petticoats and pinafores or the sock tops and homburgs, to "tart up the town" and replicate autumn's magnificent colours and energised atmosphere.

A trip to Batlow for the annual cider festival is not being hailed as a once-in-a-lifetime activity, nor is it rated among the extreme things we should do before we die, but organisers promise that no-one will regret giving it a go. Careful planning has been underway since May last year to ensure that this year's street festival is just as much fun as last year's. On 17 May visitors to the town will be able to sample a variety of apple, pear and other ciders and to enjoy all manner of edible delights while they are lavished with fabulous country hospitality. What more could be offered? Anyone needing information about the Batlow CiderFest will find it on Facebook or by visiting www.batlowciderfest.com.au. Information can also be obtained by emailing one of the organisers, Harold Tietze.

The Batlow CiderFest is a marvellous event that was established in 2012 by community members who were determined to boost the local economy and to promote the wonderful local produce. I have spoken in this place before about Batlow, which is in the Tumut shire, and its fantastic apple-based industry. The cider produced there is being exported throughout the world. The festival has been a phenomenal success and I have had the great honour of opening it on two successive occasions. A conference involving delegates from around the world is held the day before the festival. Guest speakers are invited to address those involved in the industry, but it is also an important event for the wider community. I congratulate all those involved and encourage everyone to visit Batlow and to enjoy the wonderful hospitality that it offers.

PORT OF NEWCASTLE LEASE AND HUNTER REGION FUNDING

Mr GREG PIPER (Lake Macquarie) [12.52 p.m.]: I look forward to visiting Tumbarumba and Batlow, and checking out all the apple tarts. The member for Wagga Wagga's contribution is hard to beat. However, I draw the attention of the House to the campaign fast gathering momentum in the Hunter for a larger slice of the proceeds of the 98-year lease of the Port of Newcastle to be directed to the region in light of the unexpectedly high price achieved for this significant public asset. I do not subscribe to the naïve notion that all money raised from the sale of a public asset in my area—or any other area for that matter—should be spent entirely in that area. That is not how fair and equitable government is delivered. However, when the asset is so significant and its value so intrinsically linked to the energy, efforts and enterprise of local people then a strong case can be made for a fair share being returned to the region in which the asset has been established.

When the Government announced the sale of the port in last year's budget it believed a fair return to Newcastle would be about half of what was then projected to be a sale price of about \$700 million. It promised to direct that portion—\$350 million—to the simultaneously announced Newcastle inner-city light rail project. Following this logic, it is reasonable that at least half of the \$1.75 billion that was received for the port be directed back into the Hunter region. The growing chorus of voices calling for a bigger portion of the sale proceeds to be returned includes political and business leaders of all colours, and they are backed by strong support from the communities they represent. Local mayors and members of Parliament from all sides of politics, the Hunter Business Chamber, the NSW Minerals Council, Regional Development Australia and other prominent people and organisations are all on record as saying that they believe the Hunter deserves a greater share of the proceeds.

I am buoyed by the Premier's comments that the people of the Hunter should "watch this space for further initiatives in this region". Taking in good faith his intention to redirect more funds to Hunter projects, I will suggest a few worthy examples. The Lake Macquarie Transport Interchange at Glendale is a key piece of regional infrastructure. The site sits just outside my electorate, in the electorate of Wallsend, but it would be of immense benefit not only to the people of Lake Macquarie but also to businesses and commuters throughout the region. This proposal ticks all the boxes as a well-supported infrastructure project that will deliver positive spin-offs for the entire region and should be the first item considered for additional funding. Hunter councils unanimously support this project as the region's most important transport priority and politicians on both sides of this House also support it.

The delivery of the interchange and the Pennant Street bridge will ensure that this area—the geographical heart of the lower Hunter and a major employment hub—can maximise its potential to provide housing and employment into the future. I acknowledge the \$15 million that the State Government has already committed, but another significant injection of funds is needed to make the vision a reality. Assisting Hunter Water Corporation to bring sewer infrastructure to Wyee in my electorate and other long-suffering communities throughout the region would deliver social, environmental and economic benefits. In the case of Wyee, it would ensure additional residential growth in a strategic location earmarked for urban growth. Funds could also be used to top up the shortfall in delivering the promise made by the former Minister for Police and Emergency Services to construct new police stations at Toronto and Morisset rather than the renovations we are now being asked to accept because of a cost blowout on the planned new headquarters at Belmont.

More funds to expedite the systematic upgrade of Main Road 217 is another worthy project that would have advantages for residents and businesses that rely on this busy strategic thoroughfare linking the M1 Motorway and the Newcastle Link Road at Wallsend. Projects such as the completion of the Newcastle Inner City Bypass and the rail overpass at Scone would help to strengthen the region in readiness for future transitions in our economy. It is important that funds are well spent and in a way that addresses historic shortfalls and builds economic capacity and resilience. I therefore believe that the cash reserves from the port lease should be committed to a trust fund to be spent on infrastructure and other important projects across the region.

The Hunter Infrastructure and Investment Fund is the sort of vehicle I envisage but with a wider scope to take in not only projects that may be popular with the electorate but also the less fashionable projects that demand attention from a social equity point of view. The Government has done well out of the lease and I congratulate the Premier on maximising the return beyond expectation. This result provides the capacity to do great things for the Hunter that will benefit locals and the State. I implore the Premier and the new Treasurer to accede to the collective request of the Hunter community for a fair share of the port lease windfall.

MINTO INTERFACE MANUFACTURING FACILITY

Mr BRYAN DOYLE (Campbelltown) [12.57 p.m.]: I am very proud to share with the House details of the opening of the new Minto Interface factory. Part of this Government's agenda has been to rebuild the State by improving its economic performance and finances, driving economic growth in regional areas, increasing its business competitiveness and strengthening its skills base. On Thursday 1 May I represented Premier Mike Baird at the opening of Interface's \$65 million carpet manufacturing facility at Minto, which will provide 160 jobs for the people of Campbelltown and the greater Macarthur. I was joined by Mr Clinton Squires, the managing director of Interface Australia, Mr Rob Coombs, the chief executive officer of Interface Asia Pacific, and Mr Dan Hendricks, the chief executive officer of Interface Global.

This state-of-the-art plant has been operational since February 2014 and can produce up to three million pieces of modular carpet a year. Interface represents the kind of innovation for which Campbelltown—the great

opal of the southwest and the best part of the Macarthur—Sydney and New South Wales have become internationally recognised. The company's decision to rebuild at Minto is a huge vote of confidence in Campbelltown and manufacturing in the south west. I enjoyed a tour of the facility with Michael Gabadou, who showed me the design, weaving, tufting, backing, cutting and packaging processes involved in making modular carpet. I was most impressed by the looms that feed thousands of individual carpet threads through overhead tubes to produce patterned carpet. It is a sight to behold.

Interface's slogan—"We're back to the future"—is prominent at the front of the factory. The company has a rich history in the Macarthur and Wollondilly shires. However, the business was nearly destroyed by a blaze in July 2012. At the front of the new factory is a loom that had just been delivered when the blaze occurred. It had never been used before it was destroyed. The loom is now a monument at the front of the new factory. Red threads from the burnt loom lead to a huge "Renew" sign at the entrance to the factory—representing that the business will endure and go ahead. One of the things by which I was most impressed was the pride and dedication of the workers who willingly spend time with visitors and proudly explain their part in producing quality carpet. After the fire, the company took great pains to look after its employees, and I could see why. Campbelltown has a wonderful employment base.

In recent years manufacturing in Australia has been in the spotlight. I can honestly say that under the New South Wales Government's plan the outlook for the State is far more positive than previously, with \$65 million being invested to produce 160 jobs in Campbelltown. As I told the audience, the opening of the business was a great day for Campbelltown, with the facility employing local people and producing a world-class product. I was honoured to be the keynote speaker and lead the crowd in a roaring rendition of three cheers to celebrate the opening of this marvellous facility. I commend Interface to anyone who is considering buying carpet for their business. It takes three weeks from the design phase to Interface carpet being laid in an office. If people are thinking carpet and they are in business, they need to think Interface and come to Minto at Campbelltown—the opal of the south-west and the best part of Macarthur. I commend Campbelltown and Interface to the House.

TWEED ELECTORATE ANZAC DAY SERVICES

Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed) [1.02 p.m.]: I inform the House of Anzac Day commemorative services in the Tweed electorate. Like many members on both sides of the House, I took a lot of time to visit and be involved in a number of ceremonies. Each time I do so, I am amazed and overwhelmed with the emotion. Each year right across our great nation we witness a significant increase in both young and old people attending Anzac Day ceremonies to pay their respects, particularly as next year will mark the centenary of the landing of Anzac troops at Gallipoli. Undoubtedly right across our nation, including far-flung places, there will be a proliferation of centenary commemoratives services.

We commemorate Anzac Day not only to remember those who fell but also, importantly, to gain an understanding of what we fought for, where we fought and why we fought. Many historians attribute formulation of the term "mateship" to the Anzacs and the landing on the beaches at Gallipoli as the time when our nation was born. The commemoratives services I attended on Anzac Day this year began at 4.28 a.m. at Tumbulgum. I was greeted by Greg Adams. We stood as the river mist rolled in and as young and old people shone their torches in the darkness and stepped forward to commemorate the historic event. The next Anzac Day event I attended was at 5.53 a.m. and I was accompanied by Joe Russell at the Tweed Heads service. Approximately 3,000 people attended the ceremony at a site overlooking the river mouth, which was very symbolic. At 7.45 a.m. I attended the Pottsville service with John Hawes and Merv Mason—it was a very special atmosphere in the hills of Pottsville. Later I attended the Burringbar service with Allan Vincent and Stuart Cahill. At 10.30 a.m. I attended the Kingscliff service with Brian Vickery, a ceremony that was attended by several thousand people.

It is never lost on my electorate in the Tweed Valley and in the Lismore electorate that in 2010 we lost Nathan Bewes in Afghanistan—Nathan was 23 years old when he gave up his life—and in 2011 we lost Rowan Robinson, a young Kingscliff boy who was very active in his local surf club. Rowan was killed in Afghanistan, also at the age of 23. I had the honour of representing the New South Wales Parliament at a ceremony attended by the Prime Minister and the Federal Leader of the Opposition to witness the moving of the gun carriage during Rowan's burial. In a heavily symbolic gesture, as Rowan was a former member of the Special Operations Task Group, his body was carried by his colleagues, who maintained their composure throughout the funeral. However, as I was leaving through a side entrance, I saw that his colleagues—those very tough individuals who had experienced a lot of terrible occurrences—had broken down and cried at the

back of the church. While we reflect on the continuation of the horrors of war, that takes nothing away from the sacrifices made from World War I until now—sacrifices of hard-fighting Australian men and women of the Australian Defence Force.

I was very touched by Anzac Day ceremonies in my electorate because it was the first time following the loss of two soldiers from my region that I had had a firsthand opportunity to speak to the mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters and the mates of Nathan and Rowan about their loss. I pay tribute to the friends and families of thousands of our servicemen who have been lost to this nation in larger theatres of conflict through the dreadful tragedies of war. Unfortunately, as politicians, particularly our Federal politicians, we have the onerous duty of involving Australia in conflict, which is a terrible responsibility. All sides of politics should think carefully before sending our fighting men and women overseas to engage in conflicts that potentially put their lives at risk. I implore members on both sides of politics, particularly those in the Federal Parliament, to think very carefully about engaging Australia in overseas conflict. Recently the cessation of Australia's involvement in the war in Afghanistan was announced after 12 years of Australia's participation. I reiterate that I am very proud of the service men and women of the Tweed, and I am 100 per cent for the Tweed.

ASSYRIAN NEW YEAR FESTIVAL

Mrs TANYA DAVIES (Mulgoa) [1.07 p.m.]: Today I bring to the attention of the House the Australian Chapter of the Assyrian Universal Alliance, who recently held their spectacular annual New Year Festival, which I had the pleasure of attending last month. The New Year Festival celebration was hosted by the Assyrian Universal Alliance in conjunction with the Assyrian Australian National Federation. The festival is a celebration of the rich, sophisticated and longstanding history of the Assyrian people that dates back more than 6,700 years. In 2014 we celebrated the commencement of the 6,764th Assyrian New Year. The festival is of great significance to the Australian Assyrian community, not only because of its incorporation of traditional song, dance and history but also because it was an opportunity to remind everyone attending, whether in person or via the video web link across the globe, of the continuing struggle by the Assyrian community for their own safe province within Iraq.

Mr Hermiz Shahan, Deputy Secretary General of the Assyrian Universal Alliance, reflected on the hope of Assyrians in the face of the tragedies their people have faced. He also welcomed the wonderful opportunity presented by the New Year's Festival to celebrate the contributions of the Assyrian community to a societal landscape that makes them proud to be Australians. Mr Ninos Aaron, chairperson of the Young Assyrian Youth Branch of the Assyrian Universal Alliance, spoke on the potential for us to change the fate of the Assyrians in the Middle East from where we are now placed. Mr David M. David, President of the Assyrian Australian National Federation, also discussed our potential to ease the suffering of Assyrians and Christian Assyrians, and highlighted the vital role that the Australian Government is playing in supporting and securing self-determination for Assyrians in Iraq.

I also acknowledge the contributions to this wonderful festival by local community groups and organisations. Representatives were present from the Fairfield City Council, the Republic of Iraq in Australia and New Zealand, the Young Assyrians, the NSW Police Force, the Cabramatta Community Centre and the National Council of Churches in Australia. The Assyrian Star Folkloric Dancing Group performed two wonderful dance pieces, which were significant to the occasion and also highly entertaining. The Australian and Assyrian national anthems were beautifully performed by Ms Jessica Ablahad, showcasing exceptional talent and also representing the unity between the Assyrian Universal Alliance and the wider community. Special thanks also go to the sponsors, artists and the Committee of the Young Assyrians, which is the youth arm of the Assyrian Universal Alliance, for organising the Assyrian exhibition and to the Assyrian Diqlat School of the Assyrian Australian Association, Mr Simon Israel, Ms Moreen Eramya and Mr Walter Lolham.

The Assyrian Universal Alliance was established to be a voice for the Assyrian community and is committed to upholding the Assyrian name in our community. I offer my congratulations to members of the Assyrian populace who have done so and as a result received awards on Australia Day this year. Mrs Carmen Lazar is the centre manager and settlement officer at the Assyrian Australian Association office of the Assyrian Resource Centre, Fairfield, and recipient of the prestigious Order of Australia award. Other Assyrian Australians who received Australia Day awards include Basim Shamaon, the youngest ever Fairfield City Young Citizen of the Year awardee, and Albert Mooshi, who received the City of Fairfield Achievement Medallion. These awards are presented on the basis of extraordinary contribution to the local community and I commend them.

These Australia Day award recipients demonstrate the true spirit of this great country in their continued commitment and perseverance within our community to build a better country. Mrs Carmen Lazar, OAM, is

involved with projects such as the Consumer and Community Participation Network at Fairfield Hospital, the refugee and housing task forces, Medicare Local, Fairfield Migrant Interagency and the Fairfield Immigrant and Refugee Women's Network, as well as contributing to local student success and helping out with the Assyrian Universal Alliance's response to the crisis in the Middle East. Her fellow Australia Day awardees, Basim Shamaon and Albert Mooshi, are also involved with charity and humanitarian causes and Mr Mooshi is a member of the Assyrian Charity and Educational Community.

This hope brought to our united society contrasts with the circumstances for Assyrians in Iraq. Australian Assyrians continue to not only work toward a better situation for Assyrians overseas but also contribute to local communities in such a way to make us all proud to be Australian. I was inspired by the unity, strength and single-mindedness of the Assyrian-Australian communities which celebrated the Assyrian New Year together. Around 15,000 people were in attendance that day. I look forward to my continuing involvement with and support of the Assyrian community in the days, months and years ahead.

ALBURY ELECTORATE CANCER SUPPORT SERVICES

Mr GREG APLIN (Albury) [1.12 p.m.]: The management of cancer has taken a major leap forward in Albury thanks to three key developments. First is the building of the Albury Wodonga Carer Accommodation Centre, which was dedicated by the Minister for Health in February. This facility sets a very high standard for residential accommodation for patients and their families travelling to Albury for treatment. It is named Hilltop and is an initiative of the Fight Cancer Foundation. From the commencement of the project there has been strong support throughout the electorate and across the border, with local organisations such as Zonta, Lions, Rotary and numerous clubs and individuals fundraising for the project. I am proud to say that this Government provided \$870,000. Hilltop sits on one side of the Albury hospital campus and one year on from opening its doors it has housed more than 450 people and is continuing to expand its reach. Money has been raised for a children's play area and there is already talk about further construction to add another 10 residential units.

The ground at the front of the Albury hospital is being torn up for the foundations of a regional cancer centre. This \$65 million complex, which is being funded by the Federal Government, will bring together a whole range of cancer specialists and treatment facilities. Completion is scheduled for the second half of 2016. The centre will include 30 inpatient beds, a 30-chair day chemotherapy facility, a wellness centre, a positron emission tomography-computed tomography [PET-CT] scanner, a brachytherapy service and two paediatric treatment chairs. The sum of \$65 million is a lot of money, yet we know it will be spent, down to the last dollar, by the time the first patients arrive. The Albury and border communities anticipate that the treatment centre, as delivered and completed, will in reality be just the start.

Regional communities are resilient and resourceful. We want the best for our friends and families when they are in need. We are setting out to ensure that this fantastic treatment centre is more than just functional and clinical. We want it to be welcoming and personal. To that end, a trust has been formed for the purpose of ongoing fundraising for the treatment centre. This is the third element in our region's resurgent focus on fighting cancer. The Albury Wodonga Regional Cancer Centre Trust Fund will raise money to do a number of key things, including the purchase of life-saving equipment, upgrading hardware and software, providing ongoing maintenance of essential equipment, assisting with professional development programs for staff, training staff on the latest technologies, assisting staff to attend major cancer forums and supporting cancer research.

The trust has set a \$2 million target and the total currently stands at \$200,000, with significant donations from Probus and Rotary clubs, Albury-Wodonga Health and Albury's Westpac. I am pleased to be a foundation member of the governing board for the trust. Albury-Wodonga Health's retiring chief executive officer, Stuart Spring, was quoted in the *Border Mail* as having said this about the centre and community involvement in particular:

The organisation that has been developed is bringing together the best of the public and private sectors in one single, co-ordinated way that does not exist anywhere else in the country. That sends a very powerful message to Government. They know this is not just another public hospital service or just another health service. This is something that is owned by the community, who are passionate about it and will have much to say about it in the future.

The trust was officially launched on 31 March by its patron, international basketball star Lauren Jackson. Fundraising events have been scheduled throughout the year ahead. A gala dinner has been set for 16 May, with a host of celebrities providing entertainment, along with a chance to hear from a cancer patient about his experiences and how the cancer centre might assist people such as himself. What we are witnessing in Albury is an ongoing sense of community partnership and engagement in the battle against cancer. The fundraising tap did

not turn off with the announcement of new government-funded buildings. The generosity continues. It is as though the completion of a building program has not signalled an ending but, rather, the commencement of a second continuing phase.

There is no end date for this fight. The people of Albury and the border region have been inspired by the new facilities. We are all spurred on to do more, to find more money, to dig deeper into our pockets. We are no longer satisfied with the basics. We do not stop working when government money is found or when it is spent. We do not expect the various governments of our land to do all the heavy lifting. The Albury community sees how rewarding it is to work in partnership with government—namely, government plays a valuable role in getting important infrastructure projects moving; then the community finesses the project as is appropriate for its aspirations. Information about the trust fund and making donations can be found at awccancertrust.org.au.

WESTPAC BICENTENNIAL FOUNDATION

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT (Baulkham Hills) [1.17 p.m.]: In an era when the banking sector is often maligned and discussed with negative overtones, I would like to break the mould by formally acknowledging and congratulating the Westpac Banking Corporation for the announcement in April to create the single largest private education scholarship in Australia: the Westpac Bicentennial Foundation. The Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Hon. Julie Bishop, MP, launched the foundation on Wednesday 2 April. The Westpac Banking Corporation has a strong reputation throughout New South Wales and Australia for its approach to community and social responsibility. As Australia's first and oldest bank, established in 1817 as the Bank of New South Wales under a charter of incorporation provided by Governor Lachlan Macquarie, Westpac has grown substantially to become an Australian global business employing more than 36,000 employees across the Asia-Pacific and the United Kingdom.

In 2017 Westpac celebrates its own bicentenary—200 years of successful operations that grew out of a small office in the new colony of Sydney. Edward Smith Hall was its first cashier and secretary, and the first employee, Joseph Hyde Potts, a porter and servant, received a weekly ration of the King's stores and an annual salary of £25. This celebration of 200 years of history through the launch of the new Westpac Bicentennial Foundation is not simply about designing a birthday cake and a fancy media release but, rather, a conscious effort on behalf of a well-established private sector employer to contribute to the betterment of our State and nation, helping those future generations of Australians who will clearly be shaping us in the years and decades to come.

The Bank of New South Wales established the first known disaster relief fund to help the victims of the Hawkesbury River flood in 1817-18. I acknowledge that the new Minister for Finance and Services and candidate for the electorate of Hawkesbury is present in the Chamber—no doubt this will be an educational experience for him. I have been a customer of Westpac since my dad first opened an account for me as a schoolboy. I not only appreciate Westpac's efforts in support of the community but also strongly believe that the Government should acknowledge those private sector organisations doing the right thing for our society. Whilst those opposite are typically keen to highlight the excesses and failings of the private sector and call for more regulation at every turn, it is important for the Government to thank publicly those organisations with a strong track record in delivering social and community outcomes, businesses that want to make a difference by investing in the broader community and supporting the wisdom and values of employees.

Westpac, rather than being another bank that derives super profits, contributed more than \$130 million to the community via a unique approach to supporting partnerships, greater employee involvement and capacity building. These programs extend to agreements with agribusiness, sporting clubs, registered charities and organisations in the not-for-profit sector, such as the Salvation Army, disaster relief funds, helping the homeless, Indigenous Australians and an employee-matching gifts program, amongst many other important initiatives. The Westpac Bicentennial Foundation is the creation of a charitable organisation focused upon the education and personal advancement of Australians through a one-off contribution of \$100 million to fund 100 awards and scholarships every year in perpetuity.

The scholarships and awards, to be administered in partnership with a number of Australian universities, cover five different spheres: Future Leaders scholarships for new or recent graduates for post-graduate study at a global institution; the Best and Brightest Program to provide awards for post-doctoral researchers; the Young Technologists Program, which offers up to 40 three-year undergraduate scholarships each year on the basis of merit and diversity, and to overcome economic disadvantage; the Community Leaders Program, to provide 10 awards annually to encourage community leaders to undertake a personal education

opportunity with direct relevance and value to the community they represent; and an Asian exchange scholarship scheme to give Australian undergraduate students an opportunity to spend a semester of study at leading Asian universities, with the intent to increase more Asia-literate graduates in Australia.

The scholarships will phase in from 2015 and will grow to more than 200 by 2017. Over the next 100 years, 10,000 scholarships will be awarded by the Westpac Bicentennial Foundation. Westpac Banking Corporation and its chief executive officer, Gail Kelly, should be properly acknowledged and thanked for this future contribution to our society, in addition to the organisation's strong record and interest in promoting corporate responsibility. I encourage members of the House to read more about the Westpac Bicentennial Foundation. I am keen to promote this initiative to my constituents in Baulkham Hills who take a strong interest in the future growth and importance of the education sector in developing our future generations.

Mr DOMINIC PERROTTET (Castle Hill—Minister for Finance and Services) [1.22 p.m.]: I congratulate the member for Baulkham Hills on his contribution. It is important for members to acknowledge the great work various businesses do across this State, particularly the banking sector. I have witnessed the great work of Westpac in my electorate. Westpac is a strong supporter of the Castle Hill Leadership Program, which mentors year 12 students over the course of their Higher School Certificate and culminates with students trekking the Kokoda Track rather than participating in Schoolies Week celebrations. The students involved in the program and I look forward to being addressed by the chief executive officer of Westpac, Gail Kelly, at The Hills Lodge next month. I acknowledge the great work that Westpac does, not only through the Westpac Bicentennial Foundation but also in other areas across the State.

FIVE DOCK CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Mr JOHN SIDOTI (Drummoyne) [1.23 p.m.]: It gives me great pleasure to inform the House about an important meeting of the Five Dock Chamber of Commerce that I attended recently. Also present at the meeting were: President Joe Di Giacomo, Vice President Glen Haron, Mr Craig Laundy, MP, Federal member for Reid, and Angelo Tsirekas, mayor of Canada Bay. We spoke in depth about the many challenges associated with the Five Dock town centre, including its viability, future use and potential growth. We spoke also about addressing a number of issues, including parking, and the potential involvement of State and Federal governments in possible future partnerships.

I had the pleasure of addressing the Chamber on the many achievements of this Government. The Liberal-Nationals Government has worked tirelessly to restore viability to a very important sector in our community—namely, the small business sector. I spoke about our great achievement in reforming workers compensation laws, which has resulted in huge premium reductions. Indeed, the scheme is back in the black for the first time since 2008. Last year there was a 7.51 per cent reduction or a saving of more than \$130 million a year. A large proportion of the businesses in my area are from the small business sector and I know these savings have been welcomed. For example, in my electorate Aldridge Traffic Systems, which former Premier Barry O'Farrell and a number of other members visited last year, employs many people. The reduction in premiums has allowed Aldridge Traffic Systems and other businesses like it to employ more people.

This Government has a great employment record. Since coming to office we have created nearly 110,000 new jobs, many in small- and medium-sized businesses. We have achieved this by reducing operating costs for businesses, such as payroll tax rebates and workers compensation premiums, and halting electricity price rises, which were seen as a huge impost on small, medium and large businesses in this State. Last year the Government announced that the payroll tax threshold would increase from \$689,000 to \$750,000. This meant that 1,300 businesses previously liable for payroll tax would be free of payroll tax and those still paying payroll tax would save at least \$3,000. In my electorate these measures have been welcomed with open arms; they have encouraged further employment and helped to maintain business viability.

Currently 210 government services are available at 18 one-stop shops across the State. Service NSW offers one-stop shops, has one telephone line, one website, reduces regulation and eliminates car registration stickers—all welcome initiatives. Whether one wants to renew a driver licence, pay water rates or enrol to vote, it can all be done via a Service NSW centre. Importantly, these services are no longer a Monday to Friday thing; they open on Saturdays as well. This will make it easier for people to do business with the Government at a time that suits them and they were welcomed by a number of people and businesses in the Five Dock area to whom I spoke. Indeed, to encourage businesses to do well we must continue to strive for such initiatives and reforms. However, whilst many businesses are doing extremely well there is still a significant proportion struggling. Reducing red tape and compliance issues will go a long way towards alleviating the problems associated with running a small business.

RYDE ELECTORATE ANZAC DAY SERVICES

Mr VICTOR DOMINELLO (Ryde—Minister for Citizenship and Communities, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Minister for Veterans Affairs, and Assistant Minister for Education) [1.28 p.m.], with concurrence: The Anzac story is one that unifies and unites Australians regardless of their age or heritage. The First World War battles at Gallipoli and on the Western Front created the Anzac legend, which some say was the birth of Australian nationhood. On Friday 25 April I was proud and humbled to stand beside members of my community to remember those who had fallen, those who live and those who still serve our great nation. The Ryde community is truly multicultural and community engagement and understanding of our Australian heritage is growing.

In order to keep the Anzac traditions alive for all my constituents, men and women with direct links to military associations have been joined by other individuals and community organisations through government initiatives. Today I will speak about two. The first initiative is Joining Forces. This initiative engages our multicultural communities to commemorate our Anzacs. This year Helen Crouch, chief executive officer of North Ryde Community Aid, joined our Armenian community in North Ryde to assist them to gain a greater understanding of the Anzac commemoration services. She did this by providing a translated order of service and a link for the communities to join together over breakfast.

The second initiative, "United We Stand", takes this significant chapter in our country's history and enables all Australians to recognise, to pay tribute and to link with our Anzacs through the time-honoured traditions of courage, sacrifice, mateship and endurance. The project, through research, reflection and recognition, is being adopted by Ryde sports clubs, and today I recognise particularly the Ryde Hunters Hill Hockey Club and the Eastwood Ryde Netball Association. These organisations were, for the first time, represented at our Ryde services. Mr Maurice Dawson and Mrs Anne Doring joined our service men and women to lay a wreath and, on behalf of their clubs, they made a pledge to continue the legend—our history—within their clubs.

The volunteers who administer these clubs have taken up the banner to have the Anzac story remembered throughout the year. They are researching their members to identify lines of contact with our Anzacs through players' grandfathers and great-grandfathers and they have committed to play a commemorative game each year, culminating in recognition of players who exhibit the qualities for which our Anzacs are noted. The Ryde Hunters Hill Hockey Club has identified 10 connections through its club members and is developing its commemorative day. The Eastwood Ryde Netball Association, which has more than 4,000 members, has started the process of researching its membership and developing its commemorative day.

I am pleased to advise that 15 other sporting organisations in the Ryde area have identified that they wish to participate in the "United We Stand" initiative, each deciding to honour our Anzacs and to give all people in our community a connection of which they can be proud. This year Anzac services held by North Ryde and Ryde RSL sub-branches were very well attended, with wreaths laid in honour of our Anzacs by past servicemen, servicewomen and local community organisations. I will run through a list of the organisations and people who have decided to come on board in relation to some of these important government initiatives, particularly in the upcoming Anzac centenary period.

They include the North Ryde RSL Sub-Branch, RydeX Sub-Branch, North Ryde RSL Club Life Members, the NMDC of Sub-Branches, a patron of North Ryde RSL Sub-Branch, RydeX RSL Club, Gladesville and Hunters Hill sub-branches, the Returned Services League of Australia, the 8th Engineer Regiment, Ryde City and Districts Vietnam Veterans Association, the National Servicemen's Association, the Naval Men's Association of Australia, North Ryde RSL Sub-Branch Women's Auxiliary, the Australian Women's Land Army, RAAF Bomb Disposal, Australian Women's Ex-Services, AIF Small Ships, the Country Women's Association, Ryde Eastwood Legacy, North Ryde RSL Widows Club, the War Widows Guild, RydeX Phoenix Bowling Club, Life Education, Red Cross and Legacy, TJ Andrews, Ryde City Council Centenary Anzac Committee, Ryde Multicultural Society, Ian J Arthur Funerals, the President of North Ryde RSL Youth Club, North Ryde community baseball clubs, North Ryde Community Church, the Scouts, Northcross Christian School, Holy Cross College and Marsden High School. Proper commemoration of the Anzac story needs to occur at a grassroots level, and Ryde is showing how that can be done.

[Acting-Speaker (Mr Lee Evans) left the chair at 1.33 p.m. The House resumed at 2.15 p.m.]

VISITORS

The SPEAKER: I welcome to the gallery 18 year 11 legal studies students and their teacher from Mackellar Girls Campus, guests of the Premier and member for Manly. I welcome to the gallery 16 members of the Hornsby Scout Fellowship, guests of the Parliamentary Secretary for Communities and member for Hornsby. I welcome also 30 members of the Charlestown Rotary Club, guests of the Government Whip, the member for Charlestown.

ADMINISTRATION OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE STATE

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

T F BATHURST
Lieutenant-Governor

Office of the Governor
Sydney, 28 March 2014

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

ADMINISTRATION OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE STATE

The SPEAKER: I report the receipt of the following message from Her Excellency the Governor:

MARIE BASHIR
Governor

Office of the Governor
Sydney, 31 March 2014

Professor Marie Bashir, Governor of New South Wales, has the honour to inform the Legislative Assembly that she has re-assumed the administration of the Government of the State.

ADMINISTRATION OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE STATE

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

T F BATHURST
Lieutenant-Governor

Office of the Governor
Sydney, 27 April 2014

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

ADMINISTRATION OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE STATE

The SPEAKER: I report the receipt of the following message from Her Excellency the Governor:

MARIE BASHIR
Governor

Office of the Governor
Sydney, 28 April 2014

Professor Marie Bashir, Governor of New South Wales, has the honour to inform the Legislative Assembly that she has re-assumed the administration of the Government of the State.

ASSENT TO BILL

Assent to the following bill was reported:

Child Protection Legislation Amendment Bill 2013

DEATH OF THE HONOURABLE NEVILLE KENNETH WRAN, AC, CNZM, QC, A FORMER PREMIER, MINISTER OF THE CROWN AND MEMBER FOR BASS HILL

The SPEAKER: It is with regret that I announce to the House the death of the Hon. Neville Kenneth Wran, a former Premier of New South Wales, who served as the member for Bass Hill from 17 November 1973 to 4 July 1986. On behalf of the House I extend to the family the deep sympathy of the Legislative Assembly for the loss sustained.

Members and officers of the House stood in their places as a mark of respect.

DEPUTY SERJEANT-AT-ARMS**Appointment**

The SPEAKER: It is with pleasure I announce that Cheryl Joy Samuels was appointed Deputy Serjeant-at-Arms on and from 14 April 2014.

EDITOR OF DEBATES**Appointment**

The SPEAKER: It is with pleasure I announce that Scott Fuller was appointed Editor of Debates on and from 23 April 2014.

MINISTRY

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I inform the House that the Attorney General and Minister for Justice will answer any questions today on the Police and Emergency Services, Industrial Relations and the Central Coast portfolios.

PARLIAMENTARY CONTRIBUTORY SUPERANNUATION FUND TRUSTEES**Appointment****Motion by Mr Anthony Roberts agreed to:**

That in accordance with section 14 (1) (b) of the Parliamentary Contributory Superannuation Act 1971 Bradley Ronald Hazzard be appointed as a trustee of the Parliamentary Contributory Superannuation Fund in place of George Souris.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**Notices of Motions****Government Business Notices of Motions (for Bills) given.****DEATH OF THE HONOURABLE NEVILLE KENNETH WRAN, AC, CNZM, QC, A FORMER
PREMIER, MINISTER OF THE CROWN AND MEMBER FOR BASS HILL****Ministerial Statement**

Mr MIKE BAIRD (Manly—Premier, Minister for Infrastructure, Minister for Western Sydney) [2.23 p.m.]: I pay tribute to Neville Kenneth Wran, who sadly passed away recently. Five days ago I had the honour to represent the people of New South Wales at the State funeral of Neville Wran, who was Premier from 1976 to 1986. Quite fittingly, it was a gathering of the Labor family as well as his family. Mr Wran's significance extends well beyond his party and his family. He is one of the most significant political figures in the history of our State. Neville Wran passed away on Sunday 20 April at the age of 87 with his wife and family at his side. His final years were marked by a battle with that most cruel disease, dementia, which is why Mr Wran's wife, Jill, said at the time of his passing that while it was a sad time for her and her family it was also a blessed relief for her husband. I spoke with Mrs Wran the day after her loss and, on behalf of the people and Parliament of New South Wales, offered her as well as Harriet, Hugo, Kim and Glenn my sincerest condolences for their loss. I was touched by her graciousness and dignity.

Neville Wran and I come from opposite sides of the spectrum but there can be no denying the enormous impact he had on New South Wales during his 16 years in Parliament and especially during the 10 years he served as Premier between May 1976 and July 1986. He grew up in Balmain, which was a different place in the 1930s and 1940s from what it is today. His childhood had a significant influence on his political priorities and it has been reported that his litmus test for new policies was the question, "What is in this for Joe Blow and his missus?" Neville Wran's Government focused on meeting the needs of the people and investing in transport, education and health. During his premiership the Government also led on a number of groundbreaking policies at the time, including environmental protection, Aboriginal affairs and women's affairs. His legacy includes protecting the rainforest of northern New South Wales and developing the now iconic Darling Harbour precinct.

Neville Wran had a commitment to fairness and equity. His Government worked to end discrimination on the grounds of race, gender, disability and sexual orientation. Remember, this was a long time before the concepts of equality that we value so highly today had been embedded in our culture. Neville Wran was a man of the 1970s, but also a man who changed the 1970s and, in doing so, helped to establish the flavour of that decade. The Wran Government also introduced reforms to our electoral system, which made New South Wales a more democratic place. They are standards that we take for granted these days. He introduced four-year terms for the Parliament and ensured that the Legislative Council was fully elected for the first time.

I did not have the opportunity to meet Neville Wran, but my father did. He conveys this story as an aspiring frontbencher. He caught the eye of the Premier, who decided to tell the Parliament during question time that my father was a spy. While he was trying to work out why he was being nominated as a spy, he ran out of the House to talk to his good mate John Dowd who said, "Don't worry about it, it will add to your mystique." As time went on, there was always a bit of mystery about him because people were not sure whether he was a spy, but so convincing was Neville Wran on that day that my father started to question whether he was in fact a spy.

Despite different allegiances I would have liked to have met Mr Wran. He passed what I regard as the highest test for a political leader: He sought high office in order to make a difference, not just for the sake of occupying that office. Balmain boys do not cry. I have checked that detail with the current Greens member and it remains correct, but many tears have been shed this past week for a Balmain boy, and deservedly so. On behalf of all the people of New South Wales, I acknowledge the enormous contribution of Neville Wran and again offer my deepest condolences to Jill Wran, and Harriet and Hugo, Kim and Glenn.

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON (Blacktown—Leader of the Opposition) [2.27 p.m.]: On behalf of the Opposition I acknowledge the passing of Neville Wran. He was Premier of this great State from 1976 to 1986. It is fair to say that political careers come and go. Some are ordinary and some are exceptional. Let there be no doubt Neville Wran's was one of the great political careers. He was a Labor legend and an icon of New South Wales. There are not too many people in this State who lived through that period who do not remember the great things that Neville Wran did for this State. At last week's State funeral Justice Michael Kirby referred to Neville as a comet who lit up the sky and whose trail would blaze for decades to come. That was the perfect image to describe him.

Neville Wran was no ordinary politician. He was a leader with vigour, strategic intellect, a canny understanding of the possibilities of politics and how to bring along the person on the street in any argument or debate. He was in a rare class of leaders who not only governed for his time but defined the times. Neville Wran was born in 1926 in inner city Paddington, the youngest of eight children and raised in working-class Balmain. His father, Joe, was a seaman and a labourer. Neville Wran was educated at Fort Street High and the University of Sydney, where he studied law. He was admitted as a solicitor in 1951, called to the bar in 1957 and became a Queen's Counsel in 1968. This State will be eternally grateful that a man of Neville Wran's accomplishment ultimately came to see politics as his true vocation in life.

Neville Wran was elected to the Legislative Council in 1970 and three years later became leader of the New South Wales Labor Party. It was the start of a decade of unparalleled electoral success. In 1975 Labor had been reduced to rubble, the morale of its supporters crushed by the demise of the Whitlam Government in November that year. Six months after that landslide defeat, Neville Wran charted the way back, winning an election majority in May 1976 by one seat. He then led Labor to victory with an extraordinary 57.7 per cent of the primary vote in the Wran slide election of 1978. Labor increased its majority by another six seats in 1981 and won again convincingly in 1984. By the time Neville Wran stepped down in 1986 he had been the longest continuing serving New South Wales Premier. In the final analysis the accumulation of political success is less important than what one does with it. On that score Neville Wran's record is extraordinary and stands as an eternal touchstone of what a Labor government should aspire to achieve in power. To quote Rodney Cavalier, a former Minister for Education in that period:

The period when Neville was premier... presents itself in my memory as a time of hope and achievement and a sense of glory to be part of such wonderful times.

Neville Wran's legacies include the building of the eastern suburbs rail line, the electrification of the Hunter and Illawarra rail lines, developing Darling Harbour and the Sydney Entertainment Centre, as well as far-sighted investments in trains, buses, ferries and roads, and the refurbishment of many of Sydney's iconic places. At a time of new social movements and rapid change the Wran Government never sought to stand in the way of that change. In fact it stood at the crest of it by introducing new antidiscrimination laws, decriminalising homosexuality and establishing the Equal Opportunity Tribunal. The State's first ever Ministry for Aboriginal

Affairs was created, and defining land rights legislation was passed by this Parliament. In so many ways Neville Wran's was a decade in power that fostered a new sense of inclusion for people on the margins of society—those left broken and forgotten by the political process.

On the environment Neville Wran made the historic decision to cease all logging of the iconic northern New South Wales rainforests. He created 20 new national parks and it was thanks to his leadership that the Gondwana rainforests gained World Heritage listing. Equally important were Neville Wran's reforms to improve the quality of our political process. The Premier alluded to some of those reforms, such as turning the Legislative Council from a fiefdom to a democracy, instituting four-year political terms, and establishing new disclosure laws and a pecuniary interest register for members of Parliament. In later life Neville Wran served with energy and distinction in a variety of roles in both government and business, including National President of the Labor Party and Chairman of the CSIRO.

Last week the public farewelled Neville Wran in a moving ceremony at Sydney Town Hall, the site of so many of the legendary speeches and stoushes that defined his career. We mourned alongside his wife, Jill, his five children and the many who loved him. Neville lived to the ripe old age of 87. Sadly, dementia taunted and frustrated him to the end but he will be remembered most of all for how he served in his prime. As Graham Freudenberg once reflected:

Not to have lived through 1978 is not to know the possibility of politics.

The Premier alluded to the words that will always be associated with Neville Wran, "Balmain boys don't cry." But it is fair to say there were many across this State on Thursday who shed a tear. Last Thursday many of us sat in the Town Hall and shed a tear at the sad loss of Neville Wran. His career in politics was one of true service to the people of New South Wales. On behalf of the entire Labor Party I state today that we will do our best to continue the legacy of one of Labor's finest and greatest leaders.

QUESTION TIME

[Question time commenced at 2.34 p.m.]

PREMIER AND POLITICAL DONATIONS

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: My question is directed to the Premier. Will the Premier confirm that on 9 March 2011 he received an illegal donation which exceeded the State campaign cap from Eureka Capital Partners, a company owned by Mr Roger Massy-Greene whom he awarded a \$150,000 consulting contract and appointed as Chairman of Networks NSW after doubling the salary to \$200,000?

The SPEAKER: Order! Before I call the Premier I remind members about the standing orders in relation to questions. Questions should contain neither inferences nor imputations, which that one did. If these types of questions continue to be asked, I will rule them out of order. The Premier has the call.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I love the claims that are raised by those opposite.

The SPEAKER: I am glad you do.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: If Opposition members want to raise slurs they should go out and put the allegations out there, because I will not be lectured by the Leader of the Opposition.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I will not be lectured by the Leader of the Opposition, who only yesterday in this place had to explain to the people of New South Wales how he forgot a \$3 million bribe. He said it took him six months to tell someone else. Who would be the first person one would tell? I do not know who one would tell first. Well, the first person was Mark Lennon, head of Unions NSW. That is about right—that is where one would go and that is the first person one would have to tell. That took six months.

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Order! If Government members do not come to order they will be removed from the Chamber. Members will come to order. I cannot hear the member's point of order.

Mr Michael Daley: This is pathetically predictable. It does not answer the question.

The SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order, as the member for Maroubra well knows. What did the Premier say was pathetic? The member's point of order was pathetic. The member will resume his seat.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: How long did it take him to tell the public? If you are a leader of a political party you would think it would be of some interest to the people of this State to say, "By the way, I received a \$3 million bribe." Do you think you should tell them? How long did that take? Six years—that is how long it took. He said:

If I had my time over again then I would have erred on the side of caution and I would have reported the matter to the authorities.

If he had his time again he would have reported it.

Ms Linda Burney: Point of order: My point of order is relevance under Standing Order 129. The question to the Premier was about donations to him from Eureka Capital Partners.

The SPEAKER: Order! I almost ruled the question out of order in the first instance. The member for Canterbury will not repeat any imputation or inference contained therein. She will resume her seat. There is no point of order.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: The important point is the comments from the Leader of the Opposition. He has had a road to Damascus experience, because all of a sudden transparency and integrity matter. Where does it come from? I think the *Sydney Morning Herald* had it exactly right when it said:

The impact of all of this is that the credibility of the Opposition leader is terminally degraded on matters of transparency and accountability. His judgment has been lamentable. His silence has been revealing. His rationalisations are implausible. His failure even to acknowledge the shortcomings of his actions, let alone express regret for them, leaves him as a toothless inquisitor in Parliament on matters of probity...

Mr John Robertson: Point of order: I refer to Standing Order No. 129, relevance. The Premier has strayed as far as possible from the leave of the question. It may well be that he does not like the question or does not want to give an answer, but his response is nowhere near the question that was asked.

The SPEAKER: Order! I uphold the point of order. The Premier will be generally relevant to the question asked.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I think it is worth repeating to the House what was said in this newspaper article. It stated:

His failure to acknowledge the shortcomings of his actions—

Mr John Robertson: Point of order: Madam Speaker, the Premier is defying you and canvassing your ruling.

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Blacktown has just taken a point of order. The Premier has said only a few words and has added nothing new to the debate. I have directed the Premier to return to the leave of the question. I will listen to his answer and ensure that he does so.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: The article states:

His failure even to acknowledge the shortcomings of his actions, let alone express regret for them, leaves him as a toothless inquisitor in Parliament on matters of probity, leading a depleted Opposition.

Those opposite continue to make their smears but we on this side will get on with the job of governing for the people of New South Wales. We are used to the smears of those opposite. But I will say this: The Leader of the Opposition has no credibility on this subject.

GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE

Mrs TANYA DAVIES: My question is addressed to the Premier. What action is the Premier taking to enhance transparency and integrity in New South Wales?

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Canterbury will resume her seat. The member for Cessnock will come to order.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I thank the member for her question and commend her for her fantastic work in her electorate. The events of the past few months in the Independent Commission Against Corruption have been shocking and totally unacceptable. The people of New South Wales have every right to feel let down. Let me give this assurance to the people who elected us: I have heard the concerns of the community and I will clean up politics in New South Wales.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Since coming to office this Government has acted. For too long those opposite were all talk and no action. Let us get this straight from the outset—

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I will not be taking lectures from the Labor Party on accountability. I will not be taking lectures from the Labor Party on transparency.

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

Ms Cherie Burton: You have to get advice from somewhere.

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

Mr Nathan Rees: What did you think was going to happen this week?

The SPEAKER: Order! I place the member for Toongabbie on three calls to order.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: This Government is continuing to improve transparency and accountability. Let me assure the people of New South Wales that I will leave no stone unturned as we act to restore their faith and their trust in those who represent them. All corruption in public office must be condemned, and it is our role in this place to ensure that we take a zero tolerance approach to those practices. If you are doing wrong, we will find you and you will face the full consequences of your actions. We have said that time and again, and we mean it. Let us remember that, unlike those opposite who sat idly by and turned a blind eye to activities ongoing, it was the Liberal-Nationals Government that acted to refer matters of concern to the appropriate authorities. Under this Government, we continue to move decisively to restore accountability to Government—and we will continue to do so.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Since March 2011 we have delivered record funding to the State's watchdogs, including the Independent Commission Against Corruption, the NSW Ombudsman, the Audit Office of New South Wales and the Police Integrity Commission. We did that despite the budgetary challenges we inherited. We have given the Independent Commission Against Corruption additional resources and asked it to pursue investigations of mining leases handed out by those opposite. We have banned success fees for lobbyists. We have strengthened the powers of the Independent Commission Against Corruption and we have given added protection to whistleblowers.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I have also asked to bring forward the Government's consideration of the Independent Commission Against Corruption recommendations—something which those opposite refused to do. We are considering those recommendations in detail and shortly will be announcing new measures to address the role of lobbyists and the current system of political donations in New South Wales. It is about time.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Today I can confirm for the House that there has been another significant development, and a major step forward in cleaning up our own house. The new State Director of the Liberal

Party, Tony Nutt, has today appointed former Executive Director of the Independent Commission Against Corruption Mr Michael Symons to work with him on improving a series of matters within the New South Wales division of the Liberal Party.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: In addition to his previous role with the Independent Commission Against Corruption, Mr Symons was formerly a police chief superintendent in South Australia. He is a national and international expert on governance matters.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Mr Symons will work with the state director to review structures, processes and procedures to ensure compliance of fundraising and financial management within the party. He will provide advice on processes to ensure that the division's more than 500 party units have a clear understanding of obligations to enhance compliance. This initiative is one of a number of changes and improvements that will be made given recent events.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: The people of this State have the right to expect that this Government is making every effort to ensure that its house is in order. I will be leaving no stone unturned in working to restore the faith and trust of the people of this State. All of us will be taking action to ensure that we return that confidence to the people of New South Wales.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: What we will not do is be lectured by those opposite, who for 16 years did absolutely nothing.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition will come to order. There is too much audible conversation in the Chamber. I call the member for Macquarie Fields to order for the second time.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: As we outline our initiatives, taken today and in the past, we give the commitment to the people of New South Wales that we will take every action to restore confidence in this place. We will take every action to ensure that the people of New South Wales understand that we are taking decisions, making policies and taking action in their interest.

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

PREMIER AND POLITICAL DONATIONS

Ms LINDA BURNEY: My question is directed to the Premier. Will the Premier confirm that on the same day he received the \$5,000 donation from Eureka Capital Partners he received a further \$5,000 from Duvose Limited, which is also owned by Mr Roger Massy-Greene?

The SPEAKER: Order! The question contains a clear imputation. There is an implication that an amount of money was received. I rule the question out of order. It should be rewritten.

Mr John Robertson: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. I have ruled the question out of order.

Mr John Robertson: Madam Speaker, there is documentation from the Liberal Party—

Mr Anthony Roberts: Point of order: The Speaker has made her position clear. There is no point of order.

The SPEAKER: Order! That is correct. I have ruled the question out of order.

Mr John Robertson: There is a letter from the Liberal Party confirming that the donations were made on the same day.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition will resume his seat. The question should be rewritten.

Mr Anthony Roberts: Point of order: The Leader of the Opposition is now canvassing your ruling.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will resume their seats. The question should be rewritten. I call the member for Auburn to speak to the point of order taken by the Leader of the House.

Mrs Barbara Perry: To the point of order: In relation to the Speaker's ruling, I believe noise in the Chamber prevented the Speaker from hearing the question. The question was clear; it did not contain an imputation.

The SPEAKER: Order! I almost ruled the first question on this subject out of order. I respect the views of the member for Auburn on such matters, but this is a sensitive situation. Questions must conform strictly to the standing orders, but they have not done so for some time. The member for Cessnock seems to find that amusing. I direct him to remove himself from the Chamber for the remainder of question time.

[Pursuant to sessional order the member for Cessnock left the Chamber at 2.47 p.m.]

GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE

Mr JOHN BARILARO: My question is addressed to the Premier, whom I congratulate on his recent appointment. How is the Government getting on with the job of transforming New South Wales?

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I thank the member for Monaro for that sensible question. He is a very good local member. In three years the people of New South Wales have seen the Government, under the leadership of the former Premier, Barry O'Farrell, and now under my leadership, doing a very good job for the people of New South Wales. They know that we have been doing a good job. Despite the fact that those opposite continue to smear us, we continue to do a good job. If you run through the list of the various indicators that we have been managing you will start to see a great story. We can start by looking at the economic indicators. When we came to government—just three years ago—New South Wales had the slowest rate of jobs growth in the country. Our economic growth was the slowest in the country. Our business confidence was the worst in the country. We had the lowest housing supply in the country, and retail trade was the lowest average annual rate of any State. Where are we now under the new Government? We have gone right back up to the top of the charts.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will come to order.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: That is what happens when a good government is doing a good job—things start to move.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Not only is the economy moving, not only are there more jobs and people hiring, and not only is there rising confidence everywhere, but many thousands more people are delivering front-line services. There are more than 5,000 additional nurses, teachers and police on the front line serving our community because of the great work of this Government.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: There are more than 1,300 additional hospital beds thanks to the Minister for Health.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: The Opal card, which members opposite promised for many years, is being delivered by the Minister for Transport. There are 1,000 extra train services.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: There are 1,700 extra bus services and 55 extra ferry services each week. Everywhere we turn there is better customer service for the people of New South Wales. We are also investing in infrastructure.

The SPEAKER: Order! I remind the member for Kogarah that she is on three calls to order

Mr MIKE BAIRD: We are investing in infrastructure at a record pace and we are unleashing the capital to do it. We are investing \$60 billion in infrastructure over four years. The recycling model we have adopted, including Port Botany, Port Kembla and the desalination plant, is all going towards the capital of this State. Everywhere people turn, projects are happening across New South Wales, including the North West Rail Link, the South West Rail Link and on the Pacific Highway and Princes Highway.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: We are rebuilding hospitals from one end of the State to the other. We all know the hospitals. They are at Wagga Wagga, Campbelltown, Hornsby, Tamworth, Wollongong, Dubbo, Port Macquarie, Bega, St George, Nepean and even on the northern beaches. Hospital upgrades are happening everywhere. There are new schools under the Minister for Education, who signed up to the Gonski arrangements and made New South Wales the first State to do so. We are also looking after the vulnerable in this State. We are very proud of the actions we have taken under the two Ministers responsible for disability services.

The SPEAKER: Order! I remind the member for Toongabbie that he is on three calls to order.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: We were the first State to sign up to the National Disability Insurance Scheme because we prioritise looking after the vulnerable. That is what the people of New South Wales have come to expect: a government that is delivering better services, building infrastructure and looking after the vulnerable. It would be remiss of me not to point out that, while these projects are funded, we are delivering and everything is improving under this Government, each year members opposite have about a \$4 billion deficit. Robbo's wrecking ball goes back and forth. Robbo is going to run a wrecking ball through the economy and through the budget. The good news is that the people of New South Wales can have confidence in this Government.

Mr Richard Amery: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Order! Has the Premier completed his answer?

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Yes, Madam Speaker.

Mr Richard Amery: My point of order is taken under Standing Order 75. Members should be addressed by their correct titles.

The SPEAKER: Order! I remind the Premier to address members by their correct titles.

PREMIER AND POLITICAL DONATIONS

Ms LINDA BURNEY: My question is directed to the Premier. Did the Premier receive a donation of \$5,000 from Eureka Capital and on the same day receive \$5,000 from Duvose Limited, both of which are owned by Roger Massy-Greene?

Mr MIKE BAIRD: The member for Canterbury should make those allegations outside this place. Go and make them outside. The member knows that donations are a matter for the party. If she has any concerns, she should refer them. I am very happy to do that. In relation to donations, I love the road to Damascus experience that we have witnessed: All of a sudden members opposite are interested in donations. All of a sudden they are saying, "Hold on. We have to look at donations." I love it. I have been very consistent on this issue. In my inaugural speech I said that the system needed to change. In 2008 I made a submission in relation to campaign finance and I stood proudly alongside the former Premier when we brought reforms to donations to this House. We brought those donations reforms to this House.

The SPEAKER: Order! I direct the Deputy Serjeant-at-Arms to remove the member for Kogarah from the Chamber for the remainder of the day under Standing Order 249.

[Pursuant to standing order the member for Kogarah left the Chamber, accompanied by the Deputy Serjeant-at-Arms.]

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

Ms Linda Burney: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Order! Has the Premier completed his answer?

Mr MIKE BAIRD: No, I have not.

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

Ms Linda Burney: The point of order is relevance under Standing Order 129. The question referred specifically to Eureka Capital and Duvoise Limited.

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

Ms Linda Burney: I would like an answer, Madam Speaker.

The SPEAKER: Order! I have made my ruling. The Premier has the call.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: My question to the Deputy Leader of the Opposition is: How is your hot water bottle going?

Ms Linda Burney: Very good, thank you.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Members on this side of the House said that we need to reform donations. We came into this place, introduced legislation and said that it was about time we cleaned it up.

Mr John Robertson: Point of order: My point of order is relevance under Standing Order 129. There is a letter signed by the Liberal Party that says you got these donations. The Premier was asked whether he can confirm that that was the case.

The SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. The Leader of the Opposition will resume his seat.

Mr John Robertson: If you do not want to answer the question that is all well and good, but the letter says that you did.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I have answered that, and I say in relation to—

The SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition will come to order. He will be removed from the Chamber if he does not resume his seat when directed to do so.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: All members of the House would want to know that we on this side said we needed reform. We brought in reforms limiting donations and trying to limit the influence they had in this State. That is exactly what we did. But what happened when we brought in that legislation? Did members opposite, during their new road to Damascus experience, say, "Yes, we need to reform"? No, they did not say that.

Mr John Robertson: Point of order: My point of order is relevance under Standing Order 129. It is interesting that the Premier talks about a road to Damascus experience. While you introduced the laws you were out there laundering funds.

The SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. The Leader of the Opposition will resume his seat. The Deputy Premier will come to order. I remind the member for Toongabbie that he is on three calls to order.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Members might be interested to hear what members opposite said when donation reform came to the House. The Leader of the Opposition said, "This does nothing to improve democracy in New South Wales." The Deputy Leader of the Opposition said, "This is an attack on the way in which this Parliament operates."

Ms Linda Burney: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Order! If the member for Canterbury is seeking to take a point of order regarding relevance, I remind her that I have ruled the Premier is being relevant to the question asked. He may not be answering the question in the way the member wants, but he is being relevant. That is all that is required of him under the standing orders.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: The point is clear: We have taken a very strong stance. We brought reforms into this place that were knocked back by the unions and the High Court.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: We will take every action to ensure that integrity and trust is returned to politics in New South Wales.

REGIONAL WATER SUPPLIES

Mr KEVIN ANDERSON: My question is addressed to the Deputy Premier. How is the Government securing water supplies for regional communities?

Mr ANDREW STONER: What a good question from the tremendous member for Tamworth. Madam Speaker, I know you are aware that the recent drought that regional communities have faced, particularly in the north-west of our State, has brought into sharp focus the importance of access to reliable, high-quality water supplies. Indeed, just last week I visited beautiful Barraba in the electorate of the member for Tamworth, where we officially opened a new pipeline from Split Rock Dam to Barraba.

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

Mr ANDREW STONER: The new pipeline will deliver a reliable, high-quality water supply, which one would think is the right of all communities in one of the world's most developed nations in the twenty-first century. But the harsh reality is that across regional areas of New South Wales, particularly during the record drought that beset us in the first decade of this millennium, many communities suffered from a lack of reliable supplies of quality water. Because this Government cares about standards of living and access by our citizens to ordinary rights, we are addressing this issue.

In February this year I announced \$40 million for programs to improve water security for regional communities under a new program funded through Restart NSW, the Water Security for Regions Program. At that time five high-priority projects across regional New South Wales worth \$20 million were implemented in communities that include Bourke, Wilcannia, Cobar, Nyngan near Nimmitabel in the Monaro electorate, and Forbes. I am proud that the Government provided funds to help those communities to prepare better for future droughts by having access to supplies of quality water. Today I announce a targeted process to determine the allocation of the remaining \$20 million during the 2013-14 financial year for new priority projects. Based on need, the Government has shortlisted 24 local government areas including the Bega Valley, Bombala, Boorowa, Brewarrina, Cabonne, Central Tablelands, Glen Innes, Lachlan, Lismore, Liverpool Plains, Narrabri, Narromine, Palerang, Parkes, Snowy River, Tamworth Regional Council, Tumbarumba, Tumut, Upper Hunter, Upper Lachlan, Walcha, Walgett, Warren and Yass Valley.

Those local government areas will be able to apply for the balance of our regional water security program, which is the \$20 million to which I referred earlier. The projects that those local government areas put forward must meet a range of criteria that include improving access to reliable supplies of quality water and producing a net economic benefit to the communities they serve. Applications will be assessed by the New South Wales Office of Water and Infrastructure NSW, with assistance from a regional independent assessment panel. Submissions will close on 30 June 2014. The Water Security for Regions Program reflects the Liberal-Nationals Government's commitment to deliver quality infrastructure for people who live in regional areas of New South Wales. The program refers specifically to one of the targets of the State Plan NSW 2021, which relates to access to potable water. In relation to water infrastructure, the State Infrastructure Strategy refers to developing "a comprehensive, prioritised program of new and refurbished regional dams throughout regional New South Wales to address the impacts of climate variability and droughts scenarios".

Pursuant to standing order additional information provided.

Mr ANDREW STONER: The New South Wales Government is not distracted from the task. Earlier the Premier referred to the past three years of this Government under the leadership of Barry O'Farrell when the fortunes of the State were restored. This Government is absolutely committed to continuing the process of good government in New South Wales, including in regional areas of New South Wales. I wrote to the Deputy Prime Minister, Warren Truss, to discuss ways in which our governments can work together to secure reliable supplies of high-quality water for regional communities in the future. The Barraba model is a very good one. The pipeline from Split Rock to Barraba was constructed through cooperation among State, Federal and local governments to deliver water to Barraba. As good rain fell on the Northern Tablelands, practically the entire community of Barraba turned out to witness the water being turned on. That occasion reflected the importance of these issues to people in regional areas of New South Wales. This Government is committed to meeting those needs.

MINISTERS AND POLITICAL DONATIONS

Mr PAUL LYNCH: My question is directed to the Premier. Has the Premier asked members of his new Cabinet to confirm that they have not received any support from prohibited donations or slush funds, such as Eightbyfive?

Mr Mark Coure: If you have an allegation, you know where to make it.

The SPEAKER: Order! There is no allegation. It was a question. The Premier has the call.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: It will surprise no-one to learn that I will not provide for Opposition members any commentary about discussions I might have with this fantastic team of Government members. While we are talking about support and discussions among colleagues, I mention that last weekend I was fascinated to read an article that spoke very clearly about a newly preselected member for Balmain. I do not know what discussions have been going on among colleagues in relation to that.

Mr Paul Lynch: Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 129. Whatever that is about, it is not an answer to the question.

The SPEAKER: Order! I will hear further from the Premier.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: The member for Liverpool asked me about discussions among colleagues, and my answer is very relevant to discussions among colleagues. The article stated that senior Labor sources said "they back her to succeed NSW Labor Opposition Leader John Robertson".

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: In some respects that made me a bit sad because what about our old mate the member for Maroubra?

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: What about our old mate? Suddenly they are disappearing.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will cease arguing across the Chamber. That includes the member for Monaro and the member for Murray-Darling. Government members will come to order. I call the member for Murray-Darling to order for the first time. I call the member for Canterbury to order for the second time.

Mr John Robertson: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Order! When members come to order the Leader of the Opposition may state his point of order. I call the member for Monaro to order for the first time.

Mr John Robertson: My point of order relates to Standing Order 129, relevance. I note we have a new Premier, but we are getting the same old tired speeches.

The SPEAKER: Order! I uphold the point of order. The Premier will return to the leave of the question. The Leader of the Opposition will come to order. The member for Drummoyne will come to order.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: I felt sorry for the member for Maroubra. I do not know why the member for Keira has backed away from him because the member was going to get Treasury. He has backed away from the Leader of the Opposition and has gone with Labor's preselected candidate for Balmain. Every other member of this House says, "No, no. We are backing the current member for Balmain." What is wrong with him?

Mr John Robertson: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition raised this issue. The Premier answered the question in the first 30 seconds of his response to the extent that he believed he could answer it. The Premier has now diverged somewhat from the question to matters that nevertheless are generally relevant.

Mr John Robertson: He has diverged significantly from the question, Madam Speaker.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Premier is being generally relevant to the question asked. I understand the frustration of the Leader of the Opposition, but he will resume his seat. The Leader of the Opposition will resume his seat.

Mr John Robertson: The delivery by the member for Ku-ring-gai was much more entertaining than what we are getting from the Premier.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition will resume his seat. I have requested three times that the Leader of the Opposition resume his seat. I place him on three calls to order. If the Leader of the Opposition does not come to order he will follow his colleague out of the Chamber for the rest of the day. The Premier has the call.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: The issues are becoming very concerning for Opposition members, but we just want to say to the member for Maroubra, "Don't give up the fight. We know that you've still got a chance with your members." The Leader of the Opposition stated that he regretted not having revealed that a bribe was offered to him, and I imagine he also regrets endorsing the preselection of the former member for Balmain. As we look forward to an election campaign in the Balmain electorate, I must say that Opposition members think they will have the champagne corks popping.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: They think, very arrogantly, that they will roll into government. Well, have I got news for them. We are going to fight every day—every single day—between now and the election for the people of New South Wales, and we are going to do that because we are doing a great job for the people of New South Wales and we have more to do. Whatever celebrations those opposite have planned, they need to know that we will fight them every step of the way.

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will come to order. I call the member for Heffron to order for the first time. I call the member for Bankstown to order for the second time.

PUBLIC SECTOR WAGES POLICY

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN: My question is addressed to the Treasurer. How is the Government's wages policy delivering fair wages and improved productivity for the people of New South Wales?

The SPEAKER: Order! Members will come to order.

Mr Barry Collier: Don't mislead the House again.

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

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: We might come to the member for Miranda at some time because he has a certain economics textbook that we might refer to. It makes light reading. I note that the Leader of the Opposition struggled last week with the difference between net and gross, but we will come back to that later in the week.

The SPEAKER: Order! I call the Deputy Premier to order for the first time.

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: I thank the member for Cronulla for his question and congratulate him on becoming Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasury cluster. There is no doubt, in light of what the Premier said earlier in terms of performance of the New South Wales economy, that we have gone from the dark ages under those opposite to being the powerhouse of the nation when it comes to every economic indicator. Let us take jobs. Last month we saw 18,100 jobs created nationally, 16,300 of them created here in New South Wales. It is news that those opposite do not like to hear. It is news that the member for Maroubra, in particular, does not like to hear and, in terms of his performance as finance Minister, it is something we will be revisiting on a regular basis between now and the end of the year.

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

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: Today we have seen a very important ruling by the Court of Appeal.

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

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: It has confirmed that increases in superannuation guarantee charges are absorbed within the Government's wages cap of 2½ per cent. That is good for taxpayers and it is good for our economy. Most importantly, we do not apologise for being fierce advocates when it comes to expenditure of the hard-earned taxpayer dollars of families and businesses around this State. We will not apologise for getting the budget back under control in the way that the former Treasurer did over the past three years.

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

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: We will not apologise for investing heavily in infrastructure and services around the State.

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

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: But in order to do so we have to ensure that the budget is under control. I particularly want to recognise our hardworking public service. What we have seen from those opposite in recent times on this issue has been nothing short of disgraceful. Why is that? It is because if the Court of Appeal had found against the Government today it would have blown an \$865 million hole in the budget. And what does that mean? I will outline some of the costs that could have resulted. We would potentially have had to slash the public sector by 8,000 jobs.

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

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: I note that the member for middle management has a lot to say on this point, but let us look at \$865 million—

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

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: Those opposite supported the union campaign to see the superannuation guarantee charge included above the wages cap, so when people hear Mr John Robertson campaigning over the next 12 months they should know that he will blow potentially almost a billion dollars through this measure alone. What does that mean? It means 7,499 additional classroom teachers, 8,087 additional nurses, 9,610 additional community service caseworkers, and 6,747 additional police officers. If one considers the enormous benefit that can be derived through investing in capital expenditure off the back of this, this is a scary prospect facing New South Wales should those opposite fall into office next March.

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

Mr ANDREW CONSTANCE: It is an \$865 million blowout in the budget, putting the State's triple-A credit rating at risk, and causes the rest of the community to shake their heads. We put the wages policy in place following years in which Labor had the same wages policy, but made the point when we did that we expected any productivity offsets to be met before increasing public service wages. This case is also fairly interesting insofar as it talks about whether superannuation should be included or incorporated in remuneration. For 20 years this has been— [*Time expired.*]

PREMIER AND POLITICAL DONATIONS

Mr MICHAEL DALEY: My question is directed to the Premier. Is it true that the Premier's own electoral funding returns show that he has not declared a single donation in seven years, despite receiving 43 different donations totalling \$170,000?

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Yawn, yawn, yawn. This is the best they have. They have had a long time—if you think about it, they have had some material to work with and many weeks to get it—and this is the best they have.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: The Liberal Party takes the donations; that is what they do. If the member for Maroubra wants to raise these sorts of allegations he should go ahead and raise them, but the Liberal Party is very clear in relation to its policy on this. I note that the member talks about documents and papers. What interests me, particularly in relation to the member for Maroubra, is winding our way back to last question time. There was a fantastic moment where to the former Premier, off the back of a truck, came a document. Do members remember that document? It was called—and everyone finds this hard to believe—the New South Wales Labor Policy Forum. It would be a pretty quick forum. The problem those opposite have is that the Jobs and Economy Policy Commission actually did some work and put together a document, which those opposite have, and interestingly we have not heard a word of denial since the document was revealed. What is interesting is what will happen to the State if Labor takes power.

Dr Andrew McDonald: Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 129. The Premier's answer has nothing to do with the question. We do not use our forums to launder funds.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Premier answered the question at the beginning of his response and is now addressing relevant matters.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Whatever they do in their forums, the interesting thing they do here—

The SPEAKER: Order! I remind the member for Macquarie Fields that he is on three calls to order.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: What is in Labor's DNA? This is Labor's policy: They want to build infrastructure. That is good—it is a great start—and we are doing that, but how do they want to build it?

Ms Linda Burney: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Order! Does the member's point of order refer to relevance?

Ms Linda Burney: Yes.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Premier answered the question in the first 20 seconds or so of his response and his comments remain relevant.

Ms Linda Burney: There have been three questions and not one answer.

The SPEAKER: Order! There is no point of order. The Premier has the call.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: We know how Labor pays for infrastructure. In their policy document—not mine—they pay for it with an increased tax take and more debt. That is the latest DNA. More tax, more debt, more tax, more debt. It is in Labor's DNA. They have not denied it.

Mr Michael Daley: Point of order: My point of order relates to Standing Order 129. The question related to the Premier's own electoral return, not some online survey.

The SPEAKER: Order! The Premier has answered the question and he continues to be relevant to it. There is no point of order.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: The member for Maroubra is upset that the people are switching to the next member for Balmain. We want the member for Balmain to know that we are backing him.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Those opposite have yet to explain to the people of New South Wales why they want to increase taxes, why they want more debt, why they want a broad-based land tax and why they want to

introduce a congestion charge. That is the road map those opposite are trying to take to the State. The good news is that this side of the House is pursuing sensible policies. We have reduced by \$10 billion the debt forecast by those opposite and we have reduced expenditure with sensible policies that have started to drive the economy and build infrastructure. At some point those opposite will have to explain to the people of New South Wales how they will fund any policy they put forward. Currently, those opposite are \$4 billion a year behind with not \$1 going towards infrastructure. Their answer is right here: Those opposite want the State to raise its debt, lose its credit rating and put a tax on every New South Wales household. We do not want to follow that plan. The good news for the people of New South Wales is that we continue to make responsible policies and decisions that produce good results for the State.

HOUSING SUPPLY

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS: My question is addressed to the Minister for Planning, and Minister for Women. How is the Government putting downward pressure on house prices by increasing supply?

Ms PRU GOWARD: I thank the member for her question, which I am pleased to answer for a couple of reasons. First, I know the importance of better planning to the member for Menai as her electorate has many challenges; and, secondly, there is a great deal of good news that will not be welcomed by those opposite. They hate good news. What a difference three years makes.

The SPEAKER: Order! I remind members that many of them are on three calls to order. Members who are directed to leave the Chamber will be removed for the rest of the day, not just for the remainder of question time.

Ms PRU GOWARD: In three years communities across this State have benefited from this Government's long-term approach to better planning, better infrastructure and better services.

Mr Michael Daley: Particularly about Wallarah.

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

Ms PRU GOWARD: This is a good Government that was ably led by the member for Ku-ring-gai for three years. I thank Barry O'Farrell for his rock-solid leadership over the past three years.

Mr Michael Daley: Oh yes, rock solid.

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

Ms PRU GOWARD: He led us to victory against a rotten Labor Party and was the first Liberal leader to do so since 1988. We delivered exactly what the electorate expected us to deliver. The man who is now Premier was also there from day one in government, with steady hands controlling the finances of this State. This good Government will continue the good work it has been doing for the past three years with renewed vigour and focus to transform this State and make it number one again. In the Planning portfolio alone, under the fantastic former Minister, we were able to stimulate the economy, create thousands of jobs and keep downward pressure on home prices. Just yesterday I announced the highest rate of housing approvals in New South Wales in 11 years. Not since 2003 have more homes been approved for more families and communities than in the past 12 months.

For those interested, 50,976 new homes were approved in New South Wales in the 12 months to March 2014, which represents a 30 per cent increase. Since this Government came to office the average monthly approved numbers have been 3,415 dwellings compared with only 2,657 per month in the last five years of the Labor Government. These are homes for almost 51,000 families across New South Wales: some in regional New South Wales, some in suburban Sydney and some close to the central business district. Last year this meant 11,658 new dwellings for Western Sydney. These new homes are for families in the electorates of Riverstone, Mulgoa, Hawkesbury, Castle Hill, Londonderry and Penrith.

Mrs Barbara Perry: How come it is so spread over there and I am coping it all?

The SPEAKER: Order! This is not an opportunity for the member for Auburn to question the Minister.

Ms PRU GOWARD: I welcome questions. It also meant 4,603 dwellings for south-western Sydney, about which members representing the electorates of Campbelltown, Camden and Wollondilly are very conscious. No wonder Western Sydney has become the powerhouse since the election of this new Government in 2011.

Mrs Barbara Perry: It is inequitable; absolutely inequitable. What about equity?

The SPEAKER: Order! The member for Auburn will come to order. Her comments are inappropriate. The Minister has the call.

Ms PRU GOWARD: Wait for the good news, member for Auburn, because 5,946 new dwellings were approved in suburbs north of the central business district, 4,843 new homes in suburbs south of the central business district and 4,583 in the city and eastern suburbs.

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

Ms PRU GOWARD: While talking about the good news, we need reminding of the one good thing that occurred early in this Government's life: abolishing part 3A. Everyone remembers part 3A—the old ministerial tick-and-flick trick.

Pursuant to standing order additional information provided.

Ms PRU GOWARD: Those opposite love part 3A, especially the former planning Minister, former Premier and former member for Heffron, who I learned from weekend television now wants to pursue a career in television. With all those developments on which she signed off with a flick of her pen, clearly she thought—

Mr Ryan Park: Point of order: My point of order is under Standing Order 129. The Minister's remarks about the former member for Heffron are completely irrelevant.

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

Ms PRU GOWARD: The former Premier clearly thought she was a property expert. Given the events of the past few days—I understand David Gyngell is in town feeling a bit sorry for himself—perhaps she could get a job on *The Block*. But I digress: This Government got rid of part 3A and those opposite cannot stand it. They will go to their deaths ashamed of what they did. The communities that fought so hard to get rid of part 3A remember it very well. My electorate hated it and rallies were held across the State.

Mr Ron Hoenig: Which part 3A?

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

Mr Ron Hoenig: Explain it.

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

Ms PRU GOWARD: Communities discovered that Labor had denied them a say in their own future. We inherited that legacy and we got rid of it in 88 days.

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

Ms PRU GOWARD: Since then we have been committed to reforming the planning system to give communities a say where Labor had centralised control behind closed doors. That is what this good Government has been doing and will continue to do. [*Time expired.*]

The SPEAKER: Order! I remind members that several of them are on three calls to order. Members who are directed to leave the Chamber will be removed for the rest of the day. All members who are on one or two calls to order are deemed to be on three calls to order.

LIBERAL PARTY AND POLITICAL DONATIONS

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON: My question is addressed to the Premier. Why has the Premier failed to shut down the Liberal slush funds, including the Millennium Forum and Free Enterprise Foundation, which counsel assisting the Independent Commission Against Corruption has alleged have been used to launder donations from prohibited donors?

Mr MIKE BAIRD: Today I announced a significant appointment. The Liberal Party State Director, Tony Nutt, is taking the action required to get to the bottom of any wrongdoing. We make no apologies for that as it is exactly what should be done. Any wrongdoing needs to be sorted and the consequences will flow. Tony Nutt made that decision today and also announced a significant appointment in Michael Symons, who will go through everything in detail and find any wrongdoing to provide full confidence in the actions we are taking. I say to the Leader of the Opposition again that I find it incredible that members opposite park their moral high horse in the foyer and when they saunter in here they think they are whiter than white when it comes to donations. Their response to the donations inquiry was that they were against it at every point and turn. When we brought donations reform into this House, they were against it.

Mr John Robertson: Point of order: It is relevance under Standing Order 129. The question was specifically about why the Premier has failed to shut the Millennium Forum and the Free Enterprise Foundation.

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

Mr MIKE BAIRD: The State director is dealing with those issues, as he should. We heard what the Leader of the Opposition said. This is what the member for Keira said about the donations reform: It is nothing more than a mean-spirited, cruel, evil attack. He said it was an attack.

Mr John Robertson: Point of order—

The SPEAKER: Order! Is it a different point of order?

Mr John Robertson: No. Madam Speaker, the Premier is now flouting your ruling. He has gone straight back to those matters—

The SPEAKER: Order! If the Premier were flouting my ruling he would know about it.

Mr MIKE BAIRD: The good news for the people of New South Wales is that members on this side of the House are genuine in their desire to reform the donation system in this State. We are genuine. When I raised the issue in my maiden speech, when I made a public submission, I do not remember how many Opposition members came running to my side saying, "We want to work with you. That is a fantastic idea." How many of those members opposite came across? The member for Maroubra was not there. Do members think the Leader of the Opposition came? Did anybody come? Only the member for Wollongong came, but she was talking about budget parties; she was not talking about anything to do with donation reform that is for sure.

We say to the people of New South Wales that we have heard the concerns. In relation to lobbyists and donations, we will be responding for the good of the State. We will be taking a considered approach to the challenges that have been raised. We have said that we do not care what wrongdoing is found; it must be stamped out. We make no apologies. For many months and years we have seen events occur at the Independent Commission Against Corruption that the Opposition did nothing about. We will take action to ensure that the people of New South Wales can have trust in politics in New South Wales.

Question time concluded at 3.33 p.m.

UNPROCLAIMED LEGISLATION

The SPEAKER: Pursuant to Standing Order 117, I table a list detailing all legislation unproclaimed 90 calendar days after assent as at 6 May 2014.

OMBUDSMAN**Report**

The Speaker announced the receipt, pursuant to section 31AA of the Ombudsman Act 1974, of the report of the NSW Ombudsman entitled "Review of the NSW Child Protection System: Are Things Improving?", dated April 2014.

Ordered to be printed.

NSW CHILD DEATH REVIEW TEAM**Report**

The Speaker announced the receipt, pursuant to section 34I of the Community Services (Complaints, Reviews and Monitoring) Act 1993, of the report entitled "Causes of Death of Children with a Child Protection History 2002-2011", dated April 2014.

Ordered to be printed.

REGISTER OF DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS

The Speaker tabled the Supplementary Ordinary Returns by Members of the Legislative Assembly as at 31 December 2013.

Ordered to be printed.

DEPARTMENT OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**Annual Report**

The Speaker tabled an erratum to the Report of the Department of Legislative Assembly for the year ended 30 June 2013.

Ordered to be incorporated in the report.

AUDITOR-GENERAL'S REPORTS

The Clerk announced the receipt, pursuant to section 63C of the Public Finance and Audit Act 1983, of the following performance audit reports of the Auditor-General:

- (1) "Fitness of Firefighters: Fire and Rescue NSW and NSW Rural Fire Service", dated April 2014, received out of session and authorised to be printed on 1 April 2014
- (2) "Management of Volunteers: New South Wales State Emergency Service", dated April 2014, received out of session and authorised to be printed on 15 April 2014

ANNUAL REPORTS

The Clerk announced the receipt, pursuant to section 35 of the Law Enforcement and National Security (Assumed Identities) Act 2010, of the following reports for the year ended 30 June 2013 received out of session and authorised to be printed on 2 April 2014:

- (1) Australian Federal Police
- (2) Australian Taxation Office
- (3) Corrective Services NSW
- (4) Independent Commission Against Corruption
- (5) New South Wales Crime Commission
- (6) Police Integrity Commission

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE**Government Response to Report**

The Clerk announced the receipt of the Government's response to Report No. 11/55 of the Public Accounts Committee entitled "Efficiency and Effectiveness of the Audit Office of New South Wales", received out of session and authorised to be printed on 2 April 2014.

COMMITTEE ON THE OMBUDSMAN, POLICE INTEGRITY COMMISSION AND CRIME COMMISSION**Government Response to Report**

The Clerk announced the receipt of the Government's response to Report No. 7/55 of the Committee on the Ombudsman, Police Integrity Commission and Crime Commission entitled "2013 General Meetings with the Police Integrity Commission, the Inspector of the Police Integrity Commission, the NSW Crime Commission, the Information and Privacy Commission, the NSW Ombudsman, the Child Death Review Team", received out of session and authorised to be printed on 10 April 2014.

OFFICE OF TRANSPORT SAFETY INVESTIGATIONS**Report**

The Clerk announced the receipt, pursuant to section 46D of the Passenger Transport Act 1990, of the report of the Office of Transport Safety Investigations entitled "Bus Safety Report, Bus Fires in New South Wales 2013", received out of session and authorised to be printed on 15 April 2014.

COMMITTEE ON LAW AND SAFETY**Government Response to Report**

The Clerk announced the receipt of the following Government responses received out of session and authorised to be printed on 16 April 2014:

- (1) Further Government Report to Report 1/55 of the Legislative Assembly Committee on Law and Safety entitled "Inclusion of Donor Details on the Register of Births"
- (2) Further Government response to Report 2/55 of the Legislative Assembly Committee on Law and Safety entitled "Managing Donor Conception Information"

SOCIAL POLICY COMMITTEE**Government Response to Report**

The Clerk announced the receipt of the Government's response to Report No. 2/55 of the Social Policy Committee entitled "Provision of Alcohol to Minors", received out of session and authorised to be printed on 23 April 2014.

LEGISLATION REVIEW COMMITTEE**Report**

Mr Stephen Bromhead, as Chair, tabled the report entitled "Legislation Review Digest No. 54/55", dated 6 May 2014, together with minutes of the committee meeting regarding Legislation Review Digest No. 53/55, dated 25 March 2014.

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:

Pymont and Ultimo Bus Services

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

Kings Cross Late-night Transport Services

Petition calling on the Government to provide late-night transport services in Kings Cross, received from **Mr Alex Greenwich**.

Sydney Electorate Public High School

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

Same-sex Marriage

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

Byrrell Creek Dam

Petition requesting that the construction of the Byrrell Creek Dam proceed, received from **Mr Thomas George**.

Byrrell Creek Dam

Petition requesting that the construction of the Byrrell Creek Dam proceed, received from **Mr Geoff Provest**.

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**.

Slaughterhouse Monitoring

Petition requesting mandatory closed-circuit television for all New South Wales slaughterhouses, received from **Mr Alex Greenwich**.

Container Deposit Levy

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

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

The Drip Gorge

Petition calling on the Government to support the gazettal of The Drip block, lot 45, and land bordering the Goulburn River as national park, received from **Mr Andrew Gee**.

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

The Hon. Mike Baird—Human Organ Trafficking and Harvesting—lodged 19 March 2014 (Mr Richard Amery)

The Hon. Jillian Skinner—Prince of Wales Hospital Jobs and Services—lodged 5 March 2014 (Mr Michael Daley)

The Hon. Jillian Skinner—Palliative Care Services—lodged 18 March 2014 (Mr Barry O'Farrell)

The Hon. Michael Gallacher—Oxley Local Area Command—lodged 25 February 2014 (Mr Kevin Anderson)

The Hon. Brad Hazzard—Thornton Hall—lodged 25 February 2014 (Mr Stuart Ayres)

The Hon. Robyn Parker—Old Bar Beach—lodged 25 March 2014 (Mr Stephen Bromhead)

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Business Lapsed

General Business Orders of the Day (for Bills) Nos 1 to 3 and General Business Notices of Motions (General Notices) Nos 2749, 2751 to 2766, 2768 to 2790, and 2792 to 2804, lapsed pursuant to Standing Order 105 (3).

CONSIDERATION OF MOTIONS TO BE ACCORDED PRIORITY

State Economy

Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Hawkesbury) [3.41 p.m.]: In seeking priority for my motion I remind the House that the Government's fundamental objective is to provide the services so desperately needed across this great State. The Government has not shirked its task in roads, public transport, health, education and supporting vulnerable people. In three years we have an impressive record. Every Government member has worked hard to ensure that their communities have been satisfied with important infrastructure initiatives because for 16 years they were deprived by our predecessors. There is no more glaring example than in my own backyard—namely, the Rouse Hill development area absorbed a massive amount of residential growth but was deprived of important services such as a rail link. Under the wisdom, guidance and tuition of our great Minister for Transport we now have the North West Rail Link—not a broken promise by our predecessors; \$8.3 billion has been invested in this important rail project.

The only way the Government can deliver important services to the people of New South Wales is if we have a sustainable economy and, as the Treasurer and the Premier said earlier today, we are in a sustainable position. However, it is only through the hard work and diligence of the Government that we have arrived at that point. People would not be surprised to learn that we inherited a very challenging deficit when we came to office three years ago. We had the worst economic growth rate of any State in this country and the highest unemployment figures, but we now have the highest rate of growth and the lowest unemployment figures. Proudly, since being in government we have been able to provide employment for no fewer than 130,000 people. That has put downward pressure on unemployment and has provided a significant boost to the economy. There is nothing more important than providing as many people as possible with a job and a home, and then linking those homes with important infrastructure and employment areas so that people can work and stay in their local areas.

Political Donations

Mr JOHN ROBERTSON (Blacktown—Leader of the Opposition) [3.44 p.m.]: My motion deserves to be accorded priority for a number of reasons, not least of which is the pathetic performance today by Premier Baird. All we have heard for 2½ weeks is rhetoric and talk, but there has been no action. Despite the Premier saying, "I am going to be their worst nightmare. I am going to give it to them. They had better look out." What have we heard? He has done nothing about closing down the Millennium Forum or the Free Enterprise Institute.

He has done nothing about the internal audit conducted by Tony Nutt—now there is someone who is independent. Tony Nutt worked for John Howard and was the State Director of the New South Wales Liberal Party. He is not going to pull a rort or make sure that nothing comes out.

What we have got is a Premier who has talked himself up, and in 2½ weeks he has done absolutely nothing. He says he wants to be tough. If he was tough on day one when allegations were made at the Independent Commission Against Corruption, he would have shut down the Millennium Forum. He would have closed the Free Enterprise Institute. He would have shut down Micky-Tech, but he has done nothing. If he was serious today then he would have said, "I am going to ban all public donations." But what do we get? The Premier said, "No, I think we should have a debate." The public is beyond having a debate. What they have seen play out at the Independent Commission Against Corruption is a complete debacle. Those on the other side have been systematically rorting the system, putting in place structures to circumvent the law and, to quote Geoffrey Watson, counsel assisting the Independent Commission Against Corruption, "Putting in place a system to launder donations from prohibited donors."

Those on the other side are shaking their heads in disbelief. Why are three members sitting on the cross benches over this matter? Why did the Minister for Police and Emergency Services resign? Why has the Minister for Newcastle disappeared? He is not here. In fact, this morning he was packing his bags and running away. What is he running away from? He is running away from the Premier, who has said he was going to be tough but has no spine and no ticker when it comes to dealing with these issues. Why? Those opposite are nervous. Who will be next?

Question—That the motion of the member for Hawkesbury be agreed to—put.

The House divided.

Ayes, 65

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

Noes, 23

Mr Barr	Ms Hornery	Mr Rees
Ms Burney	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.

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! I draw the attention of members to the presence in the public gallery of Mr David Harris, former member for Wyong.

STATE ECONOMY**Motion Accorded Priority**

Mr RAY WILLIAMS (Hawkesbury) [3.57 p.m.]: I move:

That this House notes that the Government is getting on with the job of transforming New South Wales by rebuilding the State's economy and investing in the three pillars of:

- (1) improving front-line services;
- (2) delivering vital infrastructure; and
- (3) protecting the vulnerable.

As I said earlier, this Government remains committed to providing important infrastructure across all levels of service delivery for the people of New South Wales, and there is only one way to do that—that is, to have a sustainable and sound economy. It is no secret that when we came to office three years ago we found a \$5 billion shortfall in the State's budget. We found that New South Wales had one of the slowest rates of economic growth of any State in this country. We also found that we had a very high unemployment rate. The Government has made an outstanding effort to live within its means, to restore some financial credibility and, at the same time, to invest billions of dollars in important infrastructure across every area of service delivery. I look at the changes in my own backyard. In fact, I should declare a conflict of interest because my electorate is to receive the \$8.3 billion North West Rail Link. That is a fundamental public transport outcome for my electorate.

Mr Nathan Rees: There will be 30-storey buildings around every station.

Mr RAY WILLIAMS: I note the interjection of the member for Toongabbie. He is absolutely thrilled that the people of his electorate will also have the option of using not only the Western Line but also one of those very important park and ride stations at which we will be providing an additional 5,000 car parking spaces. People within the Toongabbie electorate will be able to catch the North West Rail Link directly to massive growth areas such as the Norwest Business Park, Macquarie Centre, North Sydney or even right into the central business district. A government cannot do that unless it is committed to financial credibility and sustainability.

As we heard from the Treasurer a few minutes ago, this Government has done important work in fighting against the 2.5 per cent increase to superannuation. That has saved \$850 million in this budget, which, incidentally, is another \$850 million that will be injected into further infrastructure. If we add that to our \$62 billion infrastructure spend in this term of government, we see that there is improvement and investment across all areas. We have invested \$13 billion in WestConnex and \$1.5 billion in NorthConnex. We have also committed to and commenced building many other important link roads—I speak of none other than the Erskine Park Link Road, which links important growth areas in Penrith to employment zones. Other examples are Schofields Road and Richmond Road—the site of Sydney Business Park, which I opened 18 months ago—that link the important growth area of Marsden Park directly to the M7.

In the Health portfolio there is not a hospital around this State that is not receiving a massive injection of funding. We have invested \$4.7 billion in critical health infrastructure across New South Wales. We have also made a massive investment in front-line services. In total there are now an additional 5,000 important front-line service positions, including police, nurses, doctors and teachers. One of our proudest achievements will be the billions of dollars to be invested in the National Disability Insurance Scheme. That is a record about which every Government member can feel rightly proud. Government members are representing their communities and they have helped to restore the budget in New South Wales. We have lived within our means while at the same time providing critical investment in important areas.

Pursuant to sessional order business interrupted and motion lapsed.

LEGAL PROFESSION UNIFORM LAW APPLICATION BILL 2014**Second Reading**

Debate resumed from 27 March 2014.

Mr GARRY EDWARDS (Swansea) [4.02 p.m.]: I support the Legal Profession Uniform Law Application Bill 2014. The bill aims to create a uniformly regulated legal profession across New South Wales, Victoria and other jurisdictions that elect to participate in the uniform scheme in future. The bill represents the outcome of a Council of Australian Governments [COAG] task force from 2009 to 2011, which aimed to deliver harmonised regulation of the legal profession across all States and Territories. The goal of this uniform scheme is to introduce uniform professional regulation, enhance consumer protection, protect the independence of the legal profession and reduce compliance costs for law practices to improve competitiveness in both national and international markets.

The uniform law offers many benefits for consumers and those working in the legal profession. Consumers will benefit from protections and rights across jurisdictions and will have access to new low-cost ways to resolve service complaints with practices. Consumers will also have a tailored set of consumer friendly orders such as a simple apology or an order that work be done at a reduced cost. The bill strengthens billing practices to ensure that principals are responsible for the legal costs charged by their law practices.

For those in the legal profession the uniform scheme will reduce the regulatory and compliance costs for firms operating in New South Wales and Victoria because the office systems and precedents required in each State will be identical. Lawyers will practise seamlessly across jurisdictions and regulatory standards will replace disparate legislation. Legal firms operating in different States will be able to maintain a single cost agreement and the same trust account management software.

The DEPUTY-SPEAKER (Mr Thomas George): Order! There is too much audible conversation in the Chamber.

Mr GARRY EDWARDS: The bill applies the uniform law as a law of New South Wales and includes jurisdictional provisions that establish the local institutional framework required to facilitate the operation of the uniform law in New South Wales. These include providing for matters which the uniform law allows to be matters for local legislation, including processes for costs assessment, procedural provisions for disciplinary hearings in the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal [NCAT], and the keeping of registers of information about the profession and the fidelity fund. They also include providing for the functioning of local regulatory bodies such as the New South Wales Legal Services Commissioner, Legal Profession Admission Board, Bar Association and Law Society; and providing for the Public Purpose Fund, Solicitors Mutual Indemnity Fund, and approval of practitioners' professional indemnity insurance policies.

The bill also specifies the functions that local regulatory authorities will carry out. These remain the same as existing regulatory functions exercised by those bodies. In particular, the Law Society and Bar Association will continue to issue practising certificates. The Law Society and Bar Association will also continue to conduct trust account inspections. The New South Wales Legal Services Commissioner will continue to oversee complaint handling. The Law Society and Bar Association will be delegated powers to handle complaints as they currently do. The Legal Profession Admission Board will continue to make admission recommendations to the Supreme Court.

Although at present only New South Wales and Victoria have committed to the uniform scheme, it is expected that other States and Territories will join once the regulatory framework is established. The Legal Profession Uniform Law Application Bill 2014 represents significant progress towards establishing a seamless national legal practice while improving consumer protections. This bill ensures that those benefits will be enjoyed by consumers and lawyers in New South Wales and other States and Territories in future. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr PAUL LYNCH (Liverpool) [4.07 p.m.]: I lead for the Opposition in debate on the Legal Profession Uniform Law Application Bill 2014. The Opposition does not oppose the bill. The bill intends to introduce a uniform law to regulate the legal profession in New South Wales and Victoria and potentially in other jurisdictions at a later date. The process to get the bill to this stage has been lengthy. The process to

establish uniform regulation of the legal profession in this country commenced with the Council of Australian Governments [COAG] in 2009. Labor has always been supportive of this process. Frankly, I do not think it is credible to not support national consistency on this topic in the twenty-first century.

The present position is that only two States: Victoria and New South Wales will be part of the national regulation. Whilst that is only two States, it is certainly the overwhelming bulk of the legal practitioners in this country—representing almost three-quarters. Other jurisdictions previously indicated that they wished to be part of this but they then withdrew. There is speculation that some of those jurisdictions may be reconsidering their positions and re-joining. The uniform law has proceeded through the Victorian Parliament, although that took longer than anticipated because of the fractious nature of that Parliament's lower House. The Victorian legislation is annexed as a note to the bill before this House and is adopted as New South Wales legislation as a result of this bill. Whilst the Victorian jurisdiction is thus the first to legislate, the offices for the new positions of the Legal Services Council and a commissioner for uniform legal services regulation will be located in Sydney.

The application of the Victorian Act, the uniform legislation, will occur in stages. At first only provisions relating to new regulatory bodies and frameworks for uniform rules will commence. It seems the more substantive provisions will not start before 1 January 2015. The initial rollout of the uniform scheme will create a common legal services market for those two States, which have the vast bulk of the country's legal practitioners. The scheme aims to harmonise regulatory obligations while retaining the local performance of regulatory functions. I certainly do not propose to deal with the provisions of the bill in detail. One senior practitioner described them to me as being in eye-glazing detail, and he is right. I note support for the bill from both the Bar Association and the Law Society. In my view, the only real issues that have been raised relate to some concerns that this legislation disadvantages small firms of legal practitioners. I must say that that is not really my analysis of the proposals.

I believe that a number of changes, such as a new short form of costs disclosure for matters in which costs are less than \$3,000 and some sensible changes to time limits, certainly will have benefits for small practices. The final point I make is to welcome the inclusion of new section 160C, which substantially restates the existing law. This provision abrogates the right of the Crown to appoint Queen's Counsel. As I say, I welcome this and the Government's position on the bill. For certain people, some of the rhetoric around this issue amounts to a rerun of the republican debate, but my primary support of the current position and for the bill is entirely unrelated to that and to a far more significant issue in the sense that there is another quite important principle involved. The use of the title "Queen's Counsel" or "King's Counsel" means some endorsement by the monarch.

Under our current constitutional arrangements, the monarch must act on the advice of his or her Ministers. That means, fairly plainly, that the Government would have to be involved in the appointment of Queen's Counsel. Some other jurisdictions retain the involvement of the Government in the determination of who should be Senior Counsel. In this State the Government does not, and has not for many years, adopted that view. It was an initiative of a conservative government to remove the Queen's Counsel title and remove the Government's involvement in that procedure, which Labor has always supported. It has been a bipartisan position and I think it should remain that way. I note in passing that the so-called financial advantages for individual counsel being able to describe themselves as "Queen's Counsel" seem to be absolutely minute, if not entirely absent. The Opposition does not oppose the bill.

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla) [4.11 p.m.]: I support the Legal Profession Uniform Law Application Bill 2014, which will apply the Legal Profession Uniform Law as a law of New South Wales to create a uniformly regulated legal profession across New South Wales, Victoria and any other jurisdictions that choose to participate in future in the uniform scheme. Since 2004 nearly every Australian jurisdiction has enacted legal profession legislation on the basis of a national model bill, but there has not been a single national framework to regulate the legal profession because of variations among jurisdictions. In February 2009 the Council of Australian Governments decided to bring regulation of the legal profession onto its microeconomic and regulatory reform agenda. After the decision was made in May that year the National Legal Profession Reform Taskforce was appointed to make recommendations relating to the proposed draft legislation.

At the time it was agreed that the reform process would provide an opportunity not only to increase uniformity but also to encourage clarity and accessibility of consumer protection. In late 2009 the task force began a consultation process and released several discussion papers. In May 2010 a proposed new framework for national legislation was released in the form of a draft national law and national rules. That was followed by

a three-month public consultation period. In November 2010 the task force released an interim report, which addressed in part some of the issues that had arisen from the consultation, and made recommendations related to funding. At the end of 2010 amended draft legislation was released, which reflected the revised views of the task force. In February 2011 the Council of Australian Governments agreed in principle to settled reforms to legal profession regulation by May that year, except for Western Australia and South Australia. By May 2011 the Council of Australian Governments had received the revised legal profession reform package. Later it was reported that Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory had reservations about the scheme.

In September 2011 the Commonwealth Attorney-General released the revised draft national law after discussions between the Attorneys General of the Commonwealth, New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland and the Northern Territory. In October 2011 the Commonwealth Attorney-General announced that a new National Legal Services Board and a new National Legal Services Commissioner would be established in New South Wales. In October 2012 the Queensland Attorney General announced that Queensland would not be participating in the national scheme. On the website of the Commonwealth Attorney-General, he notes that legal services are a critical part of Australia's economy and require clear and efficient national regulation. However, the current diversity of regulation across jurisdictions in Australia imposes unnecessary costs and red tape for lawyers and consumers. The reforms of the national uniform legal profession regulation will enhance consumer protection, protect the independence of the legal profession and help to ensure access to justice.

Because of reduced compliance costs between New South Wales and Victoria, law practices based in those States will also have their competitiveness enhanced in both national and international markets. The uniform law will standardise regulatory obligations, cut red tape for law firms and still provide for a significant degree of local involvement in the performance of regulatory functions. The bill will apply the uniform law as a law of New South Wales and will include jurisdictional provisions that establish the local institutional framework that is required to facilitate the operation of uniform law in this State. Those provisions, first, provide for matters that the uniform law allows to be matters for local legislation, including processes for costs assessment, procedural provisions for disciplinary hearings in the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal [NCAT], the keeping of registers of information about the profession and the fidelity fund; secondly, provide for the functioning of local regulatory bodies such as the New South Wales Legal Services Commissioner, the Legal Profession Admission Board, the Bar Association and the Law Society; and, thirdly, provide for a Public Purpose Fund, Solicitors Mutual Indemnity Fund and approval of practitioners' professional indemnity insurance policies.

The bill also specifies the functions that local regulatory authorities will carry out. They remain the same as existing regulatory functions exercised by those bodies. In particular, the Law Society and Bar Association will continue to issue practising certificates and will continue to conduct trust account inspections. The New South Wales Legal Services Commissioner will continue to oversee complaint handling. The Law Society and the Bar Association will be delegated powers to handle complaints, as they currently do, and the Legal Profession Admission Board will continue to make admission recommendations to the Supreme Court. The new uniform scheme will benefit consumers, who will have access to new low-cost ways to resolve service-level complaints, including new consumer friendly laws such as a simple apology or an order that work be redone at a reduced cost. The duty imposed on law practices to charge fair and reasonable costs and the strengthening of billing practices to ensure that principals are responsible for the costs charged by their firm will enhance consumer protection, which will lead to fewer disputes and facilitate enforcement when required.

Both Victoria and New South Wales are leading implementation of this important reform for the regulation of the legal profession as it continues its expansion in markets. The stakeholders in New South Wales who have made a significant contribution to the development of this legislation include the Bar Association, the Law Society, the Office of the Legal Services Commissioner, the Legal Profession Admissions Board and the Supreme Court. This legislation is an important step forward in enhancing uniformity and consumer protection across Australia, protecting the independence of the profession and reducing compliance costs for law practices. For all those reasons and all those advantages, I commend the bill to the House.

Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron) [4.18 p.m.]: I indicate that the Opposition does not oppose the Legal Profession Uniform Law Application Bill 2014. As a member of this House, one of the things I marvel at is the close scrutiny of legislation as we enact laws for the people of New South Wales that may well impact upon them profoundly. I marvel also at how members of the Legislative Assembly pay such great attention to the words that indicate this bill is in fact a reform of the entire legal profession of this State and at how members are so attuned to the fact that what they are doing may have an impact spanning decades. As I tried to read through this bill, I referred to the Attorney General's second reading speech. As a member of the Bar of New South

Wales, I struggled to understand it. I may not be the sharpest tool in the drawer, and my parliamentary colleagues in this House will be able to enlighten me with an understanding of what they will be voting for. However, I will do my best to contribute what I do know, and no doubt others will enlighten us before the ultimate vote on this bill.

I know that this is a staged approach in an attempt to provide uniform regulations for the legal profession in Australia. That is an ambitious goal that is worth supporting. This country has a population of only about 23 million and our history is that of the development of colonies, with different professions in different States developing their own laws and regulations—which is perfectly understandable as we are all effectively sovereign states and were sovereign colonies. Nevertheless, with the number of people in this country, one would think there would be a uniform approach to the legal profession. The staged process was commenced in 2009 arising from the Council of Australian Governments [COAG] under the Rudd-Gillard Government. It was commenced by the Labor Government in this State and continued to be progressed in New South Wales and Victoria by the current State governments. Queensland had also been involved but, with the election of the conservative government, Queensland withdrew from the process.

I imagine that Premier Newman, being quite concerned about the legal profession's view on some of Queensland's legislation—particularly in relation to bikies—thought the profession was not something that his Government needed to support or listen to, and so withdrew from the process. The process having commenced, changes were made to the laws in response to feedback from all States and Territories, and also through the Standing Council on Law and Justice as well as the Council of Chief Justices of Australia and New Zealand. The bill proposes some standard regulations that will apply in Victoria and New South Wales in respect of a number of the complexities of the profession, such as practising certificates and registration certificates, trust accounts and public purpose funds, legal costs and particular kinds of costs, legal costs and costs assessments, professional indemnity insurance, fidelity cover, mortgage practices, and registers and publicity of disciplinary action.

How that translates to a consumer of legal services is not something that I understand fully. But no doubt the newly appointed Attorney General, who is considerably experienced in the practice of law, will enlighten the House when he replies to the debate using terminology that I might actually understand so that I can convey those views to my constituents because, as I indicated earlier, I needed an interpreter to understand the previous Attorney General's second reading speech. There is one part of the legislation that I am delighted is contained therein. It is clause 160 of the Legal Profession Uniform Law Application Bill 2014, which prohibits official schemes for the recognition of seniority or status. Subclause (1) states:

Any prerogative right or power of the Crown to appoint persons as Queen's Counsel or to grant letters patent of precedence to counsel remains abrogated.

Effectively, that means for anybody who subscribes to the uniform law there will not be a royal warrant for the appointment of Queen's Counsel or King's Counsel. As a young solicitor, I remember serving on the Labor Party Legal and Constitutional Committee and proposing that suggestion, much to the horror of a number of people sitting around the table who, despite their republican views, aspired to the allocation of the royal warrant and appointment as Queen's Counsel. It was to my utmost delight and surprise that it was the conservative Fahey Government in New South Wales that abolished the title. I never for one moment expected that the Tories would abolish the Queen's Counsel title, which in fact they did. The member for Cronulla—a man for whom I have enormous respect—contributed to this debate and, as he left the House, was signing his death warrant as to being granted in future the royal warrant of Queen's Counsel in place of his Senior Counsel title.

No doubt Premier Fahey was acting on advice and expressing the views of his former partner, the late John Marsden, but in the past 12 months or so there has been some suggestion that the royal warrant should be returned. Whilst I might have a bit of fun with those who wish to engage in discussing the return of the royal warrant, there was always a problem with granting the Queen's Counsel title. The Attorney General of the day made the appointment. As a matter of practice, the Bar Association would recommend the appointment of silks to the Attorney General and he would grant the Queen's Counsel title or the royal warrant, or would advise the Governor to grant the royal warrant on the recommendation of the Bar Association. But many of us in the legal profession—even young solicitors—knew that sometimes the government or Attorney General of the day would appoint his mates, adding one or two to the list, and grant Queen's Counsel titles to people who may not necessarily have reached the level of expertise required to be awarded the Senior Counsel title.

Another issue is that appointments of Crown prosecutors and public defenders as Deputy Senior Crown Prosecutor and Senior Crown Prosecutor or Deputy Senior Public Defender and Senior Public Defender also

came with a royal warrant and Queen's Counsel title. Being appointed Queen's Counsel is not just about the title; it marks having reached a particular level of respect within the profession. Not to disparage anyone who was appointed to those positions, because some very eminent people were, but those granted Senior Counsel titles under the system that currently operates in this State and in Victoria, where the title was granted by the President of the Bar Association after a pretty rigorous assessment process, are regarded with eminent respect by the profession. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

Another interesting clause is clause 160 (7), which states:

In this section:

executive or judicial officers includes the Governor, Ministers of the Crown, Parliamentary Secretaries, statutory office holders, persons employed in the Public Service or by the State, an authority of the State or another public employer, and also includes judicial office holders or persons acting under the direction of the Chief Justice of New South Wales or other judicial office holder.

Those persons are not to have an input under clause 160, as I read it, in relation to the appointment of Senior Counsel. Bearing in mind its process for appointing silks, the New South Wales bar probably needs to read clause 160 carefully between its leaving this House and going to the other place because there is a consultative process that currently applies where judges—I do not know about magistrates—of certain jurisdictions are consulted in relation to the selection of silks. The Bar Association should examine clause 160 to ensure that it does not impact on its current exceptional process of the past two to three years. The Bar Association has made some rather exceptional appointments to Senior Counsel over a number of years.

Mr STEPHEN BROMHEAD (Myall Lakes) [4.28 p.m.]: I support the Legal Profession Uniform Law Application Bill 2014. From the outset I congratulate the former Attorney General, the Hon. Greg Smith, on introducing this bill and the present Attorney General on taking up the position and carriage of the bill. Although the Council of Australian Governments started uniform laws across Australia, the legal profession had discussed them for more than a decade. The various State law societies advocated for uniform law for many years. Finally, New South Wales and Victoria reached agreement. The Legal Profession Uniform Law Application Bill 2014—the uniform law—provides a scheme to regulate the legal profession and is the subject of an agreement between New South Wales and Victoria. It is anticipated that other jurisdictions will agree later. The bill states:

The objects of this Bill are:

- (a) to apply the text of the Uniform Law as a law of this State, and
- (b) to enact complementary provisions having effect for this State, and
- (c) to repeal the *Legal Profession Act 2004* (the **repealed Act**).

The text of the Uniform Law is set out in Schedule 1 to the *Legal Profession Uniform Law Application Act 2014* of Victoria.

In 2009 the Council of Australian Governments established a task force to develop national laws for regulating the legal profession. This bill represents the outcome of many years of advocacy. Although only New South Wales and Victoria have committed to the uniform scheme at this time, it is expected that other jurisdictions will join once the regulatory structures are in place and operating. The goal of the uniform reforms is to introduce uniform professional regulation, enhance consumer protection, protect the independence of the profession and reduce compliance costs for law practices to improve their competitiveness in national and international markets. As a former practising lawyer, if I wanted to represent a New South Wales client in a Queensland court I was required to be admitted to the Queensland bar. This process makes matters extremely difficult because a client and his or her solicitor often have a relationship that spans many years, of which part is based in respect between client and lawyer.

A client with an issue in another State—that is, another jurisdiction—who wants the lawyer who has represented him in New South Wales and with whom he has had a relationship for a number of years will get that representation only if the lawyer is admitted to that other State's bar. This legislation means that a New South Wales lawyer will be able to represent his clients in Victoria and, hopefully in the future, clients in any other Australian State. The uniform scheme is to be established under the framework of an intergovernmental agreement executed by New South Wales and Victoria in 2013—a uniform law that is scheduled to a bill recently passed by the Victorian Parliament and uniform rules to be drafted by a new Legal Services Council. A new position of Commissioner for Legal Services Regulation also will be established to oversee implementation of the complaints and discipline provisions of the Uniform Law.

The uniform scheme will reduce the regulatory and compliance costs for firms operating in New South Wales and Victoria as the office systems and precedents required in each State will be identical. Consumers will have access to new, low-cost ways to resolve service-level complaints, including new consumer friendly orders, such as a simple apology or an order that work be redone at reduced cost. The duty on law practices to charge fair and reasonable costs, and strengthened billing practices to ensure that principals are responsible for the costs charged by their firm, will enhance consumer protection, lead to fewer disputes and facilitate enforcement when needed. In his second reading speech the Hon. Greg Smith, the then Attorney General, and Minister for Justice, stated:

This bill will apply the provisions of the Legal Profession Uniform Law as a law of New South Wales, as well as providing supporting provisions for the regulation of the legal profession in this State.

As I stated, the bill applies the Uniform Law as a law of New South Wales and includes jurisdictional provisions that establish the local institutional framework required to facilitate the operation of uniform law in New South Wales. These include providing for matters that the Uniform Law allows to be matters for local legislation, including processes for costs assessment, procedural provisions for disciplinary hearings, the keeping of registers of information about the profession and the fidelity fund; the functioning of local regulatory bodies, such as the New South Wales Legal Services Commissioner, the Legal Profession Admission Board, the Bar Association and the Law Society; and providing for the Public Purpose Fund, Solicitors' Mutual Indemnity Fund and approval of practitioners' professional indemnity insurance policies. The bill also specifies the functions that local regulatory authorities will carry out. These remain the same as existing regulatory functions exercised by those bodies.

In particular, the Law Society and Bar Association will continue to issue practising certificates; the Law Society and Bar Association will continue to conduct trust account inspections; the New South Wales Legal Services Commissioner will continue to oversee complaint handling; the Law Society and Bar Association will be delegated powers to handle complaints, as they currently do; and the Legal Profession Admission Board will continue to make admission recommendations to the Supreme Court. This legislation is long overdue and is something the New South Wales Law Society has been championing for many years, as well as those particular firms that practise in New South Wales and other jurisdictions. Small firms that do not normally cross borders raised some concerns, but admissions to those other jurisdictions to represent clients will no longer be required. As the work and client base of big firms is different from those of small boutique firms, I do not believe they will face the issues and problems first raised some years ago. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr BRAD HAZZARD (Wakehurst—Attorney General, and Minister for Justice) [4.37 p.m.], in reply: I thank members representing the electorates of Swansea, Liverpool, Cronulla, Heffron and Myall Lakes for their contribution to debate on the Legal Profession Uniform Law Application Bill 2014. Before addressing the substance of the bill in my new capacity as Attorney General of the State, I should like to place on record my acknowledgement of and thanks to the former Attorney General, who carried out his duties most capably and professionally. The Hon. Greg Smith, who is the member for Epping, ensured that he carried out with dignity his functions as the State's first law officer. On behalf of the Parliament and the people of New South Wales, I thank him for his contribution. I place on record also my thanks to the entire legal community for the vital role it plays to ensure that the rights of citizens and the broader community of New South Wales are safeguarded. The strength of a great democracy depends on the strength of its legal system, guided by a strong and independent judiciary. I thank the members of the judiciary across our entire court and tribunal system for their efforts on behalf of the citizens of New South Wales.

I turn now to the substance of the Legal Profession Uniform Law Application Bill 2014. A number of members spoke in support of the broad intent of the bill. The member for Heffron raised some issues, particularly the fact he considered it was not perhaps the clearest second reading speech. I do not share that view. The second reading speech made very clear the intent of the bill. As a number of members have said, it is the outcome of years of discussion amongst the legal profession but also the broader community who recognise the value of having a national approach to the issues that are contained in this bill. The member for Heffron raised issues relating to section 160 and the appointment of Senior Counsel. I do not think there is anything contained within section 160 that would come as a surprise to any members of the community. He has implored the Bar Association to look at section 160 to ensure that the bar's needs are met. I certainly share that view and look forward to hearing from the Bar Association or others who are interested in the appointment of Senior Counsel in respect of the issues that are raised therein.

The implementation of the uniform legal profession reforms will result in a range of benefits for the profession and for consumers. The reforms include streamlining regulatory requirements for legal practitioners,

making consumer rights and remedies consistent across participating jurisdictions and ensuring that decisions about admissions to the profession are made consistently. I acknowledge the generous support in respect of advice but also the funding by the Law Society of New South Wales to enable the establishment of the new uniform regulatory bodies. I also thank for their contribution those who helped to bring these reforms more broadly to this point. In particular, I extend my thanks to successive presidents of the Bar Association and the Law Society, the chief executive officer of the Law Society, the executive director of the Bar Association, the former and current acting Legal Services Commissioner, the staff of each of those institutions and, more broadly, members of the community and members of the judiciary who have made contributions over many years to achieve the outcomes of this bill. I am pleased that the bodies that these people represent will continue to play a vital role in the ongoing regulation of the legal profession of New South Wales.

The original goal of the National Legal Profession Reform project was to create a truly national legal profession. However, without the participation of other States and Territories, the significant benefits of national uniform regulation will not be fully realised. I take this opportunity to strongly encourage the Attorneys-General of the other States and Territories to follow the lead set by Victoria and New South Wales in adopting the Uniform Law so that the goal of a nationally and uniformly regulated profession can be achieved. In achieving a national and uniform regulated profession we can be satisfied that there will be substantive and major benefits for the community. After all, that is why we are in each of our Parliaments across Australia and that is what we should be trying to achieve. At this point I see the need to extend the bridge that we have established across this great nation. I certainly will be raising this issue with each of the Attorneys General across the country at the first available opportunity. Again, I thank honourable members in this place for their contribution to this debate.

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

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Third Reading

Motion by Mr Brad Hazzard 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.

HOME BUILDING AMENDMENT BILL 2014

Bill introduced on motion by Mr Stuart Ayres, read a first time and printed.

Second Reading

Mr STUART AYRES (Penrith—Minister for Fair Trading, Minister for Sport and Recreation, and Minister Assisting the Premier on Western Sydney) [4.45 p.m.]: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time.

I am pleased to introduce the Home Building Amendment Bill 2014. The introduction of the bill is the culmination of a comprehensive consultation process. This reform process was undertaken to ensure home building laws reflect current practice and reduce any unnecessary red tape for industry while providing consumers with appropriate protection. It is essential that consumers are adequately protected from risks associated with such a big investment as building a home or undertaking major renovations. At the same time, the building and construction industry makes a vital contribution to the New South Wales economy. Access Economics reports that the sector will employ approximately 9.2 per cent of the State's entire workforce by 2020. When the Liberal-Nationals Government came to power in 2011, housing starts were at a near 50-year low and the sector was in a fragile state. Later that year the Government responded to the most pressing concerns of home owners and industry and introduced some urgent amendments, which had been well overdue, to cut red tape.

However, further reform was necessary to facilitate a healthy industry and support the New South Wales 2021 goal to improve housing affordability and availability. That is why, in 2011, my colleague the

member for Lane Cove announced that the Act would be comprehensively reformed. To ensure that stakeholders were partners in the reform process, issues with legislation were identified and potential solutions were developed with the assistance and involvement of all stakeholders, particularly key stakeholders who had expertise and experience in the industry to assist in the development of viable options for reform. I thank all the stakeholders who have generously given their time and input in the development of these reforms. There are more than 50 changes contained in the bill that will ensure appropriate levels of consumer protection are maintained and, where appropriate, enhanced. The industry will benefit from cuts to unnecessary red tape and the reforms will support builders to get on with the job of creating homes in the communities that members represent across the State.

I now address a number of the specific points in the bill. The bill proposes a number of reforms to building contracts. Under the current Act, a builder can request a maximum of 10 per cent only for a deposit before the work is commenced if the contract price is \$20,000 or less, and 5 per cent where the contract price is more than \$20,000. The 5 per cent cap for deposits on work of more than \$20,000 is not always sufficient to cover the costs of commencing a project. This often places pressure on builders who may incur considerable costs for building materials and equipment before the work begins. Accordingly, the bill increases this cap on deposits from 5 per cent to 10 per cent, effectively creating a blanket cap of 10 per cent for all deposits. The bill also addresses a problem that while deposits for work are strictly regulated, there is currently no regulation of the payment for the work once it commences.

During the extensive consultation it has been reported that this can result in some home owners finding that they have paid for work not yet carried out and sometimes by very significant amounts. This may leave the home owners at risk if their builder becomes insolvent or disappears before the work is completed, and home warranty insurance may be insufficient to cover all of their losses. The bill addresses this situation by requiring contracts of more than \$20,000 to include a progress payment schedule. It also restricts the kind of progress payments that can be claimed by a builder to two types only of payment. The first type are payments specifically linked to completion of specific stages of work and the work to be done at each stage must be described in a clear and plain language contract. The second type are payments for work performed, or costs already incurred, and each claim for payment would need to be supported by invoices, receipts and other documents to support the claim.

These represent payment methods used in home building contracts which are currently used by those builders who engage in best practice contracting. Better information will now be given to consumers before a contract is signed, encouraging more informed decision-making. Consumers will now be better informed before they sign a contract and make a significant investment. It will be an offence also for builders to request payments which are not one of the "authorised payments". The reforms will assist home owners and builders by providing greater certainty about their rights and obligations under a contract and will help to reduce disputes. They also will help shield home owners from the risks of uninsured losses without impeding the ability of builders to maintain an appropriate level of cash flow. The changes will apply to new residential building contracts entered into after commencement of the legislation.

The statutory warranties scheme is a core element of the consumer protection framework of the Act. It creates legally enforceable standards for the quality and performance of building work. Currently, the statutory warranties cover work for six years from completion for structural defects, and two years for other breaches of the warranties. Consequently, for claims brought after the two-year period the question of whether a defect is a structural defect is critical. Stakeholders on all sides have expressed concerns over the definition of "structural defect". In fact, 90 per cent of stakeholders who responded to the 2012 issues paper wanted the term better defined. The main issue was that a significant defect may not be a structural defect but could still be a major defect worthy of the six-year warranty period. Of particular concern was whether water penetration and fire safety non-compliance fell within the two- or six-year warranty period, as there has been considerable variation in rulings on these matters depending on the severity of the defect.

Reform of the definition of structural defect is long overdue. It is necessary to reduce the significant time and money spent by parties on disputes and to ensure more consistent court and tribunal decisions. This will deliver cost savings for home owners, builders and the Home Warranty Insurance Fund. The bill replaces "structural defect" with a new concept of a "major defect" for six-year statutory warranty period. To provide further certainty the definition will be moved from the regulation to the Act. A two-step test will be introduced to determine whether a problem is a major defect. The first step is whether the defect is a major element of the building. Major elements will include structural load-bearing elements, but for the first time fire safety systems and waterproofing are also expressly included.

The second step considers how severe the consequences of the defect are to the building, such as where it causes or is likely to cause a building to be uninhabitable or unusable, the destruction of the building, or the threat of collapse of the building. The bill provides a regulation-making power to prescribe other major elements or major defects to provide further direction in the future if necessary. In keeping with our transparent and extensive consultation approach, we will continue to monitor and consult with our stakeholders in developing the regulations. This clearer and more robust definition will help to reduce the number of disputes and their length and complexity. This should help to reduce the significant legal costs associated with these types of disputes.

A number of other amendments will further clarify aspects of the statutory warranty scheme. Owners corporations have expressed concern about the ease with which they can apply the existing definition of completion to trigger the statutory warranties and insurance. This is because they are not parties to the original contract. To provide owners corporations with greater certainty about their rights the bill will introduce a new definition of completion of building work for strata schemes. This will be the date an occupation certificate is issued that authorises the occupation and use of the whole of the building. The new definition will apply only to new contracts entered into after commencement of the Act.

The Act is currently silent on whether a home owner has a duty to mitigate their loss, thereby avoiding situations where minor defects become a much bigger problem over time. At common law, if a home owner fails to take reasonable steps to mitigate their loss this may reduce the size of their claim. Home warranty insurance policies may also include loss mitigation clauses. This amendment clarifies that a home owner who suffers loss arising from the breach of a statutory warranty has a duty to mitigate that loss. This change will not reduce the rights of home owners but will clarify the obligations they are under. Home owners also will be required to make reasonable efforts to notify a builder in writing of an alleged breach of the statutory warranties within six months of the breach becoming apparent. Once again this will not reduce a home owner's rights but is a matter which a court or tribunal may take into consideration.

The bill broadens the defences available to a builder when a builder has reasonably relied on instructions given by a relevant professional acting for the home owner and the professional is independent of the builder. It is reasonable for a builder to rely on instructions provided by a professional such as an architect or engineer who is engaged by a home owner. It is unreasonable to require a builder to second-guess the expertise of the agents when they do not have the same level of expertise or qualifications. This amendment will not apply in respect of contracts entered into before the commencement of the amendment.

The bill enhances dispute resolution processes in a number of ways. Fair Trading inspectors already can issue orders to a builder requiring the builder to rectify defective or incomplete work. Those orders are important for quick resolution of disputes. The new legislation will allow the orders to specify staged dates for different work to be completed. Builders now will be able to apply to have an order amended when it would not be reasonable for them to meet the time frames, such as if there were delays in the delivery of materials or delays due to bad weather. To enhance compliance with orders, penalty notices will be able to be issued for failing to comply.

To further support the timely and cost-effective resolution of disputes, home owners will have a duty to not unreasonably refuse a builder access to a building site to rectify defective work. This is simply because a builder who is willing to rectify work can be placed in an unfair position if the home owner refuses access. This is particularly so when there is an order in place. A failure to allow access can unnecessarily inflate the time, costs and resources required to resolve the dispute. A builder will not be able to enter land without the owner's consent, particularly when there have been issues the home owner is concerned about relating to a builder's behaviour. If access was unreasonably refused this would be taken into account by a court or tribunal in determining a builder's claim. A court or tribunal also will have regard under these reforms to the principle that the rectification of defective building work by the responsible party is the preferred outcome.

The amendment also addresses home builders. The Act currently allows home owners to do building work on their home by obtaining an owner-builder permit from Fair Trading. The owner-builder provisions are being reformed to help to ensure that the permit system is not being used inappropriately for commercial reasons as a means of circumventing the licensing requirements. These reforms also will help to manage health and safety risks associated with owner-builder work. Currently owner-builders are permitted to undertake work relating to a single dwelling or a dual occupancy only. There are concerns that some commercially orientated, unlicensed people may be using the permit system in order to undertake dual occupancy work on land with a view to subdividing the land and on-selling it at a profit.

The owner-builder permit system is not intended for such commercial development work. Owner-builders will not be able to obtain a permit for work on a dual occupancy unless the commissioner is satisfied that special circumstances exist, such as where a family could demonstrate legitimate non-commercial reasons for the work or where refusing the permit could cause family hardship. Mandatory home warranty insurance is a key consumer protection mechanism in the legislation. Home warranty insurance is a form of last resort cover for home owners in the event a builder is unable to complete or rectify work due to insolvency, death, disappearance or due to certain licence suspensions.

While owner-builders are currently required to take out home warranty insurance, the bill makes them ineligible to obtain home warranty insurance under the statutory scheme before onselling their home. This is to focus home warranty insurance on the licensed building sector, and to make a clear distinction between homes that are built by qualified licensed builders and those built by owner-builders. To safeguard subsequent purchasers of properties, contracts for the sale of all properties on which owner-builder work has been carried out in the last six years will be required to include a consumer warning that the work has been undertaken by an owner-builder and that the owner-builder is not providing statutory insurance. This reform does not preclude private insurers from entering the market and offering insurance to owner-builders which they can attach to the contract for the benefit of the subsequent purchaser. In order to combat the use of false insurance certificates, the bill provides for a public register of certificates of insurance to be made available to a home owner or potential purchaser of property.

The bill will also clarify a number of the home warranty insurance requirements in the Act, including clarifying the definition of "disappeared" for the purposes of insurance claims as meaning a licensee or owner-builder "cannot be found in Australia". This responds to a 2011 District Court ruling that interpreted this as meaning "could not be found in New South Wales". The new definition will not apply to any finalised claims or litigation, or any proceedings commenced or claims made before the commencement of the legislation. This amendment bill also addresses a number of licensing issues. This bill enforces the Act's consumer protection objectives by refining the current system of licensing under the Act to ensure that consumers are contracting with fit and proper people with appropriate knowledge and skills, and to help address the risk of phoenixing activity.

Imprisonment for up to 12 months will now be a sentencing option for repeat offenders who engage in unlicensed contracting, for seeking work by or on behalf of unlicensed persons and for home warranty insurance offences. Licence eligibility is also being tightened where an applicant for a new licence has had recent involvement in companies that later became insolvent, and to allow New South Wales Fair Trading to take account of past consumer complaints, cautions, penalty notices or insurance claims. Corporate licence holders will be required to notify the commissioner within seven days if they have been placed into external administration.

Finally, the bill introduces a number of amendments to enable the Act to be better targeted towards core building works, which will cut red tape for industry. The Act's requirements will no longer apply to standalone contracts for internal painting, concrete tennis courts, ornamental ponds or water features. Consumers will remain protected by the Australian Consumer Law for these kinds of work. The Liberals and Nationals Government is committed to reforming the home building legislation to ensure that it takes a balanced approach to regulating the industry by providing appropriate protection for home owners without imposing unnecessary red tape on industry.

In fulfilling this commitment, I am pleased to introduce this bill. I believe it strikes the right balance between industry concerns and protecting consumers. I would like to acknowledge the hardworking staff at the New South Wales Office of Fair Trading for their work in developing this bill, particularly Gabbie Mangos, Simone Leiser, John Vernon, Richard Potts, Rhys Bollen and Rob Vellar. Without the hard work of these invaluable staff, this bill would not be before the House today. I would also like to thank all the members of New South Wales Fair Trading whom I have had the privilege of working with during my time as Minister. They have made my introduction to this area of legislation most enjoyable. I have learned a lot. I think we have constructed a piece of legislation that will do some marvellous things for the building sector and clear up a number of areas that were neglected by the previous Government and needed to be addressed. It has been a joy to work with all those people and I wish them the greatest success. I commend the bill to the House.

Debate adjourned on motion by Ms Tania Mihailuk and set down as an order of the day for a future day.

**PAYROLL TAX REBATE SCHEME (JOBS ACTION PLAN) AMENDMENT
(FRESH START SUPPORT) BILL 2014**

Second Reading

Debate resumed from 27 March 2014.

Mr BARRY COLLIER (Miranda) [5.04 p.m.]: My recollection is that when my speech was interrupted when last speaking on this bill I was responding to an interjection regarding my qualifications so far as business is concerned. I will continue with my answer for the sake of continuity. As I began to say, as a barrister I was effectively running my own small business—simply because barristers are and must be sole practitioners. As a senior associate solicitor in a private practice before joining Legal Aid New South Wales, I was more than aware of my responsibilities in relation to business cost and fee receipts so far as the practice itself was concerned.

I have a degree in commerce, with a major in economics with merit. I taught economics and commerce in State high schools for 17 years; developed economics, commerce, legal studies and business studies syllabuses for high schools across the State; and was appointed by the New South Wales Department of School Education as the State Curriculum Consultant for these subjects. I was also chairman of the Higher School Certificate economics examination committee, comprising teachers and academics, for three years and wrote five economics textbooks plus workbooks for Higher School Certificate students. The new Minister for the Environment, the member for Pittwater, the Hon. Rob Stokes, who has a PhD, has commended me on those textbooks. I encourage the new Treasurer to read them as he may learn a thing or two as well.

Most recently, I had the honour of being appointed by the O'Farrell Government to the Rookwood General Cemetery Trust board, where I chaired the Finance, Corporate Governance and Audit Committee. Unfortunately, I had to resign the position upon my re-election to Parliament last October. That position required that I become a member of the Australian Institute of Company Directors, as I did. So, in response to that interjection, I do have some qualifications and some background in business. Of course each of us in this place, in our roles as local members of Parliament, regularly deals with business men and women and are alive to the issues that they raise with us. Those on the other side know, as I know, that small business is the backbone of the Australian economy, and indeed the New South Wales economy. [*Extension of time agreed to.*]

Essentially that is the problem here: 90 per cent of businesses in this State do not pay payroll tax and will therefore not be eligible for any assistance under this particular scheme. In its submission to the 2011-12 New South Wales budget, the New South Wales Business Chamber said, and I quote:

Feedback from our members has overwhelmingly indicated that the current scheme is ineffective and is not providing employers with any significant incentive to take on additional staff. We understand that take-up has been running at around 50 per cent of the expected rate; assuming this remains the case we estimate that closure of the scheme to new entrants from 1 July will free up around \$310 million from the initial \$400 million commitment.

The New South Wales Business Chamber then went on to give examples of where it would rather see the money applied. It is really not very hard to think of some of these. For example, why not put the money back into TAFE to help retrain and reskill those in the many small businesses across the State, and indeed those who work in the public sector, who may soon find themselves unemployed as a result of the recession which will inevitably follow on from the budget of the Abbott Government to be delivered next week—and to which the budget to follow from this State Government may well contribute. If the Government really is serious about assisting employees who have been made redundant, as the member for Coogee says, then it should not be extending what is essentially a failed scheme. Clearly it is about time that those opposite stopped repeating their mistakes of the past and began thinking outside the square.

Mr TONY ISSA (Granville) [5.08 p.m.]: I support the Payroll Tax Rebate Scheme (Jobs Action Plan) Amendment (Fresh Start Support) Bill 2014. The Fresh Start Support scheme will provide a \$6,000 payroll tax rebate to businesses which employ workers who have recently lost their job. Coming from a small business background, I know firsthand how hard it is to survive with the daily struggle. It is heartening to see the Government acknowledging this and giving business a hand by providing this initiative to employ people, and therefore helping our communities to grow. The Payroll Tax Rebate Scheme (Jobs Action Plan) Amendment (Fresh Start Support) Bill demonstrates that the New South Wales Liberals and Nationals Government remains dedicated to making New South Wales the first place to do business.

The Liberal Government is determined to support workers by giving them opportunities for new employment in the unfortunate event of them becoming redundant, and by providing incentives through payroll tax rebates in order for businesses to grow and create long-term sustainable jobs. This initiative will provide fresh hope for people who feel abandoned by a system, which can often be the beginning of a downward spiral for some families. The Fresh Start Support scheme is an extension of the current Jobs Action Plan. The Jobs Action Plan was a 2011 election commitment that started on 1 July 2011 and promised a payroll tax rebate of \$5,000 to businesses. The Liberal Government has increased the payroll tax rebate from \$4,000 to \$5,000, which is a 25 per cent increase, and it has been extended for a further two years. Recent figures from the New South Wales Office of State Revenue show that more than 41,100 registrations were made for the Jobs Action Plan from 1 July 2011 to 31 January 2014. These are encouraging figures.

The main purpose of the Fresh Start Support scheme is to provide a \$6,000 payroll tax rebate to businesses that have hired an employee from a "designated employer". This rebate is made up of the existing \$5,000 rebate already available and an additional \$1,000 to businesses that hire a worker from a former designated employer. The guidelines for the Fresh Start Support scheme state that a designated employer can be a metropolitan employer that has made 100 or more employees redundant in a 12-month period or a regional employer that has made 50 or more employees redundant in a 12-month period. The guidelines I have mentioned will be determined by the Government's Expenditure Review Committee of Cabinet.

An employer must hire a worker who has been made redundant by a designated employer between 1 January 2014 and 20 June 2015. The New South Wales Government will consider expanding the Jobs Action Plan and Fresh Start Support scheme at a suitable time. When out in the community I often talk with small business people. Their comments often focus on how small business is the backbone of this country and the importance of continuing to support small business. It was good to see this Government establish the Small Business Commissioner to cut red tape and allow our small business people to get on with their jobs, create employment, support the economy and thereby support all communities.

I will now mention a few statistics regarding key economic indicators for New South Wales. During the last decade of Labor governments, New South Wales had the slowest rate of jobs growth in any State. Since the 2011 election 109,000 jobs have been created under the Liberal Government. This is the highest number of jobs created and it has given New South Wales the lowest unemployment rate of all States. My electorate of Granville is a low socio-economic community. Any assistance given to small business will help give people more opportunities to get out and work, and that is a win for all.

For the last 10 years under Labor, New South Wales had the slowest rate of economic growth of all States. Under this Liberal Government New South Wales has had the strongest annual growth in final demand of any State for two successive quarters. Business confidence was the lowest of any State among small to medium businesses for the last five years of Labor governments. Business confidence in New South Wales is now the second strongest of all the States. This is an above-decade average.

In housing supply New South Wales had the lowest number for new dwelling starts per capita for the last five years of Labor governments. Today the number of private dwellings approvals in New South Wales is at its highest since 2002. Housing the people in my electorate of Granville is a top priority. With the added incentives given to small business and more people being gainfully employed, their housing options will be easier. Under Labor, New South Wales had the lowest average annual rate of retail trade in any State. Today, under this Liberal Government, New South Wales is the strongest of all the States.

These statistics prove that the Liberal Government has been committed to its election promise to make New South Wales number one again. As I indicated earlier, I come from a small business background. I understand the contribution small business makes to the economy, especially in Western Sydney. More than 2 million people live in Western Sydney. I commend the Government for its hard work to increase the employment rate in the region. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr CHRIS HOLSTEIN (Gosford) [5.16 p.m.]: I am delighted to support the Payroll Tax Rebate Scheme (Jobs Action Plan) Amendment (Fresh Start Support) Bill 2014. The Fresh Start Support scheme is an extension of the current Jobs Action Plan. The Jobs Action Plan started on 1 July 2011 and fulfilled an election commitment. It provided a payroll tax rebate of \$5,000 to a business that employed a new worker in new eligible employment. According to the New South Wales Office of State Revenue, in the 2½ years between July 2011 and February 2014 more than 46,000 registrations for job action plans were made. In my local government

area of Gosford nearly 1,000 positions were created among 63 businesses during that period. In the local government area of Wyong, which adjoins my local government area and makes up the Central Coast, 55 businesses created nearly 400 jobs.

It was interesting to listen to some of the previous speakers who seemed to have a problem with this. The member for Miranda might want to take note that in the Sutherland local government area 86 businesses created nearly 992 jobs. I do not know why he would be upset about 992 jobs being created in Sutherland alone. Let us talk about some of the other statistics in the electorates of members opposite. In Auburn, 1,693 jobs were created. In Bankstown, 908 jobs were created. In Blacktown, nearly 1,400 jobs were created. In Fairfield, 857 jobs were created. In Liverpool, 959 jobs were created. In Wollongong, 824 jobs were created. I cannot see any problem with that. It is great that people are being employed. The amount of job registrations has been outstanding. Members opposite should take note of that and look at the figures. Why would they stand in this place and argue against finding jobs? It is unbelievable. At Gosford and on the Central Coast we appreciate that 63 businesses have now employed nearly 1,000 people under the Jobs Action Plan.

The Fresh Start Support scheme provides \$6,000 payroll tax rebates to businesses that hire an employee from a designated employer. It is made up of the existing rebate of \$5,000 available under the Jobs Action Plan and an additional \$1,000 to businesses that employ workers who have recently lost their jobs through large-scale restructures. It is worth reminding ourselves of the economic background for the past decade of Labor governments in which we had the slowest jobs growth of any State. I hear no comments from the Opposition side, so they agree with me.

New South Wales had the slowest economy of many States, but thankfully that is all changing. Since the 2011 State election, 109,000 jobs have been created and the strongest annual growth rate of all the States on a quarterly and annual basis has been achieved. In addition, the number of private dwelling approvals in New South Wales is at its highest since 2002 and the retail trade now is the strongest in New South Wales of all the States. This bill demonstrates the further and continuing commitment of the New South Wales Government to make New South Wales the first place in which to do business. We are determined to support workers by giving them opportunities for new employment when redundancies occur and by backing businesses through the provision of incentives such as payroll tax rebates to grow and create long-term sustainable jobs.

In the context of the scheme, a designated employer is a metropolitan employer that has made 100 or more employees redundant in a 12-month period or a regional employer that has made 50 or more employees redundant in a 12-month period. The criteria will be determined by Government through the Expenditure Review Committee of Cabinet and may be flexible when a large-scale retrenchment has had an inordinate impact on any particular region, occupational area or industry. An employer must hire a worker who has been made redundant from a designated employer between 1 January 2014 and 20 June 2015.

In conclusion, this legislation is a godsend for the Central Coast because several businesses have had to issue redundancy notices. The opportunities presented by this bill are very clear. I reiterate my amazement at Opposition members balking at the creation of jobs through the Jobs Action Plan. With this amending legislation, we will be able to provide greater opportunities for people who have, for whatever reason, suffered redundancy. This bill presents a great incentive and opportunity for New South Wales businesses. I will not sneeze at or object to approximately 1,000 jobs being created in the Gosford local government area in a period of 2½ years. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT (Baulkham Hills) [5.21 p.m.]: I support the Payroll Tax Rebate Scheme (Jobs Action Plan) Amendment (Fresh Start Support) Bill 2014. I note that there is nobody from the Opposition in the Chamber, which is because they hate job creation and tax relief.

Mr Barry Collier: What are you talking about? I am here.

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT: The member for voodoo economics and member for the fire brigade union has walked into the Chamber.

Mr Barry Collier: Point of order: The fire brigade is completely irrelevant to this debate. I ask you to direct the member to confine his remarks to the leave of the bill.

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): Order! I note that the member for Miranda was outside the Chamber when the member began making his comments. I ask the member for Baulkham Hills to confine his remarks to the legislation, and I warn Opposition members that interjections will be met with a response.

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT: The bill will make it easier to find work for those who have been retrenched. It furthers the good economic work that this Government has done. The Government has created 109,000 jobs since it was elected—the highest number of jobs created. New South Wales has the lowest employment rate of all the States, yet when Labor was in charge we had the slowest jobs growth rate of any State. We have had the strongest annual growth in final demand of all the States for two consecutive quarters, but when Labor was in charge it was the slowest of any State for the previous decade. New South Wales has the second-strongest business confidence in the Commonwealth at an above-decade average, yet when Labor was in charge it was the lowest of any State among small and medium businesses for five years.

New South Wales has the highest number of approvals in more than a decade, yet when Labor was in charge New South Wales had the lowest new dwelling starts per capita for five years. New South Wales is the strongest of all the States, yet when Labor was in charge New South Wales had the lowest average annual rate of any State. No matter which way we look at it, and no matter which economic indicator New South Wales is compared to under a Coalition Government, we cannot and will not ever compete with what this State recorded under Labor. For 10 years under the Labor Government I had the burden of working in industry associations which represented small and large businesses that were being crippled by Labor policies and Labor's inability to create and manage jobs. There was no business confidence during Labor's term in government because of the corrupt and inept way that successive Labor governments and administrations delivered policies.

Mr Barry Collier: Point of order: I have no problem with the member for Baulkham Hills discussing economics, but he called every Opposition member corrupt. I take offence at that.

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): Order! The member for Baulkham Hills was not directing his comments at any individual. He referred to a Labor Government, not an individual. The member for Miranda was not a member of the previous Labor Government. He will resume his seat. There is no point of order.

Mr DAVID ELLIOTT: Members may recall that when the previous Government was elected in 1995, its first term had not been completed before almost one-third of them had worn a track to the Independent Commission Against Corruption. Indeed, some Labor members were so accustomed to visiting the Independent Commission Against Corruption that they had their own lockers. I find it bizarre that the member for Miranda is so perturbed by allegations that Government members put to Labor members. That is why I trust the Government when it comes to economics. I trust Mike Baird. I like Mike. When it comes to the development and growth of the State, Labor has no credibility. It is up to the Baird Government to make New South Wales number one again. It is up to the Baird Government to do the heavy lifting. It is up to the Baird Government to come up with innovative policies and to deliver them.

We have been delivering. The Jobs Action Plan was a 2011 election promise that we delivered within months of coming to office. The Jobs Action Plan provides a \$5,000 payroll tax rebate for businesses that employ new workers in new eligible employment. We increased the rebate from \$4,000 to \$5,000 for every new job and we extended the program. Up until 31 January this year, there were more than 41,100 registrations for the Jobs Action Plan. In The Hills Shire Council in my electorate, 1,012 new positions have been created as a result of the Jobs Action scheme—the fifth highest number of jobs in the State—and I am proud of that. The Jobs Action Plan has helped many people in my community enter the workforce. But the Liberal-National Government does not just stop when it is onto a good thing: It continues and develops new ideas to help the State.

The bill introduces the Fresh Start Support Scheme, which will provide a \$6,000 payroll tax rebate for businesses that employ workers who have lost their job as a result of large-scale restructures. We know that the best support for a person who has lost their job is to find a new job—and quickly—so we are putting in place measures to encourage business to get those people back into the workforce. The \$6,000 rebate comprises the existing \$5,000 Jobs Action Plan rebate and an additional \$1,000 to businesses that hire someone who previously worked for a designated employer. The initial guideline for a designated employer is that a metropolitan company has made 100 or more employees redundant in a 12-month period or a regional company has made 50 or more employees redundant in a 12-month period.

The criteria will be determined by the Expenditure Review Committee of Cabinet and may be flexible when a large-scale restructuring has had an inordinate impact on a particular region, occupational field or industry. The bill will create new jobs for those who have lost their job as a result of corporate restructuring or

economic uncertainty and it will continue the Baird Government's legacy of job creation in the State, with 109,000 jobs created so far. The bill creates jobs by backing business incentivisation through payroll tax rebates and the creation of long-term and sustainable jobs. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr ANDREW ROHAN (Smithfield) [5.28 p.m.]: I support the Payroll Tax Rebate Scheme (Jobs Action Plan) Amendment (Fresh Start Support) Bill 2014. I will not deal with the provisions of the bill in detail and validate it because members who preceded me in this debate have encapsulated in an excellent manner the bill's purpose and direction as well as its implications. I turn now to some issues raised by previous speakers on the other side of the House. Given the mass layoffs in recent times, particularly in the manufacturing sector, retrenched workers have a difficult time finding and securing new jobs. Mostly this is because of the special nature of those positions that have been made redundant. Some members referred to manufacturers and suppliers such as Simplot, Alcoa and Downer EDI. The reality is that mass redundancies are a natural consequence of the pain of downswings in the economic cycle, but they can also apply during any phase given the exposures and risks of the particular business model.

We cannot fail to forget other names that have left the scene in New South Wales such as Norsk Hydro, which closed its plant in Kurri Kurri in September 2012 and took 500 workers out of their jobs thanks to the increase in energy prices further propelled by Labor's carbon tax. Cereal producer Kellogg's Australia, as part of the changes to its global supply chain network, and given the rise in commodity prices and tough competition, has announced that its Charmhaven plant on the Central Coast will close by the end of this year, with an estimated loss of approximately 100 jobs. Glencore's Ravenworth coalmine in the Hunter Valley is scheduled to be closed from September, with an estimated 130 workers facing the chopping block. General economic circumstances out of the control of the employer have prevented the viability of the mine's continuation. This bill seeks to tackle those examples. It is about getting those workers back on their feet because they are work-ready. Every day they are left unemployed or underemployed is another day that their skill capacity and work-readiness diminishes.

The members for the electorates of Miranda and Cessnock harped on about how small businesses would not be entitled to the rebate and spun a negative web on it, but they provided the very reason for it—those businesses do not have to pay payroll tax. As from 1 July 2013 the annual payroll threshold in New South Wales is \$750,000. This is in line with Western Australia, which remains the top economic performer overall according to the State of the States April report of the CommSec economic team. However, New South Wales is catching up quickly. We are the biggest mover and now the second best performing State. This threshold is higher than the other State economies of equivalent size—in Victoria it is \$550,000 and in South Australia it is \$600,000. This simply means that many small businesses outside that minimum threshold are not liable for tax. The Government recognises that those businesses contribute a great deal of economic activity to this State and should not be hampered by such a tax.

The members for the electorates of Miranda and Cessnock also misinterpreted the scheme. They said that this is a cash throw at private business. It is not. It is about stimulating the economy where it is needed by utilising a double-edged sword. On one side, by incentivising medium- to large-scale businesses in Australia, which hire more than half of all employees, to continue to maintain the employment of their workers and to continue their core operations in delivering goods and services to the State, and, on the other side, by stimulating and ensuring the growth of employment positions for many Australians in New South Wales. More than 680,000 entities in New South Wales are classified as small businesses, which represents about 96 per cent of all entities. But the majority of them—if we are to use the 2011 sample data of the Australian Bureau of Statistics—do not employ workers at all. In fact, two-thirds of all small businesses in Australia do not have any employees and nearly 90 per cent employ up to four employees. That is not to say that small businesses do not matter; they do.

In response to the need to recognise and support small businesses, then Minister for Small Business, the Hon. Katrina Hodgkinson, launched the Small Business Friendly Councils pilot program. The aim of this program is to clarify and assist dealings between small business and councils and the Office of the New South Wales Small Business Commissioner anticipates it will be rolled out this year to all interested New South Wales councils. Issues such as dealings with councils impact on a majority of small businesses where government is able to intervene. We cannot save small businesses from the global fact that one-third fail in their first year and that less than 25 per cent make it after their fifth year. Indeed, that is the nature of the markets and competition, which leads to the benefit of the consumer and society as a whole.

The Small Business Commissioner Act 2013, delivered by the Coalition Government, provided for an even playing field for small businesses, as well as encouraging and enhancing business practices. If Labor

wanted to assist small businesses and families alike—almost all family businesses tend to be small businesses—it should have rethought its stance on the carbon tax. Employees who are given the exit door from small businesses tend to have better mobility in transitioning into similar roles in other businesses, given the large amount of small businesses operating in a similar industry. However, specialists who rely on being subcontracted or on outsourced niche work from small businesses would feel the crunch in not being able to readily mobilise their skills to an area in which they are not ordinarily required. Under the payroll tax rebate scheme they would fall under excluded employment and as such would not attract a rebate.

Recent figures from the NSW Office of State Revenue show more than 41,100 registrations under the Jobs Action Plan since 1 July. Registrations have tripled since the rebate increased from \$4,000 to \$5,000 in July 2013, and it is anticipated that the rebate increase under this bill will produce similar gains. I reiterate that 109,000 new jobs have been created since the Coalition came to office—that number would be higher now. Of those 109,000 new jobs, 10,500 were created in Western Sydney under the Jobs Action Plan. A total of 30,500 jobs have been created in Western Sydney since the Coalition came to office. Half of the top 20 metropolitan areas claiming the rebate are in the Greater Western Sydney region. I proudly remind the House that the Fairfield local government area ranked seventh with 857 applications. I commend the former Treasurer, the Hon. Mike Baird, for his outstanding budget and for delivering on this important measure, which will ensure higher labour participation rates into the future. I commend the bill to the House.

Mr RYAN PARK (Keira) [5.38 p.m.]: I make a contribution to the Payroll Tax Rebate Scheme (Jobs Action Plan) Amendment (Fresh Start Support) Bill 2014. I share some of the comments made by my very good friend, the member for Orange—I think he got a prize in the reshuffle—on this matter. This legislative reform, as those on the other side would like to call it, was mentioned on 3 May by Nicole Kuter, a Fairfax journalist. The Leader of The Nationals has done it again. He has been talking up his leadership in the party room. The Deputy Premier visited the great electorate of Orange—a fantastic electorate with great food, wine and people, and rumours exist that it has a great local member—and talked about the payroll tax incentives for employers who take on redundant workers et cetera. He talked it up, as a Minister does.

Mr Geoff Provest: As he should.

Mr RYAN PARK: As I said, he talked it up as a Minister does. I have been there and done that, but unfortunately not as a Minister—there is a good chance my son might be a Minister, and he is four years old. Nicole Kuter found it interesting that the Deputy Premier went to Orange and talked about the payroll tax rebate scheme. I assume he met with Electrolux staff because, understandably, people were concerned about such a large firm winding down. I have lived in similar regional communities where large workforces suddenly contract, become redundant or an organisation closes. That was a very legitimate thing for the Deputy Premier to do, but a minor problem arose. The Deputy Premier, who is surrounded by many staff and a department, and is reasonably well briefed—I say "reasonably" because the staff are in the gallery and, being a former member of the staff federation in this place, I assume that staff make mistakes—forgot to tell—

Mr Geoff Provest: Point of order: As entertaining as it is to listen to the member for Keira, I ask that he return to the leave of the bill.

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): Order! If the member for Keira wishes to make a private member's statement or a personal explanation there are forms of the House that enable him to do that. The House is debating the Payroll Tax Rebate Scheme (Jobs Action Plan) Amendment (Fresh Start Support) Bill 2014, and I ask him to return to the leave of the bill.

Mr RYAN PARK: This bill is important because its object is to amend the Payroll Tax Rebate Scheme and its proposed support scheme to provide for an additional payroll tax rebate in respect of the employment of persons whose employment with particular employers has been terminated. The Electrolux example is important because the Deputy Premier talked up the Payroll Tax Rebate Scheme but forgot to tell Electrolux and its employees that they are not eligible for it. Oh my goodness! I appreciate that we mere backbenchers, who do not have many staff, might perhaps make such a mistake.

Mr Mark Coure: Have you been demoted? You are on the front bench.

Mr RYAN PARK: You are not on the front bench until you are sitting on the Government front bench. I understand how the odd mistake can be made, but to visit the Orange electorate—and particularly the Electrolux factory—to talk up a payroll tax bill and its associated scheme that is designed to assist particular

employees whose jobs have been terminated through redundancy and forget to tell the very workers to whom you are talking that they are not eligible, it is no wonder his party room has had conversations about his leadership. Why is the member for Orange not putting up his hand to lead The Nationals?

Mr Geoff Provest: Point of order: Once again I ask that the member for Keira be drawn back to the leave of the bill. We are not talking about The Nationals' party room or anything else. We are debating the Payroll Tax Rebate Scheme.

The ASSISTANT-SPEAKER (Mr Andrew Fraser): Order! I have previously drawn the member for Keira back to the leave of the bill. I am happy to sit him down and curtail his participation in the debate if he continues to stray from the substance of the bill. The member for Keira will confine his remarks to the bill.

Mr RYAN PARK: The overview states that the bill deals "in respect of the employment of persons whose employment with particular employers has been terminated because of redundancy." Clearly, the member for Orange has experienced difficulty with the large Electrolux organisation winding down and contracting significantly within the community.

Ms Melanie Gibbons: Are you happy with the jobs in your area?

Mr RYAN PARK: Wait. I give credit to the member for Orange because he said:

When the payroll tax rebates were announced, I was very disappointed to learn that they were to cease at June 30 2015, when the Electrolux wind-down did not commence until September 2015.

The Deputy Premier may need to be briefed on one or two more occasions. We do not want the Deputy Premier to be banned from Expenditure Review Committee meetings or from certain regional towns because he does not understand what grant is applicable and who is eligible. I take this opportunity to congratulate my good friend the member for Orange on standing up for his community. Perhaps when the Deputy Premier introduces such important bills he should speak to the organisations that could apply for the funding to support unemployed workers.

Mr GARRY EDWARDS (Swansea) [5.47 p.m.]: I support the Payroll Tax Rebate Scheme (Jobs Action Plan) Amendment (Fresh Start Support) Bill 2014, which amends the Payroll Tax Rebate Scheme (Jobs Action Plan) Act 2011. The bill demonstrates that this Government maintains its election commitment to make New South Wales number one again by strengthening the State's economy. This bill delivers on this commitment by supporting workers, giving them opportunities for new employment when they are made redundant and by providing an incentive to employers through payroll tax rebates to grow and create long-term sustainable jobs. Recently a number of large companies have been forced to close their local operations. Therefore, this legislation is a logical and responsible extension of the current Jobs Action Plan scheme that has contributed to the creation of more than 91,000 jobs in New South Wales since this Government came to office. Businesses are given the incentive not only to take on new workers but also for those workers to remain in their positions in stable employment.

The Jobs Action Plan was a 2011 election commitment, as previously stated. The plan commenced on 1 July 2011, providing a payroll tax rebate of \$5,000 to businesses that employed new workers in new eligible employment. For every employee hired, a business will receive \$2,000 on the first anniversary of employment and \$3,000 on the second anniversary of employment. The take-up of this scheme has been significant. Recent New South Wales Office of State Revenue figures show there have been almost 46,500 registrations for the Jobs Action Plan since 1 July 2011 until 28 February 2013. It is particularly pleasing for me to note that in the local government areas of Lake Macquarie and Wyong—both of which are within my electorate—1,155 jobs have been created since the Jobs Action Plan was introduced. In the Wyong local government area, which constitutes approximately 30 per cent of my electorate, 55 new businesses created 390 new full- and part-time jobs. In the Lake Macquarie local government area, which constitutes approximately 77 per cent of my electorate, 83 new businesses created 765 new full- and part-time jobs.

The Payroll Tax Rebate Scheme (Jobs Action Plan) Amendment (Fresh Start Support) Bill 2014 will provide a \$6,000 payroll tax rebate to businesses that hire an employee who has been retrenched from a designated employer. The rebate is made up of the existing \$5,000 rebate under the Jobs Action Plan and an additional \$1,000 that will go to businesses that hire a former employee from a designated employer, which is eligible on the first anniversary of the employment. The initial guideline for the Fresh Start Support Scheme states inter alia that a designated employer is a metropolitan employer that has made 100 or more employees redundant in a 12-month period and/or a regional employer that has made 50 or more employees redundant in a

12-month period. The above criteria will be determined by the Government through the Expenditure Review Committee of Cabinet and may be flexible where a large-scale retrenchment has had an inordinate impact on a particular region, occupation or industry.

I note that the Kellogg's healthy snack foods division, located at Charmhaven on the Central Coast of New South Wales, will be considered eligible as being a designated employer under the Fresh Start Support Scheme as there will be more than 100 job losses and some of those job losses will almost certainly, and sadly, be employees who live in one of the southern-most communities of my electorate of Swansea. Members of this House will be well aware of the devastating impacts of a major employer ceasing operations in a region. The bill will assist workers in such a situation to find new employment. The timing for accessing the Fresh Start Support Scheme means that an employer must engage a worker made redundant by a designated employer between 1 January 2014 and 30 June 2015. As was rightly pointed out by our colleague the member for Keira a few moments ago, the Fresh Start Support Scheme is currently scheduled to close to new applicants from 30 June 2015. This is consistent with the current Jobs Action Plan.

For the benefit of my friend the member for Keira, I will say this: The New South Wales Government will consider extending the Jobs Action Plan and Fresh Start Support Scheme at an appropriate future time. As my friend the member for Keira likes to repeat himself, I too repeat the words "at an appropriate future time". How does that sound, Mr Electrolux? This bill is part of a comprehensive initiative from this Government to get New South Wales back on track. Following the election of the Coalition Government in March 2011, New South Wales now has the highest jobs growth of any State in Australia, the strongest economic growth of all Australian States on a quarterly and annual basis, and has had positive business confidence for seven—probably nine—consecutive months. I commend the bill to the House.

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Menai) [5.54 p.m.]: I support the Payroll Tax Rebate Scheme (Jobs Action Plan) Amendment (Fresh Start Support) Bill 2014. The bill continues the focus on the Government's election commitment under the Jobs Action Plan and builds on the current scheme, with all the current requirements still in place. Since the Government came to office in 2011, the Jobs Action Plan has been instrumental in supporting the creation of 109,000 jobs in New South Wales. Currently, New South Wales has the lowest unemployment rate of all the States. This is a major turnaround because under the former Government the jobs growth rate in New South Wales had been the slowest of any State for the past decade. This bill highlights the commitment of the Liberal-Nationals Government to make New South Wales number one. We are supporting workers by giving them new opportunities for employment post-redundancies and by supporting businesses by providing incentives through payroll tax rebates to grow and create sustainable long-term jobs.

Under the current scheme, businesses who hire employees who are made redundant by designated employers receive a \$5,000 rebate. The Fresh Start Scheme will provide an additional \$1,000 payroll tax rebate to employers when they hire a worker who is made redundant after 1 January 2014. The hire must be for a new job and result in an increase in the new employer's full-time equivalent numbers. This is the same as the current scheme. The \$1,000 rebate is pro-rated if a part-time employee is hired. This amount of the rebate is then based on the number of hours worked by the employee. The additional payroll tax rebate under the Fresh Start Support Scheme will be paid on the first anniversary of the employee's employment. This increase means that the rebate increases to a possible maximum of \$6,000 for the new hiring of employees formerly employed by the designated employer. This is broken down to a possible \$3,000 on the first anniversary of employment, \$2,000 under the current scheme and an additional \$1,000 under the Fresh Start Support Scheme, with the balance paid on the second anniversary of employment.

The initial guidelines for the Fresh Start Support Scheme state that a designated employer is a metropolitan employer who has made more than 100 employees redundant in a 12-month period. For regional employers, this number drops to 50 in that same period. Some of the key issues that this Government will consider in determining designated employers include whether the scale of retrenchments from the employer will cause significant disruption to an industry or region, or whether the employer operates in a specialised field, meaning that the employees have limited opportunities for re-employment in that field or another field. The Government may still list a business as a designated employer even if it does not meet the numerical test of 100 metropolitan or 50 regional employees made redundant if the redundancies that result will have a material impact in the local area.

Businesses that are undergoing significant redundancies or business changes should notify the Government so that they can be listed as a designated employer and their former employees can benefit from

this support. This will ensure that those in most need of assistance during major structural adjustments in their respective industry or businesses are supported. The bill ensures that employers who have made large-scale redundancies and therefore are being classed as designated employers are not able to benefit from the scheme. The Government notes that these businesses should not benefit from hiring additional staff when they have recently made significant redundancies. If they still meet the criteria, the designated employer would remain able to claim a payroll tax rebate.

Shortly a regulation will be tabled outlining the guidelines for defining a "designated employer" and the definition of a "redundancy". These guidelines can be varied with the approval of the Government. The guidelines specify that once a business is listed as a designated employer it will remain so until the scheme closes. The bill recognises the difficult economic environment in which many businesses are operating, both domestically and globally—obviously some businesses are caught up in global events—and encourages employers to hire employees made redundant through no fault of their own. The bill demonstrates that the Government remains committed to making New South Wales the first place to do business and at every opportunity encourages employers to expand their operations, which is the genesis of this bill. The Government wants to provide an incentive to existing businesses through this rebate scheme to create new jobs.

In order to utilise the Fresh Start Support Scheme, an employer must hire a worker made redundant from a "designated employer" between 1 January 2014 and 30 June 2015. In the Liverpool local government area 959 jobs have been created. That is huge. A further 992 have been created in the Sutherland local government area. The member for Miranda may not have said thank you, but I certainly will because I know they will make a huge difference to our local area. I saw this first-hand recently when I visited a local business, All Round Supplies, located in Prestons. It is a one-stop shop for wholesale infrastructure materials. I had the pleasure of taking the then Treasurer, the Hon. Mike Baird, with me. All Round Supplies has grown its operations locally by employing additional staff under the Payroll Tax Rebate Scheme. It feels so strongly about the scheme and how it has benefited the company and helped it to grow that it is now telling other businesses about it.

The company's finance manager, Ken Thomas, has called a number of its best customers to give them information about the payroll tax rebate and to let them know how it has helped the company and where they can find more information. It was fantastic to visit a local business that is intent on growth and that is helping others in the local community. The Payroll Tax Rebate Scheme (Jobs Action Plan) Amendment (Fresh Start Support) Bill 2014 aims to build on the success of the reforms introduced by the Coalition Government to date. It demonstrates our commitment to meeting our electoral promises. I thank the former Treasurer and his staff for their work on the bill, and I commend it to the House.

Mr MARK SPEAKMAN (Cronulla) [6.02 p.m.]: I support the Payroll Tax Rebate Scheme (Jobs Action Plan) Amendment (Fresh Start Support) Bill 2014, which builds on the Government's election commitment in the Jobs Action Plan to create jobs in New South Wales and to rebuild the State's economy to make New South Wales number one again. The bill will amend the Payroll Tax Rebate Scheme (Jobs Action Plan) Act 2011. The Fresh Start Support scheme in this bill will provide an extra \$1,000 payroll tax rebate to employers when they hire a worker made redundant after 1 January 2014 from a list of designated employers. As under the current scheme, the hire must be for a new job and must result in an increase in the new employer's full-time equivalent numbers. In the case of part-time employees, the amount of the rebate will be pro-rated based on the number of hours worked compared with the standard hours of the particular employer's full-time employees consistent with the legislative provisions in the Jobs Action Plan legislation. The \$1,000 additional payroll tax rebate under the Fresh Start Support scheme will be paid on the first anniversary of the worker's employment. This additional \$1,000 means the rebate increases to the maximum possible \$6,000 for employees formally employed by designated employers.

Eligible employers will receive a \$3,000 payroll tax rebate on the first anniversary of employment of the relevant employee. That is \$2,000 under the existing scheme, an additional \$1,000 under the Fresh Start Support scheme and \$3,000 on the second anniversary. Other speakers have gone into more detail about the bill, but I will put this latest offering from the Baird Government in the overall context of what this Government and the O'Farrell Government have achieved in a little over three years in turning around the employment market in New South Wales. When we came to government in 2011, the State had the slowest economic growth in the nation for a decade. Since we have been in government 127,000 jobs have been created—the highest number of any State in that time. During our predecessors' last 10 years in office New South Wales had the slowest jobs growth in Australia. My friend the member for Keira can bleat and nit-pick about this scheme but our runs are on the board. We are a government that has transformed New South Wales from the laggard of the Australian economy to number one, with the largest jobs growth of any jurisdiction in Australia.

Compare that with the last 10 years of Labor, when New South Wales had the slowest rate of jobs growth in Australia. Our unemployment rate was second only to that of Western Australia. The turnaround has come about not only because of the hard work and initiative of small and large businesses in New South Wales but because of the many initiatives the Government has taken. They include reform of workers compensation to reduce the onerous premiums that New South Wales employers were facing, with the prospect of premium increases of more than 20 per cent unless a technically insolvent scheme was reformed; changes to work health and safety laws; and our initiative in the payroll tax area. We are a government that is committed to creating jobs and that has seen jobs created in New South Wales—which is far more than happened under Labor. We are a government that is committed to economic growth—which was the slowest of any State for the past decade under Labor and is now the strongest of all States on a quarterly annual basis. Business confidence among small and medium businesses was the lowest of any State during most of the last five years of Labor. For the past eight months we have had the highest confidence in Australia.

As to housing supply, we saw the lowest number of new dwelling starts per capita for the last five years under Labor. We now have the highest number of private dwelling approvals in New South Wales for more than a decade. Our retail trade was at the lowest average annual rate of any State under Labor, and is now the strongest of all States. This is a government that is achieving across the board for the people of New South Wales. These statistics are not an end in themselves, but the economic growth and the creation of jobs means better services for people and higher living standards for all citizens of New South Wales. I commend the bill to the House as part of a suite of wide-ranging initiatives by the O'Farrell Government, and now the Baird Government, to improve the lot of people in New South Wales, to improve the job prospects of workers in New South Wales and to make New South Wales number one again.

Mr GEOFF PROVEST (Tweed) [6.07 p.m.], on behalf of Mr Andrew Constance, in reply: I speak on behalf of the Treasurer in reply to debate on the Payroll Tax Rebate Scheme (Jobs Action Plan) Amendment (Fresh Start Support) Bill 2014. I thank members representing the electorates of Maroubra, Drummoyne, Sydney, Bathurst, Cessnock, Northern Tablelands, Coogee, Newcastle, Miranda, Granville, Gosford, Baulkham Hills, Smithfield, Keira, Swansea, Menai and Cronulla for their contribution to the debate. The Treasurer would also like to thank the former Treasurer for introducing this bill and for his awareness that many businesses and local communities are operating in a difficult economic environment. The bill proposes an amendment to the Payroll Tax Rebate Scheme (Jobs Action Plan) Act 2011.

The Fresh Start Support scheme proposed under this bill will provide an additional \$1,000 payroll tax rebate to employers when they hire a worker made redundant after 1 January 2014 from a list of designated employers. The \$1,000 additional payroll tax rebate under the Fresh Start Support scheme will be paid on the first anniversary of the worker's employment. The additional \$1,000 means that the Jobs Action Plan rebate increases to a possible maximum \$6,000 for employees formally engaged by designated employers. This means eligible employers will receive a \$3,000 payroll tax rebate on the first anniversary of employment of the relevant employee, \$2,000 under the existing Jobs Action Plan, an additional \$1,000 under the additional Fresh Start Support scheme, and \$3,000 on the second anniversary.

To be eligible for the Jobs Action Plan rebate scheme and the Fresh Start Support payroll tax rebate the employer must employ a worker who has been made redundant between 1 January 2014 and 30 June 2015 from a designated employer. The services of those made redundant must have been performed in New South Wales. The Jobs Action Plan rebate scheme and the Fresh Start Support rebate are currently scheduled to close to new applicants from 30 June 2015, consistent with the current Jobs Action Plan scheme. However, the Government will reconsider this as circumstances develop. Regulation is currently being drafted which outlines guidelines for defining a designated employer and the definition of a redundancy. These guidelines can be varied with the approval of the Expenditure Review Committee.

These guidelines will cover the scale of retrenchments—with no fewer than 100 retrenchments in a metropolitan area and no fewer than 50 retrenchments in a non-metropolitan area. State Government employers will not be classified as designated employers. However, Commonwealth agencies, local government and State-owned corporations can be listed as designated employers. Guidelines will also cover the situation where retrenchments are likely to affect a particular industry or region and where the opportunities for re-employment are limited because of the nature of the employer's business. This bill demonstrates that the Government remains committed to making New South Wales the first place to do business and to encouraging employers to expand their operations. I commend the bill to the House.

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

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

Third Reading

Motion by Mr Geoff Provest, on behalf of Mr Andrew Constance, agreed to:

That this bill be now read a third time.

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

ACTING-SPEAKER (Mr John Barilaro): Order! Government business having concluded, private members' statements will be proceeded with.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ANZAC DAY

Mr RYAN PARK (Keira) [6.16 p.m.]: I speak about a very important day for all of us as Australians—that is, Anzac Day. It is a day of commemoration and remembrance. On 25 April, like many members of this place, I had the opportunity to go to a local dawn service, something I have been doing for some time and since well before I was a local member—as, I am sure, many people in this place have done. This year I attended the Woonona Bulli RSL Anzac Day dawn service. It was attended by several thousand local residents. It was quite a cool morning. It was certainly overcast and threatening rain, but that did not stop a large number of people turning up for this very sombre but important occasion. In particular I would like to congratulate and thank the sub-branch President, Mr Robert Price, Vice Presidents Mr Ray Morgan and Mr John Butterly, and of course my good friend, and the person to whom I spoke about being involved in this very special day, Mr Gary May, a director at the Woonona Bulli RSL.

Prior to Anzac Day I visited the RSL club to have a look at their very extensive collection of memorabilia. The way that they have preserved that memorabilia is, quite simply, unbelievable. There is an entire room full of memorabilia from all of the conflicts that Australians have been involved in, and not only simple memorabilia, although that is important, but also extremely rare pieces, including uniforms, books and items given to the RSL by soldiers or the families of soldiers. I was also very impressed, as the shadow Minister for Education, that this club frequently has young people visiting this special room and learning about the historic and important role that Australian men and women have played on battlefields around the globe and what those who have gone before us have done to preserve our way of life. These are very important lessons for young people to learn.

Each and every member of the sub-branch is extremely passionate about and dedicated to making sure that this collection is preserved, maintained and enhanced for future generations. They are very keen to educate local students and are one of the few local groups that open each weekday and encourage locals to visit and have a chat. This is something which I am sure many other sub-branches would like to be able to do. As I said earlier, many ex-soldiers from the local region have kindly donated their own items and photographs. The people of the Illawarra have a rich and proud history of fighting for our country. This is recognised in this very important display at the Woonona Bulli RSL.

Anzac Day is a day when we all take time out to remember those who have served so gallantly and with such dedication to defend this country and our way of life. It certainly is not lost on me. As someone who was never conscripted and who has never been involved in the military I do not for one second pretend to walk in their shoes. But, as I said to the men and women present at the service on that day, they can rest assured that while I am the local member I will do whatever I can to ensure that the fantastic display at the Woonona Bulli RSL is enhanced and preserved for future generations. I made it clear that I will be working with them on future grants from government at all levels to ensure that this important collection of memorabilia is preserved. I recognise this great club and the important work they are doing. I congratulate each and every member and pay my respects to all of those people involved in Anzac Day commemorations across New South Wales.

ISOLATED PATIENTS TRAVEL AND ACCOMMODATION ASSISTANCE SCHEME

Mr CHRISTOPHER GULAPTIS (Clarence) [6.21 p.m.]: I rise to inform the House about the difficulties that my constituents are currently experiencing with the Isolated Patients Travel and Accommodation Assistance Scheme (IPTAAS). The Isolated Patients Travel and Accommodation Assistance Scheme is a terrific New South Wales Government initiative designed to financially assist people, particularly in isolated or rural areas, who have to travel significant distances to access specialist medical treatment which is not available locally. It is very important for country people because we do not have the transport or the medical facilities that are available to people who live in metropolitan Sydney. The Isolated Patients Travel and Accommodation Assistance Scheme subsidises transport and accommodation costs for patients who travel 100 kilometres or more one way from their place of residence for specialist medical treatment such as radiotherapy. The New South Wales Labor Government reduced the distance eligibility criterion from 200 kilometres one way to 100 kilometres in 2006.

In 2011 the New South Wales Coalition Government announced a significant boost of \$28 million over four years to the Isolated Patients Travel and Accommodation Assistance Scheme. The increase in funding saw a 30 per cent boost in accommodation subsidies and a 25 per cent boost in petrol subsidies. A raft of improvements to the Isolated Patients Travel and Accommodation Assistance Scheme have been made since then, but there has been no change to the distance eligibility criterion. Currently, one is eligible for subsidised accommodation under the Isolated Patients Travel and Accommodation Assistance Scheme if the cumulative journey to one's treating specialist centre exceeds 200 kilometres within a week.

Radiotherapy treatment can range from five to nine weeks in duration. A cancer diagnosis is challenging and debilitating enough without the added burden of travelling when you are feeling unwell and anxious about your treatment. Consequently many of my constituents choose to relocate close to the treatment centre for the period of time that they require treatment. Both Coffs Harbour and Lismore have cancer care accommodation to support people who are required to travel for treatment: Shearwater Lodge at Coffs Harbour and Our House at Lismore. The current distance eligibility criterion is disadvantaging hundreds of cancer patients in the Clarence Valley who require radiotherapy treatment. Grafton residents, whose closest specialist medical treatment centre for radiotherapy is Coffs Harbour, fall just short of the 200 kilometre return trip distance rule. The same applies to residents from the Lower Clarence—including places such as Maclean, Yamba and Iluka—whose nearest radiotherapy unit is Lismore.

Travel to both Coffs Harbour and Lismore from these centres is on the Pacific Highway and is approximately a two-hour round trip. For those who fall just short of the above distance rule, in order to qualify for subsidised accommodation some patients are travelling to their treatment centre on the Monday for treatment, returning home the same day and then returning again the following day, by which time they have travelled the cumulative distance of 200 kilometres during the week. Only then will they be eligible for subsidised accommodation. This seems dangerous and nonsensical and is an unnecessary imposition on someone fighting for their life against cancer.

One of the side effects of radiotherapy treatment is tiredness. Some people find it physically impossible to travel. They have no option but to meet the cost of accommodation themselves, which can amount to hundreds of dollars. Some of them are on very limited incomes and so this becomes an additional financial burden. In the worst cases some patients refuse treatment because they cannot afford the travel costs. This is a death sentence for those poor souls.

The scheme should be funded and flexible to the level that ensures that patients, families and carers who do not have specialist treatment centres close by, like their city counterparts, are supported during a challenging period in their lives. I suggest that a fairer approach to the fixed distance criteria would be a sliding scale. For example, if a person was within 50 kilometres of their place of treatment they would fail to qualify. If they were 60 kilometres away they would be eligible for 20 per cent funding. People who were 70 kilometres away would receive 40 per cent funding, people who were 80 kilometres away would receive 60 per cent funding and so on until they reached 100 kilometres, at which point they would be eligible for 100 per cent funding. I believe this would be a much fairer system for country patients and it would ensure that they received the medical treatment they deserve.

BANKSTOWN LIBRARY AND KNOWLEDGE CENTRE

Mr GLENN BROOKES (East Hills) [6.26 p.m.]: On Saturday 5 April 2014 I had the privilege of attending the official opening of the new state-of-the-art Bankstown Library and Knowledge Centre. To say this

is a landmark facility is an understatement not just for Bankstown but for Australia. This is not just a library; it is a meeting place for students, families and our seniors. Equally, it is a venue for small, medium and big business to gather for conferences, seminars, workshops and product launches. I was blown away by the use of natural light in the building, which was designed by internationally renowned architects Francis-Jones Morehen Thorp and constructed with consideration of the environment and reduced energy use front and centre.

The facility is cooled and heated by one of the most technologically advanced systems in the world. Fourteen bores have been sunk beneath the facility to take advantage of geothermal heating and cooling benefits. Electricity use and emissions will drop by up to 50 per cent compared with the old building. Some 4,000 living plants make up a floor-to-ceiling green wall, which will assist in the oxygenation of the structure. The green wall provides a 5 per cent increase in oxygen in the building. People who understand casinos will know that they put more oxygen in the air to keep people in a happy mood for gambling. The work they have done to create a happier atmosphere in the library has been unreal. The use of recycled materials from the old Bankstown Town Hall in the new facility equates to a 15-year saving in power usage.

This facility boasts the latest in information technology resources. It has a dedicated children's library area, a local history section, an outdoor reading area, a cafe, conference rooms and a 300-seat theatre named in honour of Bankstown local Bryan Brown. Bryan is a proud Panania boy. For those who are not familiar with the area, Panania is well and truly in the electorate of East Hills. Despite his success on the world stage and silver screen alongside the likes of Tom Cruise and Sigourney Weaver, Bryan has never forgotten where he came from and where he spent his youth.

Bryan and his wife, Rachel Ward, and two of their three children were special guests at the official opening of his theatre at a glittering formal event that rivalled one of Bryan's movie premieres. I echo Bankstown mayor Khal Asfour's feelings when he stated on the night that he hopes the facility will encourage more young people to pursue their academic interests with vigour and also be involved in local theatre and performance. I have no doubt this will happen. It was only fitting that two members of Bankstown council's Talent Advancement Program were among those who took to the stage in the Bryan Brown Theatre for the first performance. As people in this House can attest to, having been entertained by these very talented singers over the years, this program is another feather in Bankstown's cap.

I congratulate the mayor and his fellow councillors on supporting programs such as these that encourage our youth to develop their skills and talents. I also commend them for the courage and leadership they have shown in delivering what can only be described as an amazing community facility not only for their local residents and businesses but for all Australians to enjoy. I have a special connection to this project because it was during my time in council that we decided to embark on it. It is a wonderful experience to see something of this magnitude come to fruition after many years of planning and building. Big congratulations must also go to Matthew Stewart, Ken Menoski and the team at Bankstown City Council.

RESPIRE CARE SERVICES

Ms NOREEN HAY (Wollongong) [6.31 p.m.]: Recently at my electorate office I received a delegation of workers represented by the Public Service Association of New South Wales. The workers are employed in the delivery of respite services for people with disabilities, some of whom are profoundly disabled. One of their concerns was that they believed a move was afoot to privatise respite centres. At the moment they are public sector employees and enjoy all that goes along with that in terms of public sector provisions. At a time when New South Wales is looking to participate in the National Disability Insurance Scheme [NDIS] that is being implemented across the country, there is a view that the move to close, hand over or privatise the respite centres is a means of shifting responsibility for the centres prior to the scheme coming into effect.

The assistant secretary of the Public Service Association, Steve Turner, said that there were significant concerns about whether the families and carers of people with a disability, many of whom are children with autism and behavioural disorders, would have ongoing access to respite services. The Public Service Association mentioned five areas of concern, which are: Merryland in Newcastle; Orange; Ashfield; Thornleigh; and Dapto in the Illawarra. They also raised concerns about respite services across the board in New South Wales. Disability workers and the families of people with disabilities have been left confused by what is happening with support services at these centres, particularly at the Dapto respite centre. I raise this issue in response to the delegation that came to see me but also in relation to respite centres across the board.

Having worked many years ago giving assistance and care through a home care service, I am fully aware of how members of our community rely on whatever assistance they can get from some respite. People

who look after people with disabilities are very dedicated and hardworking. It seems that this Government regards the introduction of the National Disability Insurance Scheme as an opportunity to privatise many respite centres. Parents and carers who rely on a daily basis on much-deserved respite care have grave concerns about how their future will unfold. According to the Public Service Association and the delegation that came to see me, the uncertain future for respite centres in New South Wales is part of a push by the Government to use implementation of the National Disability Insurance Scheme as a cover to cut jobs and reduce choice of services.

The Public Service Association has called on the New South Wales Government to come clean on its plans for disability services, including respite centres, before experienced staff are lost and essential support and facilities are compromised. I also call on the Government to come clean on this issue. I am desperately concerned about any threat to the employment of people who deliver respite services on behalf of families and carers of people with disabilities. As I said earlier, in some cases people have profound disabilities and their families and carers rely on respite care. If carers and families do not receive the respite they need, they could finish up needing assistance themselves for mental health issues, et cetera. It is very important that we take our responsibilities for people with disabilities seriously. The Government should maintain wherever possible the types of services that the private sector will not want to provide. The private sector will not want to deal with profoundly disabled people, they will have to rely on the Government and the services that the Government can provide to ensure they are properly cared for.

MENAI COMMUNITY CABINET MEETING

Ms MELANIE GIBBONS (Menai) [6.36 p.m.]: On 7 April I was pleased to host the New South Wales Government's Community Cabinet in my electorate. The meeting was held at Hunts at Casula, but many of the Ministers visited the Menai electorate. I was thrilled that they did because they were able to see many of the exciting things that are happening in my area and gain an understanding of our community. They were able to get involved and make some announcements with me so that they know what is going on. I state for the record my sincere thanks to the Ministers who visited my electorate, particularly the then Premier, Barry O'Farrell, who devoted a great deal of time to answering a lot of questions that were asked by members of the community. The Moorebank intermodal facility is one of the biggest issues in my electorate, and that was reflected in the questions. I state for the record that although I was the master of ceremonies for the event, I did not choose people to ask questions with the knowledge of what the question would be. Nevertheless, it became obvious that the Moorebank intermodal facility is one of the major issues in my electorate.

Questions also related to car parking spaces and disability services. The then Minister for Community Services, the Hon. Pru Goward, answered a lot of questions during the evening as well. I particularly thank Addie and Me, which is the tearoom behind my office, for providing a beautiful spread for the Hon. Pru Goward, who is also the Minister for Women. One of my female community members mentioned to me that it was the first time that they had been thanked for the support they had given to the community. I was thrilled to be able to provide that opportunity. It gave me a warm feeling to host an event and to thank them for the time that they give to our community. I thank the Hon. Greg Smith for talking with me about graffiti in the area and the Minister for Disability Services, the Hon. John Ajaka, for talking to members of the Young Adults Disabled Association Inc., to which I have referred previously in this Chamber and whose work I wholeheartedly admire.

The then Minister for Sport, the Hon. Gabrielle Upton, met with the Moorebank Cricket Club and took a look at the club's future plans. Provided that the cricket club can do a land swap with the Army, it has big things planned for the area around Heathcote Road. It is very exciting and I hope we will be able to support them in their quest. I particularly thank the Minister for Transport, the Hon. Gladys Berejiklian, and the then Premier, Barry O'Farrell, for understanding that car parking in Liverpool is incredibly difficult to obtain and for announcing 83 new commuter car parking spaces in Liverpool right next to the train station. There are not many train stations that can boast that car parking is available right next door, and I am happy to say that Liverpool will have 83 new car parking spaces in addition to only 22 current commuter car parking spaces and three disability spaces. I am thrilled also that the former Premier and the Minister for Transport and Minister for the Hunter heard my call for increased commuter car parking spaces.

Construction of the Sutherland commuter car park is underway and it will provide an additional 300 spaces. I am absolutely thrilled to be able to provide 300 additional car parking spaces because car parking is incredibly limited in Sutherland. In fact, from 7.00 a.m., people are unable to find a car parking space. The Minister for Transport also accompanied me on an inspection to Holsworthy, which also desperately needs car parking space. The Minister is examining the problem to see whether car parking opportunities are available.

Holsworthy is an interesting situation because the Opal card is making a huge difference at the train station. Previously massive queues formed at the station when people were trying to buy a train ticket, particularly on Monday mornings. I am thrilled to see the difference that the Opal card has made.

Recently I was at Holsworthy seeking signatures for a petition to alleviate traffic problems that have been caused by construction of the Army base. The problem is that 1,200 construction vehicles enter the site at the same time as commuters are entering the train station site. I describe the situation as traffic chaos. I thank the commuters who signed the petition to ensure that something will be done. I reiterate my thanks to the Ministers who attended the Community Cabinet and who listened to the community, including Robyn Parker who listened to concerns expressed by the Sandy Point Progress Association. The issue is an important one and I hope to achieve a resolution soon.

Private members' statements concluded.

THREATENED SPECIES IN NATIONAL PARKS

Matter of Public Importance

Mrs ROZA SAGE (Blue Mountains) [6.41 p.m.]: I draw to the attention of the House that Australia is a continent of unique wildlife and plants. From the time that Europeans set foot on the Australian continent and recorded, drew and painted our unique wildlife and plant life, our animals and plants have been a source of wonder and amazement. Australia is the home of marsupial mammals, past and present, who have pouches in which their young develop. We have monotremes—platypus and echidna—which are mammals but which lay eggs. This class of animal is found nowhere else in the world. They caused considerable confusion and doubt among early European naturalists and scientists, who declared they were fakes. This is the natural legacy of Australia—unique animals that we need to protect from the onslaught of feral introduced pests, such as the foxes and cats.

The New South Wales Government has announced an innovative project under Saving Our Species to reintroduce in selected national parks at least eight mammal species that currently are extinct in New South Wales. Additional funding will be made available for this program on top of the extra \$4.8 million announced by the New South Wales Government in December for threatened species programs. Australia has the worst mammal extinction record in the world. New South Wales is not immune from that extinction crisis: 25 mammals are listed as extinct in New South Wales while over 50 per cent of surviving mammal species in New South Wales are listed as threatened. Mammals have suffered more over the past 200 years than any other group of animals. This project to reintroduce locally extinct mammals will help us halt and reverse the tide of mammal extinctions in New South Wales.

This is a targeted investment that will restore iconic mammals to New South Wales national parks and deliver a significant increase in their global populations. This project will play a vital role in saving these species from extinction. Most of the candidate species are listed nationally as threatened with extinction and several have suffered recent severe catastrophic decline. The mammals to be introduced will be those that are listed as presumed extinct in New South Wales. For example, the surviving numbat population, mostly in Western Australia, has declined to fewer than 1,000 animals. Australia's bilby population has had a dramatic decline since European settlement. We need our children to know that bilbies are not just chocolate alternatives to Easter egg bunnies.

The brush-tailed bettong population in Western Australia has plummeted in the past 15 years. Other reintroductions may include species such as the bridled nail-tail wallaby, golden bandicoot, burrowing bettong, Mitchell's hopping mouse and the greater stick-nest rat. The program will be delivered through an innovative partnership between the Office of Environment and Heritage and non-government organisations. The idea for the project came to the New South Wales Government directly as an unsolicited proposal from the Australian Wildlife Conservancy. The Government is currently calling for registrations of interest, closing on 15 May, to seek partners in delivering this key initiative. We intend having a partner selected and contracts signed before the end of 2014.

The next stages will involve constructing conservation fences and removing feral animals. The national parks in which mammals will be reintroduced will be determined as part of the expression of interest process. We expect this will involve different sites across the State. The selected partners will reintroduce species into large feral-predator-free enclosures protected by special conservation fences. These will protect the reintroduced mammal populations from foxes and feral cats. In the absence of a feral-proof fence, almost every attempt to reintroduce any of the candidate mammals has failed. Foxes and cats eat all of the released animals. Techniques such as baiting and shooting are not currently able to reduce cat numbers to a level that will allow mammal reintroductions.

Conservation fencing is currently the most effective way to promote the success of reintroduction for mammal species such as numbats and bettongs, which are particularly vulnerable to cats. This initiative will create around 10,000 to 12,000 hectares of fox- and cat-free land in national parks. This is a major investment in feral animal control, targeted specifically at saving some of Australia's most endangered mammals. It is a matter of public importance that we reintroduce these locally extinct mammals and reverse the tide of extinction in New South Wales.

Mr BRUCE NOTLEY-SMITH (Coogee) [6.46 p.m.]: I support the motion moved by the member for Blue Mountains acknowledging threatened species in national parks as a matter of public importance. The New South Wales Government announced just last month that it would reintroduce mammal species previously presumed extinct in New South Wales to our national parks. The program will be implemented by the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service in partnership with non-government organisations and it will be an investment in addition to our State's current commitments to national parks and endangered species.

Some species, including iconic Australian animals such as the bilby and the numbat, have been presumed extinct in New South Wales for almost a decade. Governments have a responsibility to protect endangered species in the wild, particularly precious mammal species such as those mentioned. The fact that they were allowed to become extinct in our State is truly shameful. New South Wales currently has 25 mammals listed as extinct, whilst more than 50 per cent of mammal species that have survived are listed as threatened. Mammals, in particular, have experienced the greatest levels of extinction or threat of extinction of any group of animals in Australia.

Unfortunately, failure to protect endangered species is not a problem exclusive to our State. Australia has one of the worst rates of extinction in the world. A disturbing 1,000 species in our country have become extinct or at risk of extinction in the past century. This signals the need for greater and more effective action at both a Federal and State government level to improve our country's record on protection of endangered species. While other States have implemented this strategy on a smaller scale, with this program New South Wales is setting the agenda for other governments in this country. A review of previous efforts to protect our endangered species found that significant improvements were needed to prevent further loss.

The program will consist of reintroducing mammals into three 4,000-hectare areas within 250,000 hectares of New South Wales national parks, which comprise just 0.15 per cent of around seven million hectares of the New South Wales national park estate. It is hoped that, over time, new wild populations can be established across these national parks. The areas where these mammals are to be reintroduced will be predator-free and bordered by special conservation fences. For this program to have a chance of succeeding, we need to ensure that the mammals are protected from pests such as foxes and feral cats. There are an estimated 15 million feral cats in Australia which pose a significant risk to our endangered species. It is estimated that in Australia feral cats kill around one million native animals every night.

Following the construction of conservation fences and removal of feral animals from within those areas, they will support the reintroduction of at least eight extinct mammal species. The animals will be sourced from other States where wild populations continue to be present as well as from special captive breeding populations, such as the Perth Zoo numbat population. This is in addition to the New South Wales Government's Saving Our Species initiative announced last year, which intends to prevent threatened species from completely disappearing.

Investing in this program ensures the survival of these mammals, which as an animal lover—as I am sure everyone in this Chamber is—I care deeply about. It is also a practical method of ensuring that we reduce negative impacts on our environment. If threatened species are allowed to disappear forever, so too do some of the more important natural elements of our environment. The reintroduction of these mammals will support restoration of our ecosystems. After the program has been introduced, the public will be free to go inside these conservation areas in our national parks and see the animals. We have a long way to go in this State and in our nation to improve our record on extinction of species; however, last month's announcement of the reintroduction of species is a positive and practical step to ensure that iconic Australian mammals exist in New South Wales in the future, and we are working towards solving the problem of endangered species.

Mr RON HOENIG (Heffron) [6.51 p.m.]: Across our country there are more than half a million animal and plant species, many of which are unique to our great land. Sadly, however, in New South Wales there are close to 1,000 animal and plant species that are at risk of extinction. It is therefore important that as a community we unite to save these animal and plant species and preserve our environment in a sustainable way.

New South Wales has more than 865 national parks and reserves, offering the people of this State the chance to camp, hike or swim in a diverse range of landscapes. In each of those national parks exist species that must be taken care of sustainably to ensure their existence for generations to come. National parks are one of our State's greatest tourism drawcards. International visitors come from far and wide to experience the incredible natural environments that we are blessed to have in our backyard, and part of the experience sought by tourists is to view the diverse range of native species that are distinctive to our landscape.

The Greater Blue Mountains National Park was inaugurated into the World Heritage List in 2000 due to its diverse natural values, a feat of which the residents of New South Wales and the Blue Mountains should be proud. The Greater Blue Mountains National Park is home to a large collection of flora and fauna, including many listed under the New South Wales Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995. Currently located in that park are 174 species classified as vulnerable, 97 classified as endangered and, worryingly, 12 classified as critically endangered. It is vital that the New South Wales Government make a concerted effort to minimise any disruption to our national parks so that the species that call these parks home, such as those in the Greater Blue Mountains National Park, including endangered species, are able to flourish in their natural habitats. Minimising the risk of extinction of those species listed under that Act must be a government and wider-community priority.

I acknowledge the New South Wales Government for its Saving our Species program, which aims to reintroduce to many of our national parks mammal species that are extinct in New South Wales. This united effort will involve the Office of Environment and Heritage, the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service, which does fantastic work in our community, and other conservation organisations. The conservation organisations comprise people on the ground who provide our vulnerable species the best chance of survival in the wild. They ought to be commended for their efforts. Many wonderful conservation organisations across the State are passionate about re-establishing many extinct species populations. I hope this program is successful so that future generations may be given the opportunity to learn about and appreciate these mammals.

Every year September is National Biodiversity month, and 7 September is Threatened Species Day. I encourage every member to embrace the importance of conserving and protecting our State's biodiversity. Our community can become involved at the most local level, including in our own backyards, by ensuring that local birds or wildlife have a sanctuary, regularly removing weeds that can quickly threaten local flora, ensuring that pets are not released into the wild, and recycling and composting, amongst other sustainable efforts. Our native species are part of what makes Australia unique. Our threatened native species located in our national parks urgently require their populations to be secure so that our ecosystems and environments may continue to develop naturally. The many national parks across New South Wales provide such an opportunity and a statewide effort must ensure it continues.

Mrs ROZA SAGE (Blue Mountains) [6.54 p.m.], in reply: I thank sincerely the member for Coogee and the member for Heffron for their contributions to the debate. Clearly, they also are passionate about looking after threatened species and our environment, especially the associated biodiversity. I make special commendation also of the former Minister for the Environment, Ms Robyn Parker, for her commitment and passion to this project and her love of national parks. She visited the Blue Mountains frequently. I thank the member for Coogee particularly for his eloquent remarks about the Save Our Species program. The conservation areas where feral animals will be removed to protect threatened or extinct species in New South Wales comprise three large areas of 4,000 hectares surrounded by conservation fencing. This area is a very small percentage of existing national parks.

I draw to the attention of the House the comments of the member for Heffron about the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage National Park, much of which is in my electorate of Blue Mountains. Of course, that park has the important Wollemi pine, which was found only recently and which is a throwback to prehistoric times. The Wollemi pine is contained within a secret area so that it will not be pillaged and destroyed. The Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage National Park also has the Pagoda daisy. I congratulate the wonderful National Parks and Wildlife Service team in the Blue Mountains on its dedication to looking after our national parks and the many species varieties. During the clean up after the recent fires I received from them a great education in the many different flora, insects, grubs and plants. I commend to the House this motion on an important aspect of our natural environment.

Discussion concluded.

**The House adjourned, pursuant to standing and sessional orders, at 6.57 p.m. until
Wednesday 7 May 2014 at 10.00 a.m.**
